



④

# Tips for Writing in Plain Language

# 16%

of people actually  
read word-by-word

# 79%

of users scan text  
that they read

## 1

### Know your audience.

What do they already know?  
What do they need to know?

## 4

### Be concise.

One idea per sentence.  
Eliminate unnecessary words.

## 7

### Use inclusive language.

Use accessible language.  
Avoid labelling people.

## 2

### Organize your thoughts.

Guide your reader.  
Leave out unnecessary info.

## 5

### Aim for active voice.

Keep the subject and verb close.  
Use the passive voice rarely.

## 8

### Design your work.

Make content scannable.  
Use visuals to simplify info.

## 3

### Use everyday words.

Use familiar language.  
Avoid jargon and limit acronyms.

## 6

### Make it personal.

Directly address the reader.  
Write in conversational tone.

## 9

### Measure readability.

Measure the reading level.  
Target lower reading levels.

## Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

# Measure readability

The formula that calculates the grade level required to understand the text.

Target the 6th-8th grade reading level.

## Readability

### GRADE LEVEL

0-5

Very easy to read

Good for people with limited literacy

6

Easy to read

Considered conversational English

7

Fairly easy to read

Meets plain language guidelines

8

Good for the average adult reader

Meets plain language guidelines

10

Fairly difficult to read

More difficult than plain language guidelines suggest

13

Difficult to read

More difficult than plain language guidelines suggest

14+

Very difficult to read

Best understood by people with high literacy



### Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Development Guidelines

#### INTRODUCTION

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#### REVENUES

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- Fund balance in the General Fund will not be projected to fall below **12.0%** at the end of FY 2024-25.
- **Non-recurring funds will not be directed toward recurring uses.**
- Proposed **water and sewer rate** increases will not exceed an average of **6.2% for the average customer**.
- **Fee adjustments** will be considered, as appropriate, to align fee revenues with cost of services for better cost recovery rates.
- Proposed increase in **Stormwater rates** for typical residential customers (tier 2) shall not exceed **\$1.55 per month**.

#### EXPENDITURES

To balance expenditures against forecasted revenues, the City Manager will continue to monitor performance data to guide focused discussions with City departments regarding program and service priorities. This includes possible areas for elimination, reduction, reorganization, new partnerships, and/or alternative service delivery models that address the performance and efficiency of City programs.

- City employees are at the core of City services. One objective under the City's **Innovative & High Performing Organization Goal is to "recruit, retain and advance a diverse and engaged workforce."** Attracting, training and retaining a competent, high quality workforce is essential to being a high performing organization. Therefore, we will continue to consider employee compensation adjustments as a priority.

#### The following pay and benefit components will be proposed:

- Pay for Performance open range plan and Step Plan increases for General employees—5.0% average. Additional structure and salary adjustments may be considered.
- Pay Plan for sworn Police Employees—5.0% average step plan. Additional structure and salary adjustments may be considered.
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- Pay Plan for part-time Employees--3.0% average. Additional structure and salary adjustments may be considered.
- Supplemental Retirement -401(k) –5.0% (no increase over FY 2023-24 budget).
- Medical Insurance for all employees – up to 10% average increase for the City
- Dental insurance –no increase for the City
- 13.6% budgeted for employer contribution to the Local Government Employees' Retirement System (LERS), a .75% increase over the FY 2023-24 budget of 12.85%.
- The dedicated **street resurfacing funding** will be up to **\$11,000,000** for FY 2024-25 and **up to an additional \$4,000,000 from fund balance** will be considered for FY 2024-25.
- Funding for the **Maintenance Replacement Project Plan** will remain at **\$1,200,000** for FY 2024-25.
- **Fleet replacement funding** for the General Fund will be provided in accordance with the Fleet department's **10-year recommendation plan** within the debt model.
- Funding for **City Council budget** requests will be **considered**.
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- Funding for **City Council budget** requests will be **considered**.
- Programs may be considered for **down-sizing or discontinuation**.

**The reading level is**  
**14**  
**That means it is**  
**very difficult to read**



## BUILDING A CITY BUDGET FOR 2024-2025

### Introduction

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### Building a sustainable city: Key areas of focus

Budget guidelines help us achieve our city's long-term goals outlined in the **Citywide Strategic Plan**. One key objective is **sustainability**. This means making sure our city can function well in all areas:

- **Strategy:** Having clear and achievable goals for the future.
- **Programs & Services:** Providing high-quality services to residents.
- **Staff:** Employing skilled and reliable people to run the city.
- **Finances:** Having enough money to cover our ongoing expenses, with some savings set aside for emergencies.

### The City's main budget

Most of the city's money comes from the **General Fund**. This fund supports most city departments (24 out of 27) and pays for the salaries of a large portion of our full-time employees (1,700 out of 2,404).

### Our budget priorities

- **Building on Our City Plan:** We'll use your tax dollars to fund programs and services that support our city's long-term goals, as outlined in the Citywide Strategic Plan.
- **Meeting Your Needs:** A growing population means changing needs. We'll consider this when deciding how to spend your money.
- **Following the Rules:** We need to make sure our budget follows any state or federal requirements.
- **Listening to City Council:** The City Council sets spending priorities, and we'll use those to guide our budget decisions.

101 City Hall Plaza  
Durham, NC 27701

## Revenue

Where our money comes from.



Last year, most of our **General Fund money** came from **property taxes and sales taxes**. Local property tax and sales tax accounted for 82.3% (\$232 million) of the fund's total budget of \$281.5 million.

Revenue Source	Percentage of Total Revenue	Amount (in millions)
Local Property Taxes	46.8%	\$108
Local Sales Taxes	35.5%	\$124
Other Revenue Sources	17.7%	\$49.5
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$281.5</b>

- *Property taxes fully supported the Debt Service Fund, which covers the city's debt service obligations.*
- *The property tax appropriation for the Debt Service Fund was \$47.5 million in FY2023-24.*

### Potential changes to taxes

- The tax rate for the General Fund may be increased to cover employee raises and other costs.
- Rates for other funds, like those for debt service or solid waste, are likely to stay the same.

### Additional guidelines:

- The **General Fund's** fund balance will not fall below 12.0% at the end of FY 2024-25.
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## Expenditures

Spending Our City Budget Wisely



### Making the most of every dollar

To make sure our spending matches our projected revenues, we'll be looking closely at how efficiently our city departments deliver services. This might involve:

- **Reviewing Programs:** We'll analyze data to see if programs are effective and efficient.
- **Finding Savings:** We'll look for ways to reduce costs without hurting service quality.
- **Improving Services:** We'll explore partnerships or new ways to deliver services that are both effective and affordable.

### Investing in our people and our city

City employees are crucial for providing City services, and one of the goals is to have a diverse and engaged workforce. To achieve this, it is important to attract, train, and keep skilled employees. As a result, employee compensation adjustments will be given priority.

