

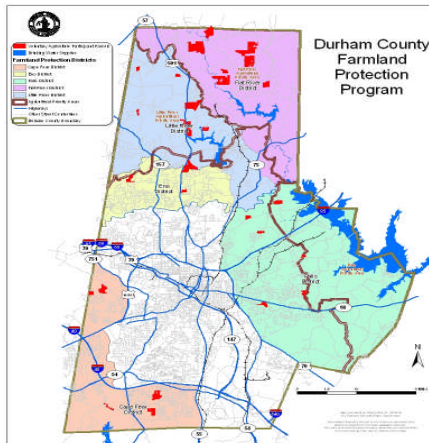
History

On May 13, 1996, the Durham Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) approved the original ordinance for the Farmland Protection Program. It was later revised and approved in August of 2003. At that time, the BOCC solicited county citizens to serve on the new Farmland Protection Advisory Board. The revised ordinance requires the Board to consist of a landowner from each of the five following Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD) who is an active farmer and/or one who is engaged in a business or activity involving farming.

- 1) Flat River
- 2) Little River
- 3) Eno
- 4) Lick Creek/Falls
- 5) Cape Fear

In addition, a representative from the Board of County Commissioners, Soil & Water Conservation Board of District Supervisors, Durham County Farm Bureau, and Durham Open Space and Trails Commission as well as a business representative can serve on the Farmland Protection Advisory Board. Five at-large members can also be appointed.

In December of 1996, the first Voluntary Agricultural District participant was enrolled. Durham County obtained its first conservation easement in 2001 on 50 acres near Streets of Southpoint Mall.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more details about qualifying as a Voluntary Agricultural District, conservation easements or other land protection programs, please contact:

Durham Soil and Water Conservation District

721 Foster Street
Durham, NC 27701

phone: 919-560-0558

fax: 919-560-0563

email: eculberson@co.durham.nc.us



Conservation Easement Enrollment



TOGETHER
WE CAN
PROTECT IT

Durham Soil & Water



Conservation District

Tel: 919-560-0558

Fax: 919-560-0563

FARMLAND IS IMPORTANT

Durham has a long standing partnership with the agricultural industry. History tells us that revenue from agricultural, especially tobacco, paved the way for the establishment of the City of Durham. Also, Duke University, formerly known as Trinity College, and Duke Medical Center were constructed from tobacco revenue. Tobacco warehouses located in Durham brought in outside revenue from neighboring counties. Agriculture and its farm families as a whole were responsible for Durham's prosperous economy.

Today, Durham County's landscape is varied; it contains a busy urban center and tranquil rural vistas. Each contributes to the fabric that characterizes Durham. Farmland, whether producing crops, livestock or forest resources, provides products for consumption. Acres of trees, pastures, and crops also prevent soil erosion and sedimentation of our rivers, lakes, and streams. This land also provides habitat for numerous kinds of wildlife.

Farmland also adds something intangible to our quality of life. Rolling pastures and fields as well as stately forests are an integral part of our heritage and national landscape. Country vistas promote a sense of serenity, but this quality of life comes at a cost that is presently borne by our local farmers. Development pressures could cause this serene countryside to disappear.

Preserving farmland for the future will require everyone's participation. This brochure explains some ways we can get started.

VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Through the work of the Durham Farmland Protection Advisory Committee and Durham County Government, we now have a Voluntary Agricultural District Program.

Under this program, landowners sign an agreement with County Government to register their tract of land as one with agricultural interest. Documentation of this participation goes on file in the Tax Office, Register of Deeds Office, and the Durham Soil and Water Conservation District. To qualify, a farmer must own at least 20 acres. Voluntary Agricultural Districts may be identified by attractive signs with the Durham VAD logo. In exchange for enrolling the landowner receives the following benefit:

- The right to a public hearing held by the Farmland Protection Board if land in an Agricultural District is considered for a public project that may condemn land.
- Waiver of water and sewer assessments on the land if the owner does not use the service.
- Notice associated with the property warning potential neighbors of noise, odor, dust, or slow moving vehicles.
- Potential for more influence in future county ordinances affecting agricultural lands.

PRESENT TAXATION PROGRAM

One of the requirements for participating in the VAD Program is that the land has to qualify for the Agricultural Present Use Value. Land that is used for agricultural production can be taxed at a rate which reflects its present use saving farmers money on property taxes. For example, if the land is used for growing fruit trees, it will be taxed at the rate for agricultural land, even if its actual market value is higher. The present use taxation program, however, does not alter estate taxes, which are calculated based on market value.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Conservation easements allow landowners to sell or donate the permanent development rights to their property while still retaining ownership of the land. Development rights may be conveyed to a qualifying government institution or other nonprofit agency. The landowner can receive tax benefits if the conservation easement is donated.

Landowners may continue to use the property for agricultural purposes or sell it for other compatible uses that conform to the terms of the easement. During the development of the conditions of the easement, some farms choose to retain a limited number of future homesites.