**Table: Summary of proposed pay and benefit changes**

Pay and Benefit Components	Average Increase
Pay for Performance open range plan and Step Plan	5.0%
Sworn Police Employees (Step Plan)	5.0%
Sworn Fire Employees (Step Plan)	5.0%
Part-time Employees	3.0%
Supplemental Retirement - 401(k)	No increase
Medical Insurance for all employees	Up to 10%
Dental Insurance	No increase
Employer contribution to LGERS	13.6%

*Additional adjustments to pay structures and salaries may be considered for each*

**Table: Funding Categories and amounts for improving city property.**

Funding Category	Amount
Street Resurfacing	Up to \$11,000,000
Additional Street Resurfacing (Fund Balance)	Up to \$4,000,000
Maintenance Replacement Project Plan	\$1,200,000
Fleet Replacement (General Fund)	Based on 10-year plan
City Council Budget Requests	To be considered
Program Downsizing/Discontinuation	To be considered

- *The "Fleet Replacement" category mentions that the funding will be provided by the Fleet department's 10-year recommendation plan within the debt model.*
- *The City Council budget requests and program downsizing/discontinuation will be considered.*

8.8

# Online Tools



**Grammarly**



**Hemingway**



**Word**

**WRITER**

**Writer**

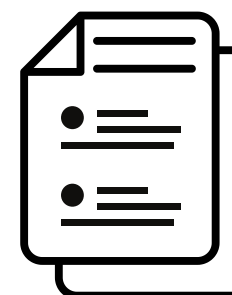
**Tip**

# Design your work

**Scannability is key.**



Long paragraphs and dense blocks of text can **intimidate readers and discourage** them from engaging with your content.



Breaking up your information into **scannable sections can help** readers navigate your work effortlessly.





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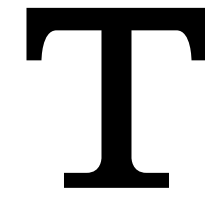
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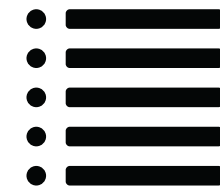
Added more  
scannable sections

# Scannable Sections



## Use clear headers

Headers should be **concise and easy to read**, so that readers can quickly scan and find the information they need.



## Use bulleted lists

Look for long sentences or sentences that **include a series**.



## Simplify with visuals

Include visuals such as icons and infographics to **help readers quickly identify and understand the information**.



**Fiscal Year 2024-25  
Budget Development Guidelines**

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- **Fee adjustments** will be considered, as appropriate, to align fee revenues with cost of services for better cost recovery rates.
- Proposed increase in **Stormwater rates** for typical residential customers (tier 2) shall not exceed **\$1.55 per month**.

**EXPENDITURES**

To balance expenditures against forecasted revenues, the City Manager will continue to monitor performance data to guide focused discussions with City departments regarding program and service priorities. This includes possible areas for elimination, reduction, reorganization, new partnerships, and/or alternative service delivery models that address the performance and efficiency of City programs.

- City employees are at the core of City services. One objective under the City's **Innovative & High Performing Organization Goal** is to "recruit, retain and advance a diverse and engaged workforce." Attracting, training and retaining a competent, high quality workforce is essential to being a high performing organization. Therefore, we will continue to consider employee compensation adjustments as a priority.



**Fiscal Year 2024-25  
Budget Development Guidelines**

**INTRODUCTION**

The development of budget guidelines is a best practice and supports **The Citywide Strategic Plan Goal, Innovative and High-Performing Organization**. One of the objectives of this goal is to promote **organizational sustainability**:

- Strategic Sustainability – realistic vision and goals
- Program and Service Sustainability -- high-quality services and programs
- Personnel Sustainability – effective and reliable personnel
- Financial Sustainability – recurring revenues equal to recurring expenditures, adequate financial reserve and contingency planning.

The General Fund is the primary fund for the city and supports 24 of the 27 city departments including 1,700 of the City's 2,404 full-time employees.

The City Manager shall use the following **Budget Development Guidelines to prepare the FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget**.

**OVERALL**

The budget should prioritize funding based on the City's Strategic Plan, needs related to accommodate population growth, State and/or Federal mandates and initiatives consistent with the City Council's priorities.

**REVENUES**

For FY 2023-24, the two largest sources of revenue to support **General Fund operations** were local **property taxes (46.8%)** and local **sales taxes (35.5%)** representing **the fund's \$281.5M budget**. Local property taxes also fully support which accounts for the City's General Fund debt service obligation appropriation for the **Debt Service Fund was \$47.5M** for FY2023-24.

The City must use a strategic approach to balance the budget, explore enhancement opportunities and cost control. **The FY 2024-25 Budget will align with the City's Strategic Plan and identify funding to enhance priority areas.**

- The current tax rate for the **General Fund** of **31.55 cents** (per \$100 assessed value) will be increased to cover the pay study market adjustments and other considerations.
- The tax rate for the **Debt Service Fund** will remain at the current rate of **31.55 cents** (per \$100 assessed value).



**Revenue**

Where our money comes from.

Last year, most of our **General Fund money** came from **property taxes and sales taxes**. Local property tax and sales tax accounted for 82.3% (\$232 million) of the fund's total budget of \$281.5 million.

Revenue Source	Percentage of Total Revenue	Amount (in millions)
Local Property Taxes	46.8%	\$108
Local Sales Taxes	35.5%	\$124
Other Revenue Sources	17.7%	\$49.5
<b>Total General Fund</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$281.5</b>

- Property taxes fully supported the Debt Service Fund, which covers the city's debt service obligations.
- The property tax appropriation for the Debt Service Fund was \$47.5 million in FY2023-24.



**Potential changes to taxes**

- The tax rate for the General Fund may be increased to cover employee raises and other costs.
- Rates for other funds, like those for debt service or solid waste, are likely to stay the same.



**Additional guidelines:**

- The **General Fund's** fund balance will not fall below 12.0% at the end of FY 2024-25.
- **Non-recurring funds** will not be used for recurring expenses.
- **Proposed water and sewer rate** increases will not exceed an average of 6.2% for the average customer.
- **Fee adjustments** will be considered to align fee revenues with the cost of services for better cost recovery rates.
- The proposed **increase in Stormwater rates** for typical residential customers (tier 2) will not exceed \$1.55 per month.

**Table: Summary of tax rates and fund allocation.**

Fund	Tax Rate (per \$100 assessed value)
G	
D	
S	
D	
T	
D	
H	

**Added**

- Clear headers
- Bullet lists
- Tables
- Color blocking

- The tax rate for the **Solid Waste Fund** will remain at the current rate of **5.59 cents** (per \$100 assessed value).
- The tax rate for the **Dedicated Housing Fund** will remain at the current rate of **3.38 cents** (per \$100 assessed value).
- The tax rate for the **Transit Operating Fund** will remain at **3.75 cents** (per \$100 assessed value).
- The tax rate for the downtown **Business Improvement District (BID)** will remain at **7.00 cents** (per \$100 assessed value).
- The allocation for the **Half Penny For Parks Program** will remain at 1/2 cent of the proposed tax rate.
- Fund balance in the General Fund will not be projected to fall below **12.0%** at the end of FY 2024-25.
- **Non-recurring funds will not be directed toward recurring uses.**
- **Proposed water and sewer rate** increases will not exceed an average of **6.2%** for the average customer.
- **Fee adjustments** will be considered, as appropriate, to align fee revenues with cost of services for better cost recovery rates.
- Proposed increase in **Stormwater rates** for typical residential customers (tier 2) shall not exceed **\$1.55 per month**.

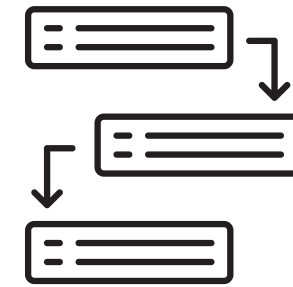
**EXPENDITURES**

To balance expenditures against forecasted revenues, the City Manager will continue to monitor performance data to guide focused discussions with City departments regarding program and service priorities. This includes possible areas for elimination, reduction, reorganization, new partnerships, and/or alternative service delivery models that address the performance and efficiency of City programs.

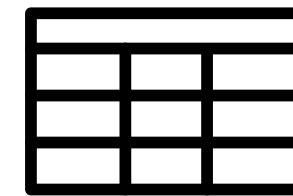
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**Design your work  
Budget Development Guidelines**

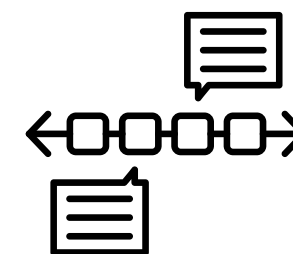
# Visuals



A **wordy paragraph** of instructions works better as a flow chart or a decision tree.



A **paragraph describing a series of events** can be a table with dates, descriptions, and outcomes.




A **description of a process** can become a chart with due dates and deliverables.

**The following pay and benefit components will be proposed:**

- Pay for Performance open range plan and Step Plan increases for General employees—5.0% average. Additional structure and salary adjustments may be considered.
  - Pay Plan for sworn Police Employees—5.0% average step plan. Additional structure and salary adjustments may be considered.
  - Pay Plan for sworn Fire Employees—5.0% average step plan. Additional structure and salary adjustments may be considered.
  - Pay Plan for part-time Employees--3.0% average. Additional structure and salary adjustments may be considered.
  - Supplemental Retirement -401(k) –5.0% (no increase over FY 2023-24 budget).
  - Medical Insurance for all employees – up to 10% average increase for the City
  - Dental insurance –no increase for the City
  - 13.6% budgeted for employer contribution to the Local Government Employees' Retirement System (LGERS), a .75% increase over the FY 2023-24 budget of 12.85%.
- The dedicated **street resurfacing funding** will be up to **\$11,000,000** for FY 2024-25 and **up to an additional \$4,000,000 from fund balance** will be considered for FY 2024-25.
  - Funding for the **Maintenance Replacement Project Plan** will remain at **\$1,200,000** for FY 2024-25.
  - **Fleet replacement funding** for the General Fund will be provided in accordance with the Fleet department's **10-year recommendation plan** within the debt model.
  - Funding for **City Council budget** requests will be **considered**.
  - Programs may be considered for **down-sizing or discontinuation**.





## Expenditures

Spending Our City Budget Wisely

### Making the most of every dollar

To make sure our spending matches our projected revenues, we'll be looking closely at how efficiently our city departments deliver services. This might involve:

- **Reviewing Programs:** We'll analyze data to see if programs are effective and efficient.
- **Finding Savings:** We'll look for ways to reduce costs without hurting service quality.
- **Improving Services:** We'll explore partnerships or new ways to deliver services that are both effective and affordable.

### Investing in our people and our city

City employees are crucial for providing City services, and one of the goals is to have a diverse and engaged workforce. To achieve this, it is important to attract, train, and keep skilled employees. As a result, employee compensation adjustments will be given priority.

**Table: Summary of proposed pay and benefit changes**

Pay and Benefit Components	Average Increase
Pay for Performance open range plan and Step Plan	5.0%
Sworn Police Employees (Step Plan)	5.0%
Sworn Fire Employees (Step Plan)	5.0%
Part-time Employees	3.0%
Supplemental Retirement - 401(k)	No increase
Medical Insurance for all employees	Up to 10%
Dental Insurance	No increase
Employer contribution to LGERS	13.6%

*Additional adjustments to pay structures and salaries may be considered for each category.*

**Table: Funding Categories and amounts for improving city property.**

Funding Category	Amount
Street Resurfacing	Up to \$11,000,000
Additional Street Resurfacing (Fund Balance)	Up to \$4,000,000
Maintenance Replacement Project Plan	\$1,200,000
Fleet Replacement (Fund)	
City Council Requests	
Program Downsizing	

- The "Fleet" that the departm within th
- The City program consider

**Added**

- Clear headers
- Bullet lists
- Tables
- Color blocking



# BEFORE

4

PURCHASING CARD NUTS & BOLTS 1/28 #3

## PURCHASING CARD GROUND RULES

- The Purchasing Card is to be used for legitimate business purposes only.
- The Purchasing Card will be used only when all of the following conditions exist:
  - The items and/or services to be purchased are for the official use of the Town of Chapel Hill.
  - The types of items and/or services to be purchased are those specifically approved by the Department Head or his/her designee.
  - The items and/or services to be purchased comply with pre-approved commodity designations. The Town has blocked specific commodity codes with the credit card company, thereby limiting card purchases to product or service specific categories.
- The Finance Director and the Purchasing Card Administrators will review card use by the cardholders and reserve the right to revoke the purchasing card privileges.
- Disputed Charges:
  - Cardholder should attempt to resolve billing disputes directly with the supplier.
  - Cardholder should email the Accounts Payable Clerk immediately upon becoming aware of a potential billing dispute.
  - If unable to resolve the dispute, the cardholder should fax the required dispute form (Appendix C) to Bank of America, and send a copy to Accounts Payable.
  - Ensure that an appropriate credit for the reported disputed item or billing error appears on a subsequent cardholder statement.
  - Cardholder should never accept cash in lieu of a credit to the Purchasing Card account.
  - Cardholders should report erroneous declines or fraudulent charges to their Department Head and the Program Administrator during normal business hours.
- Lost or Stolen Card:
  - Immediately report a lost or stolen card to Bank of America at 1-800-300-3084 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).
  - Immediately notify the Program Administrator and Department Head of a lost or stolen Purchasing Card at the first opportunity. Email, voicemail and in person (during normal business hours) are acceptable means of notification.
- Cardholders must return the Purchasing Card to the Department Head upon terminating employment with the Town or transferring jobs within the Town.
- If there is any question whether a transaction is allowed, contact the Program Administrator.

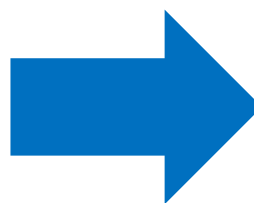
**Design your work**  
**Example**

# BEFORE

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# AFTER

Purchasing Card Rules – Updated June 17, 2020



## Purchasing Card Rules

### What's a purchasing card?

Purchasing cards, or "p-cards" for short, are credit cards that staff can use to make purchases for Town business. This could be things like buying office supplies or hardware to make repairs.

### Who needs to know these rules?

This document is intended for p-card users and their supervisors – who also may be p-card users. Please read through this before using your p-card. It can also be a good refresher if you run into questions in the future. A copy lives [here](#) on the Hive.

### Break it down for me. What do I need to know?

As a p-card user or their supervisor, there are three things you need to understand.

1. Purchasing responsibly
2. Monthly reporting
3. Handling issues

If you understand these three things, you're good to go.

### Who are the key contacts for p-cards?

For...	Staff Contact	Phone	Email
P-card setup / declines	Zakia Alam <i>Purchasing + Contracts Manager</i>	(919) 969-5022	<a href="mailto:zalam@townofchapelhill.org">zalam@townofchapelhill.org</a>
Monthly reporting	Vanessa Tart <i>Accounts Payable Supervisor</i>	(919) 968-2824	<a href="mailto:vtart@townofchapelhill.org">vtart@townofchapelhill.org</a>
Bank of America website / statements	Sally Warther <i>Purchasing + Contracts Specialist</i>	(919) 969-5025	<a href="mailto:swarther@townofchapelhill.org">swarther@townofchapelhill.org</a>

### The details.

The information on the next page covers each of these three areas in detail. Try to pick up on the main points. We all learn from experience, so remember that you can come back to this document at any time.

**Design your work**  
**Example**



**TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL**  
**Development Services- Building**  
405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-5705

phone (919) 968-2718 fax (919) 932-2954  
[www.townofchapelhill.org](http://www.townofchapelhill.org)

## Policy on Utility Reconnection

This policy was developed in response to local utility providers that have been requesting "safety" or "reconnect" permits and inspections to restore utility service to structures that have been disconnected from the utility provider, when no work requiring a permit has been performed.

North Carolina General Statutes limit the issuance of permits and performance of inspections to the construction, alteration, repair, replacement, equipment, appliances, fixtures, fittings and appurtenances to buildings or structures. We have no authority to perform inspections on existing structures where no work has been performed.

If a utility provider requires assurances that the structure is safe to have the utility service reconnected, they must make arrangements with the customer to ascertain the safety and readiness for the building system or systems to be reconnected. If work is required to repair, alter or replace any existing systems or appliances, then permits, as required by the scope of work, must be obtained from The Town of Chapel Hill and the required inspections will be performed by staff to verify code compliance for the permitted scope of work.



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[www.townofchapelhill.org](http://www.townofchapelhill.org)

## Reconnecting Gas or Power?

If you are trying to reconnect gas or power to your dwelling but Duke-Energy is telling you to obtain a permit, please follow these steps:

1. Make sure the dwelling is in the Chapel Hill Municipal District. This can be done by one of the following:
  - a) Checking the zoning map located on our website, [www.townofchapelhill.org](http://www.townofchapelhill.org)
  - b) Calling Developmental Services at 919-968-2718. We are here to help you.
  - c) If your dwelling is not in the Chapel Hill Municipal District, contact your district which could include any of the following counties: Orange, Durham or Chatham, for assistance.
2. Determine if you have had any construction work done that requires a permit.
  - a) **If yes** – contact your contractor. They will have the necessary permits.
  - b) **If no** – tell Duke-Energy you do not need an inspection from Chapel Hill to ~~reconnect~~ **turn on** power.

If you are continuing to have difficulties, please email [Developmental Services Permits@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:Permits@townofchapelhill.org) for assistance.



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL  
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405 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
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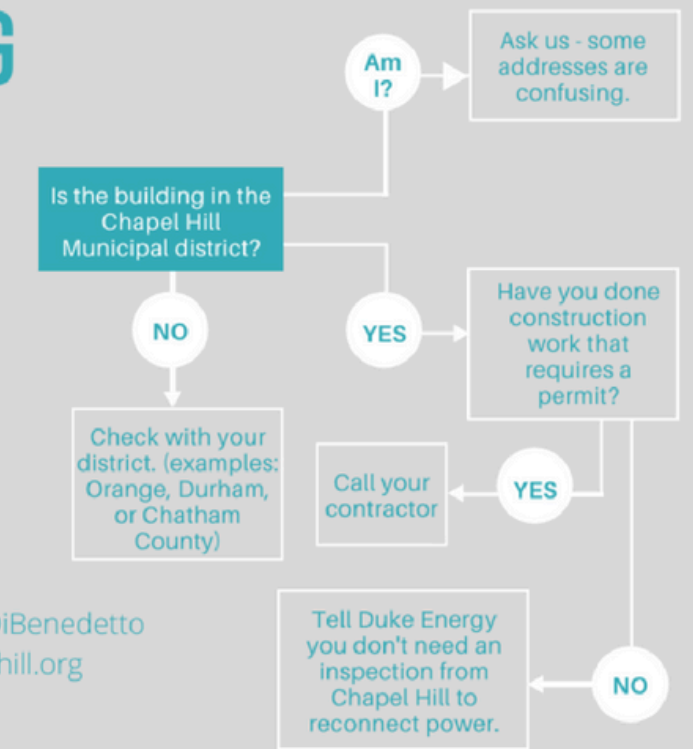
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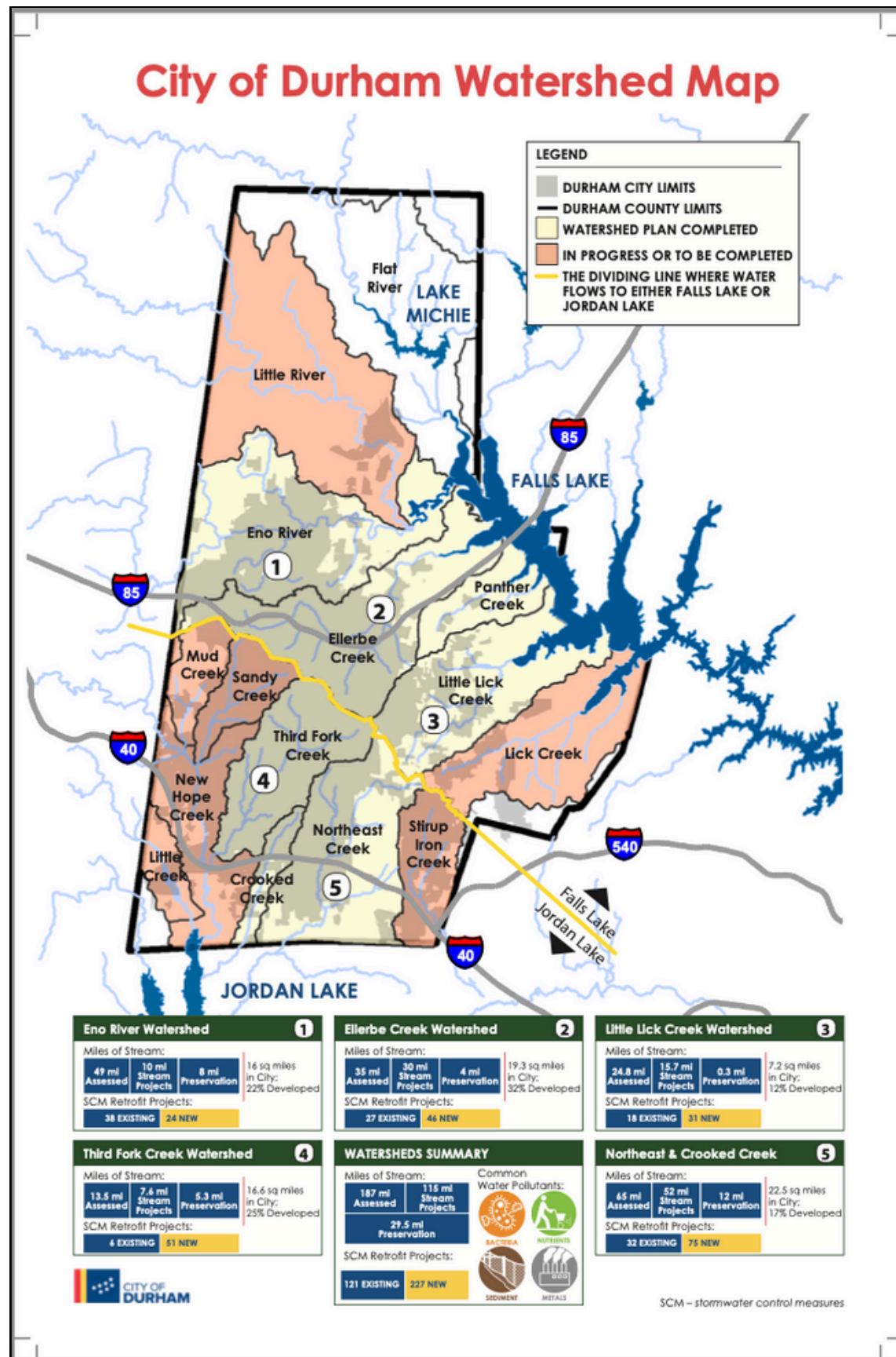
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### CONNECTING GAS OR POWER?



Chapel Hill Contact: Tom DiBenedetto  
[tdibenedetto@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:tdibenedetto@townofchapelhill.org)

Duke Power Contact:  
EMAIL/PHONE



### Watersheds and Stormwater

Durham is located on top of a ridge such that stormwater flows down on both sides to two major river basins. Waters in southwest Durham generally flow to Jordan Lake, which contributes to the Cape Fear River and finally flows into the Atlantic Ocean. In northeast Durham, water flows to Falls Lake, then into the Neuse River and the Albemarle-Pamlico Sound, and finally into the Atlantic Ocean. Both Jordan and Falls Lakes are important sources of drinking water for our area. This means pollution carried by stormwater in Durham can affect many people who live downstream.

The water cycle is a continuous circulation of water from the rivers, to the oceans, to the air, and back on the land surface. When water falls on natural areas it is absorbed and filtered by soil and plants. When water falls on urban or built areas it cannot soak into the ground and it washes off trash, bacteria, and other pollutants from the land.

Stormwater and the pollution it carries flows to the nearest stream through storm drains or ditches. Since stormwater is not treated at a wastewater treatment plant, keeping pollutants out of our runoff is the best way to protect water quality.

#### CONTACT

City of Durham  
Watershed Planning Website  
<https://durhamnc.gov/?12>

Follow us on Facebook  
DurhamNCStormwater

Follow us on Twitter  
@durhamstormH2O

Watch our videos at  
[bit.ly/sws/videos](http://bit.ly/sws/videos)

For additional information, please contact  
Sandi Wilbur  
City Project Manager  
[Sandra.Wilbur@durhamnc.gov](mailto:Sandra.Wilbur@durhamnc.gov)  
(919) 560-4326 ext.30286

## Working Towards Healthy Watersheds

**PUBLIC WORKS**  
CITY OF DURHAM

[durhamnc.gov](http://durhamnc.gov)  
version 1

### What is a watershed?

A watershed is the area of land that drains to a body of water, like a stream or lake. When it rains or snows, water that does not soak into the ground flows over the land and is called stormwater. This stormwater picks up pollutants, such as litter, fertilizer, oil, and animal waste, and flows into our streams, lakes, and drinking water supplies.

### Why Watershed Improvement Plans?

We can better understand how our actions affect local streams, lakes, and water supplies by studying the watershed. The City develops Watershed Improvement Plans (WIP) to assess watershed health and identify water quality improvement projects in the local watersheds. This is part of the City of Durham's continued efforts to improve the health of our streams, protect our regional water supply, and comply with water quality regulations.

### Watershed Management Strategies

As Durham continues to grow, additional pollution will enter the streams, rivers, and lakes if stormwater is not managed properly. There are several strategies that can be used to manage the pollution in our local waterways such as:

#### Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is a type of stormwater management that tries to protect, restore, or mimic the natural water cycle. Green infrastructure uses plants, soil, and natural ecological processes to manage stormwater where it falls, reducing the amount of stormwater that reaches waterbodies.

#### Stream & Buffer Restoration

This strategy refers to repairing the local streams that have already been impacted by increased stormwater flows. Restoration addresses erosion, poor water quality, and damage to natural wildlife habitats. This can be done by restoring the stream shape, stabilizing eroded banks, and providing engineered structures in the stream to improve wildlife habitat.

#### Land Conservation

Vegetated areas adjacent to waterbodies (also known as riparian buffer areas) can play a vital role in preventing the pollutants from entering the streams and rivers. These areas naturally infiltrate stormwater and filter it through the soils and vegetation. The City actively identifies land parcels that can be conserved during the development of each watershed improvement plan.

#### Public Education

Public education plays a key role in stormwater management. The City has an active stormwater public education and outreach program. Using a variety of tools the City educates the public about ways to help water quality, such as pet waste cleanup and proper paint disposal. The program also educates the public about such as pet waste cleanup and proper paint disposal.

### Common Water Pollutants

**Bacteria** in the water can cause health issues. Bacteria pollution can come from pet, human, and wildlife sources. Sanitary sewer overflows are a common cause of bacteria pollution.

**Nutrients**, specifically nitrogen and phosphorus, can cause algae to grow too quickly. This can lead to low oxygen levels in the water that can kill animals. Too much algae can also block sunlight from plants growing on the bottom. Sources of nutrient pollution include sanitary sewer overflows, fertilizer runoff, urban animal waste, and air pollution.

**Sediment** pollution can cloud the water and cause harm to plants and animals.

**Metals** such as copper and zinc can harm animals. The metals come from industrial processes, vehicle brake pads, tire wear debris, algacides, and other sources.

### Upcoming Watershed Evaluations

The City has already developed watershed improvement plans for Ellerbe Creek, Third Fork Creek, Northeast and Crooked Creeks, Little Lick Creek, and Eno River. The development of watershed plans for New Hope Creek, Sandy Creek, Mud Creek, and Little Creek are planned for the future.

# Protecting Our Watersheds

**Design your work Example**

Tip

# Break up long text

- Use bullets.
- Add headers.
- Use shorter sentences.



**Date:** February 25, 2021  
**Subject:** South Ellerbe Restoration Project Status Update

**Summary**  
 The top two priorities identified in community survey results for the South Ellerbe Restoration Project is to improve water quality in Ellerbe Creek and to create a natural area that improves habitat for wildlife. The constructed wetlands and stream restoration at 808 West Trinity Avenue will accomplish this by filtering rainwater runoff from part of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Local residents, visitors to Durham, and students will also be able to enjoy walking around the restoration site to observe nature. Educational areas, plazas with seating, and a grassy seating area will make the space even more inviting. In the next step of the construction timeline, 50,000 cubic yards of soil will be removed from the project site in 2021. After that, construction will begin on the wetlands and stream restoration in 2022.

**Updated Project Concept Plan**  
 During the October 10, 2019 Council Work Session, a presentation was made to City Council that reflected changes to the project concept plan. The boardwalks, some seating locations, and the beltline overlook amenities were identified as not being integral to the South Ellerbe Restoration project and could not be paid for with stormwater utility funds. The approximate cost of those amenities is \$1.8 million. Public Works staff informed Council at that time that a different funding source would be needed to cover the costs of those additional amenities at the time of construction.

Despite these amenities being currently removed from the baseline project, key amenities currently included with this project are:

- Trinity Street Plaza area with the demonstration bioretention cell and educational area (estimated cost of \$715,000),
- Duke Street Plaza area with educational signage and seating (estimated cost of \$100,000),
- An open grass area for seating behind the Trinity Ave Plaza (estimated cost of \$265,000), and
- A half-mile trail around the facility.

These plaza areas will provide for seating and education use by schools and other groups, and the trail will provide for walking, jogging, and cycling around the facility as well as maintenance access. The South Ellerbe trail travels through the project and will continue to the existing trail north of the site. Connections to the future Beltline trail are being coordinated with our staff. This also allows for some of the top-rated amenities from the community survey to remain in the funded project scope, which are access to nearby trails and educational signage.

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## South Ellerbe Restoration Project Update



Date: February 25, 2021

Subject: South Ellerbe Restoration Project Status Update

**Summary**

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**Updated Project Concept Plan**

During the October 10, 2019 Council Work Session, a presentation was made to City Council that reflected changes to the project concept plan. The boardwalks, some seating locations, and the beltline overlook amenities were identified as not being integral to the South Ellerbe Restoration project and could not be paid for with stormwater utility funds. The approximate cost of those amenities is \$1.8 million. Public Works staff informed Council at that time that a different funding source would be needed to cover the costs of those additional amenities at the time of construction.

Despite these amenities being currently removed from the baseline project, key amenities currently included with this project are:

- Trinity Street Plaza area with the demonstration bioretention cell and educational area (estimated cost of \$715,000),
- Duke Street Plaza area with educational signage and seating (estimated cost of \$100,000),
- An open grass area for seating behind the Trinity Ave Plaza (estimated cost of \$265,000), and
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These plaza areas will provide for seating and education use by schools and other groups, and the trail will provide for walking, jogging, and cycling around the facility as well as maintenance access. The South Ellerbe trail travels through the project and will continue to the existing trail north of the site. Connections to the future Beltline trail are being coordinated with our staff. This also allows for some of the top-rated amenities from the community survey to remain in the funded project scope, which are access to nearby trails and educational signage.

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2. Public Art & Education (11/8/2018)
3. Habitat Enhancement (1/10/2019)

**Videos**

- Project Introduction Video (July 2017) <https://youtu.be/88K7JHMZp4>
- Video Recap of Public Info Session (July 27, 2018) <https://youtu.be/An1noPP9mfA>
- Video Recap of Design Workshop (September 27, 2018) <https://youtu.be/N4bcrZeT5hI>
- Video Recap of Public Info Session (April 2, 2018) <https://youtu.be/0EemA5zisDA>
- Functions and Benefits of Wetlands (February 2021) [https://youtu.be/iK8rgCj\\_Nqg](https://youtu.be/iK8rgCj_Nqg)
- Functions and Benefits of Wetlands (February 2021) Spanish Version <https://youtu.be/YXLCUU2WcQ>

**Spanish-Speaking Outreach**

- Hispanic/Latino Committee update (September 2017)
- Bilingual (Spanish/English) postcards to doors of surrounding residents (September 2017, March 2018) and Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association helped distribute to Spanish-speaking business, such as La Loma and Compare Foods.
- Spanish-speaking staff members attended two Public Information Sessions for translation needs (September 2017, April 2018)
- Two Spanish Surveys:
  - o April 2018 (3<sup>rd</sup> Public Info Session)
  - o Assessing Equitable Outreach for the South Ellerbe Stormwater Restoration Project (April 2019)
- Neighborhood Improvement Services (NIS) Dept. - Stormwater staff attended two events organized by NIS at apartment complexes in PAC 3 in an effort to share Spanish and English outreach materials and build relationships with the community. Staff spoke to 84 people at Duke Manor on April 9, 2019 and 58 people at The Garrett on April 16, 2019.
- In the fall 2019, staff created a new [Spanish factsheet](#) summarizing the project that was posted on the project website and a new bilingual informative postcard.
- Collaborated with General Services Department and NIS on door-knocking efforts targeted areas of low-income, renter, and Spanish-speaking residences near the Urban Avenue project, which is approximately 2 blocks northeast of the South Ellerbe Project. (9/16/2019)
- Project Staff attended two community open houses at which South Ellerbe Project information was distributed in both Spanish and English (9/26/2019, 9/28/2019).
- Attended Community Engagement Division's Bilingual Open House at City Hall on 10/7/2019
- Hosted an information table at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church (October 27, 2019). Spoke to and distributed post cards to approximately 100 people.
- Approximately 80 bilingual postcard Distribution March 2020 to nearby residents.

**Other**

- Fence Art collaboration with Lee Crawford & three local schools (2019) - Staff hosted a Creek Week event dedicating the Clean Water Habitat art created by students from three local schools. The art is currently hanging on construction fence. See Bull City Today video <https://youtu.be/slrS158mLlc>

Additional information can be found on the project's webpage: <https://durhamnc.gov/1616/South-Elerbe-Project>. We will also post updates on our various social media pages: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/durhamncstormwater/>, Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DurhamStormH2O>.

an agreement is now being prepared.

City Council is being presented with another option as a funding source during the current budget process for the amenities not currently funded.

**Project Timeline Delays**

The project has experienced some delays in the timeline originally provided. The primary reason has been the Phase 2 - Soil Removal. Phase 1 of the project was the demolition of the existing building (completed). The soil removal for Phase 2 requires the removal/reuse of about 50,000 cubic yards of soil. We are currently coordinating with other City departments (Water Management and Solid Waste Management) on other City projects to reuse the soil and minimize hauling and disposal costs. Additional time was also needed to work with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) to get approval for the soil reuse strategy while the soil reuse legislative rule was undergoing changes. The Phase 2 Soil Removal phase of this project will be bid this summer and Phase 3 - Construction of the Wetland will follow in 2022.

**Background**

This South Ellerbe Restoration Project will help the City comply with the Falls Lake Rules by reducing nitrogen and phosphorus transported to Falls Lake and improve local water quality in Ellerbe Creek. This unique location will help treat the stormwater runoff from 485 acres of urban downtown development. The project will provide additional ecosystem enhancements such as: increased biodiversity, increased green space and pollinator friendly habitat, carbon sequestration, and improved aquatic life for South Ellerbe Creek and Falls Lake.

Once constructed, the project will achieve the top two priorities identified in community survey results - improve water quality in Ellerbe Creek and create a natural area that improves habitat for wildlife. This project will also include some of the top-rated amenities identified in the community survey results - access to nearby trails and educational signage.

**Community Outreach Activities**

Outreach and input from community members has been an important part of this multi-year process. Below is a list of just some of the community outreach activities for the project to incorporate as many voices as possible into the creation of this important project to improve water quality in our city:

**Public Information Sessions**

1. June 26, 2012 - InterNeighborhood Council of Durham
2. July 12, 2012 - City Hall
3. August 7, 2012 - North Regional Library





Date: February 25, 2021

Subject: South Ellerbe Restoration Project Status Update

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Spanish-Speaking Outreach

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Bilingual (Spanish/English) postcards to doors of surrounding residents (September 2017, March 2018) and Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association helped distribute to Spanish-speaking business, such

The reading level is 11.1 That means it is fairly difficult to read

current project. But, more realistically, we will need to work to add the unfunded amenities at a later date as funding allows under a separate project(s).

There have been several grants pursued for this project including Clean Water Management Trust Fund, Duke Energy Water Resources Fund, N.C. Flood Mitigation Grant, and Upper New Hope Clean Water Initiative. The Upper New Hope Clean Water Initiative Grant was approved for \$265,000 for construction of the wetland and an agreement is now being prepared.

City Council is being presented with another option as a funding source during the current budget process for the amenities not currently funded.

Project Timeline Delays

The project has experienced some delays in the timeline originally provided. The primary reason has been the Phase 2 - Soil Removal. Phase 1 of the project was the demolition of the existing building (completed). The soil removal for Phase 2 requires the removal/reuse of about 50,000 cubic yards of soil. We are currently coordinating with other City departments (Water Management and Solid Waste Management) on other City projects to reuse the soil and minimize hauling and disposal costs. Additional time was also needed to work with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) to get approval for the soil reuse strategy while the soil reuse legislative rule was undergoing changes. The Phase 2 Soil Removal phase of this project will be bid this summer and Phase 3 - Construction of the Wetland will follow in 2022.

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July 12, 2012 - City Hall
August 7, 2012 - North Regional Library
July 27, 2017 - City Hall
September 27, 2017 (Design Workshop) - Durham Arts Council
April 2, 2018 - Durham Co. Health Services Building

Focus Group Meetings

- Public Art & Education (10/18/2018)

## Original

4

### Summary

The top two priorities identified in community survey results for the South Ellerbe Restoration Project is to improve water quality in Ellerbe Creek and to create a natural area that improves habitat for wildlife. The constructed wetlands and stream restoration at 808 West Trinity Avenue will accomplish this by filtering rainwater runoff from part of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Local residents, visitors to Durham, and students will also be able to enjoy walking around the restoration site to observe nature. Educational areas, plazas with seating, and a grassy seating area will make the space even more inviting. In the next step of the construction timeline, 50,000 cubic yards of soil will be removed from the project site in 2021. After that, construction will begin on the wetlands and stream restoration in 2022.

13.6

Break up long text

# South Ellerbe Restoration Project Update

## Original

4

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# South Ellerbe Restoration Project Update

## Original

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13.6

## In Plain Language

### Summary

The South Ellerbe Restoration Project is designed to improve water quality and wildlife habitats in Ellerbe Creek. By creating a constructed wetland, there will be new public spaces for residents to exercise and enjoy nature.

### Plan Objectives

The primary objectives highlighted by the community survey include:

- Improve the water quality in Ellerbe Creek
- Create a natural area that benefits wildlife

### Fun Facts

- Location: 808 West Trinity Avenue
- 50,000 cubic yards of soil was removed from the project site in 2021.
- Construction on the wetlands and stream restoration began in 2022.

9.5

Break up long text

## Original

4

### Summary

The top two priorities identified in community survey results for the South Ellerbe Restoration Project is to improve water quality in Ellerbe Creek and to create a natural area that improves habitat for wildlife. The constructed wetlands and stream restoration at 808 West Trinity Avenue will accomplish this by filtering rainwater runoff from part of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Local residents, visitors to Durham, and students will also be able to enjoy walking around the restoration site to observe nature. Educational areas, plazas with seating, and a grassy seating area will make the space even more inviting. In the next step of the construction timeline, 50,000 cubic yards of soil will be removed from the project site in 2021. After that, construction will begin on the wetlands and stream restoration in 2022.

13.6

## In Plain Language

### Summary

The South Ellerbe Restoration Project is designed to improve water quality in Ellerbe Creek by creating a constructed wetland. The project will also create a new area for exercise and enjoy nature.

### Plan Objectives

The primary objectives highlighted by the community survey for the South Ellerbe Restoration Project include:

- Improve the water quality in Ellerbe Creek
- Create a natural area that benefits wildlife

### Fun Facts

- Location: 808 West Trinity Avenue
- 50,000 cubic yards of soil was removed from the project site in 2021.
- Construction on the wetlands and stream restoration began in 2022.

**Scannability** - use bullets, shorter sentences, add headers

9.5

Break up long text



## Project Timeline Delays

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## In Plain Language

The project is taking longer than expected. Here's why:

- **Removing dirt (Phase 2):** This is the main reason for the delay. We need to remove or reuse about 50,000 cubic yards of dirt (a lot of dirt!).
- **Finding a new home for the dirt:** We're working with other city departments to reuse the dirt on other projects instead of having to haul it away. This saves money and is better for the environment.
- **Getting permission (NCDEQ):** The rules for reusing dirt recently changed, so we had to work with the state to get approval for our plan.

The good news:

- We'll be putting out a bid for companies to remove the dirt this summer (Phase 2).
- Construction of the wetland itself (Phase 3) will follow in 2022.

## Original

4

### Project Timeline Delays

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12

## In Plain Language

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**Improved scannability -**  
Used bullets, shorter sentences, added headers

8

The good news:

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**Tip**

# Watch your words

**Remove jargon.**  
**Reduce wordiness.**  
**Use words <3 syllables.**  
**Avoid acronyms.**

**Approximate**

**At a later date**

**Capital improvement program (CIP)**

**Comply with**

**Establish a requirement**

**Give recognition to**

**In an effort to**

**Make a payment**

**Minority**

**Utilized**

# Watch your words

**Remove jargon.**  
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**The CIP includes a number of projects to improve the City's transportation infrastructure.**

# Watch your words

**Remove jargon.**  
**Reduce wordiness.**  
**Use words <3 syllables.**  
**Avoid acronyms.**

The **CIP** includes a number of projects to improve the City's transportation infrastructure.

The **Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** includes a number of projects to improve the City's transportation system.

# Watch your words

- Remove jargon.
- Reduce wordiness.
- Use words <3 syllables.
- Avoid acronyms.

The City Council approved a \$10 million appropriation for the construction of a new fire station.

# Watch your words

**Remove jargon.**  
**Reduce wordiness.**  
**Use words <3 syllables.**  
**Avoid acronyms.**

The City Council approved a \$10 million **appropriation** for the **construction** of a new fire station.

The City Council **approved** \$10 million **to build** a new fire station.

What does appropriation mean? Is it a necessary word?

**Write on worksheet and share with the group.**

**What **jargon** comes to mind?**

**What **acronyms** comes to mind?**



## Original



### Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Development Guidelines

#### INTRODUCTION

The development of budget guidelines is a best practice and supports **The Citywide Strategic Plan Goal, Innovative and High-Performing Organization**. One of the objectives of this goal is to promote **organizational sustainability**:

- Strategic Sustainability -- realistic vision and goals
- Program and Service Sustainability -- high-quality services and programs
- Personnel Sustainability – effective and reliable personnel
- Financial Sustainability – recurring revenues equal to recurring expenditures, adequate financial reserve and contingency planning.

The General Fund is the primary fund for the city and supports 24 of the 27 city departments including 1,700 of the City's 2,404 full-time employees.

The City Manager shall use the following **Budget Development Guidelines to prepare the FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget**.

**Watch your words**

# Budget Development Guidelines

# Budget Development Guidelines

## Original

## In Plain Language



### Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Development Guidelines

#### INTRODUCTION

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### Building a City Budget for 2024-2025

#### Introduction

This document outlines the steps we'll follow to create the city's budget for the next fiscal year, which runs from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. The City Manager uses these guidelines to create a proposed budget. We share proposed budgets with the public for feedback before it's finalized.

#### Building a Sustainable City: Key Areas of Focus

Budget guidelines help us achieve our city's long-term goals outlined in the Citywide Strategic Plan. **One key objective is sustainability.** This means making sure our city can function well in all areas:

- **Strategy:** Having clear and achievable goals for the future.
- **Programs & Services:** Providing high-quality services to residents.
- **Staff:** Employing skilled and reliable people to run the city.
- **Finances:** Having enough money to cover our ongoing expenses, with some savings set aside for emergencies.

#### The City's Main Budget

Most of the city's money comes from the General Fund. This fund supports most city departments (24 out of 27) and pays for the salaries of a large portion of our full-time employees (1,700 out of 2,404).

13

Replaced jargon  
Used every day words  
Spelled out acronym

8.4



# Watch your words

Remove jargon.  
 Reduce wordiness.  
 Use words <3 syllables.  
 Avoid acronyms.

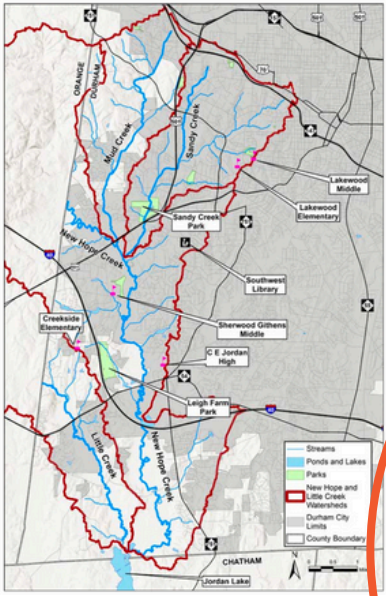
**PROTECTING OUR WATERSHEDS**  
 Factsheet #1 About the New Hope Creek and Little Creek Watershed Improvement Plan  
 Public Works Department - Stormwater & GIS Services Division | August 2020

**ABOUT THE NEW HOPE CREEK AND LITTLE CREEK WATERSHEDS**  
 Everyone lives in a watershed. A watershed is the land that drains to a body of water, like a stream or lake. When it rains, water that does not soak into the ground flows over the land and is called stormwater. This stormwater picks up pollutants, such as litter, fertilizer, oil, and animal waste, and flows into our streams and lakes. We can study watersheds to understand how our actions change the quality of local waterways.

New Hope Creek and Little Creek are two watersheds located in Durham and Orange Counties. These watersheds drain to Jordan Lake, a water supply source for several local communities. The City of Durham is studying the two watersheds to help protect Jordan Lake; help the City comply with water quality regulations; and find projects that improve water quality and restore watershed health.

One way to improve water quality is to send stormwater runoff to a Stormwater Control Measure (SCM) that removes pollutants. Sometimes engineers can improve SCMs by making them bigger or changing how they hold and filter water. Field crews studied SCMs in the New Hope Creek and Little Creek watersheds to find improvement options. Crews also looked for places to build new SCMs. Scientists and engineers evaluated 71 existing SCMs and 59 possible places to build new SCMs.

Field crews also walked close to 45 miles of streams to observe current conditions. During the stream walks, scientists and engineers recorded data on stream banks, plants along the water's edge, animals living in the streams, and water quality. Field crews also identified potential stream restoration projects in areas with poor water quality or high amounts of erosion.




2019 → 2021

Evaluate watershed health → Identify areas with water quality concerns → Assess SCM and stream condition → Recommend water quality improvement projects → Inform the public → Develop the watershed improvement plan

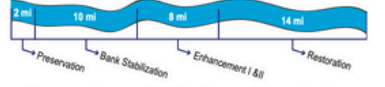
**WHAT DID WE FIND VISITING STORMWATER CONTROL MEASURES?**  
 Field teams visited 71 existing SCMs and 59 possible new locations for SCMs. Out of 71 SCMs visited, they found 29 to further evaluate for improvement. Out of 59 possible new SCMs, project staff found 36 sites to study further.

**PRELIMINARY STREAM CONTROL MEASUREMENTS**  
 Field crews evaluated stream health across 115 stream sections. The results are summarized in the following pie chart:



**WHAT DID WE FIND ON STREAM WALKS?**  
 Field teams divided the 45 miles of streams assessed in the New Hope and Little Creek watersheds into 115 stream sections to evaluate stream health and assign stream quality ratings. These ratings of excellent, good, fair, and poor are based on scores assigned to each stream based on its general health conditions. This scoring was based on visual assessments of stream bed and banks, general water quality, type of vegetation within 100 feet of the streams, and presence of fish or other aquatic species. Streams in our region of North Carolina (called the Triassic Basin) tend to have fewer types of aquatic insects because of the area's unique geology. This characteristic can result in lower stream quality ratings for Durham streams. Field teams also documented the presence of dead woody material along streams. This material reduces stream temperature through shading, stabilizes stream flows, and creates a diverse aquatic habitat.




**PRELIMINARY STREAM PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS**



- Preservation:** establish land protection mechanisms to protect high-quality streams and a buffer of land surrounding them
- Bank Stabilization:** repairs made to specific sections of the stream bank to address eroding and unstable conditions
- Enhancement I & II:** repairs to improve stream channel/bank stability and stream conditions that do not require major realignment
- Restoration:** major realignment of stream channel and banks in order to restore natural stream conditions, stable channel/bank, and water quality

**WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**  
 Now that the field work is complete and water quality improvement projects have been identified, the project team is developing computer models to evaluate the water quality improvement opportunities. These models will be applied to evaluate multiple "what-if" scenarios to determine the most effective water quality improvement projects for reducing pollutants in these watersheds.

Additional information about the New Hope Creek and Little Creek Watershed  
<http://durhamnc.gov/3766>

Follow us on:   

For additional information:  
 Lance Fontaine, City Project Manager  
[Lance.Fontaine@durhamnc.gov](mailto:Lance.Fontaine@durhamnc.gov) | (919) 560-4326 ext.30257

## Protecting Our Watersheds

## Original

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**Watch your words**

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## Protecting Our Watersheds

## In Plain Language

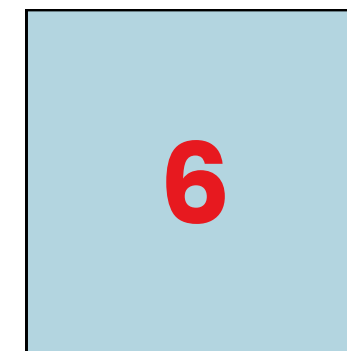
### WHAT DID WE FIND ON STREAM WALKS?

Scientists checked the health of 45 miles of streams in our area. They divided the streams into smaller sections (115 in total) and gave each section a rating: excellent, good, fair, or poor. These ratings are based on how healthy the stream looks overall. Here's what they looked for:

- **The streambed and banks:** Are they healthy and stable?
- **The water quality:** Is it clean and clear?
- **The plants around the stream:** Are there healthy plants growing nearby?
- **The animals in the stream:** Are there fish and other creatures living there?

### Fun Facts

Streams in our area naturally have fewer bug species because of the special rock formations in the ground. Fallen trees and branches along the streams are actually good for the streams! They help keep the water cool, prevent erosion, and provide homes for aquatic life.



**Watch your words**

# Protecting Our Watersheds



**Tip**

# **Use active voice**

**Example of passive voice**

**Permits will be issued to qualified applicants.**

# Use active voice

Passive voice does not specify who is performing the action. For example, the first sentence does not say who will be issuing the permits, or why.

## Example of passive voice

Permits will be issued to qualified applicants.

# Use active voice

Active voice is more direct and concise, and it makes it clear who is performing the action and why.

## Example of active voice

Permits will be issued to qualified applicants.

**The City Clerk will issue permits to qualified applicants.**

# Use active voice

## Example

**The road will be repaired by the city's public works department.**

# Use active voice

## Example

The road will be repaired by the city's public works department.

**The City's Public Works Department will repair the road on Tuesday.**

# Use active voice

## Example

**The new park was opened to the public last week.**

# Use active voice

## Example

The new park was opened to the public last week.

**The City Council opened the new park to the public last week.**

# **Active or Passive?**

**The City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed new zoning regulations next week.**



# **Active** or **Passive?**

**The City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed new zoning regulations next week.**

**Active**

# **Active or Passive?**

**The new library was built by the  
City's Public Works Department.**

# **Active or Passive?**

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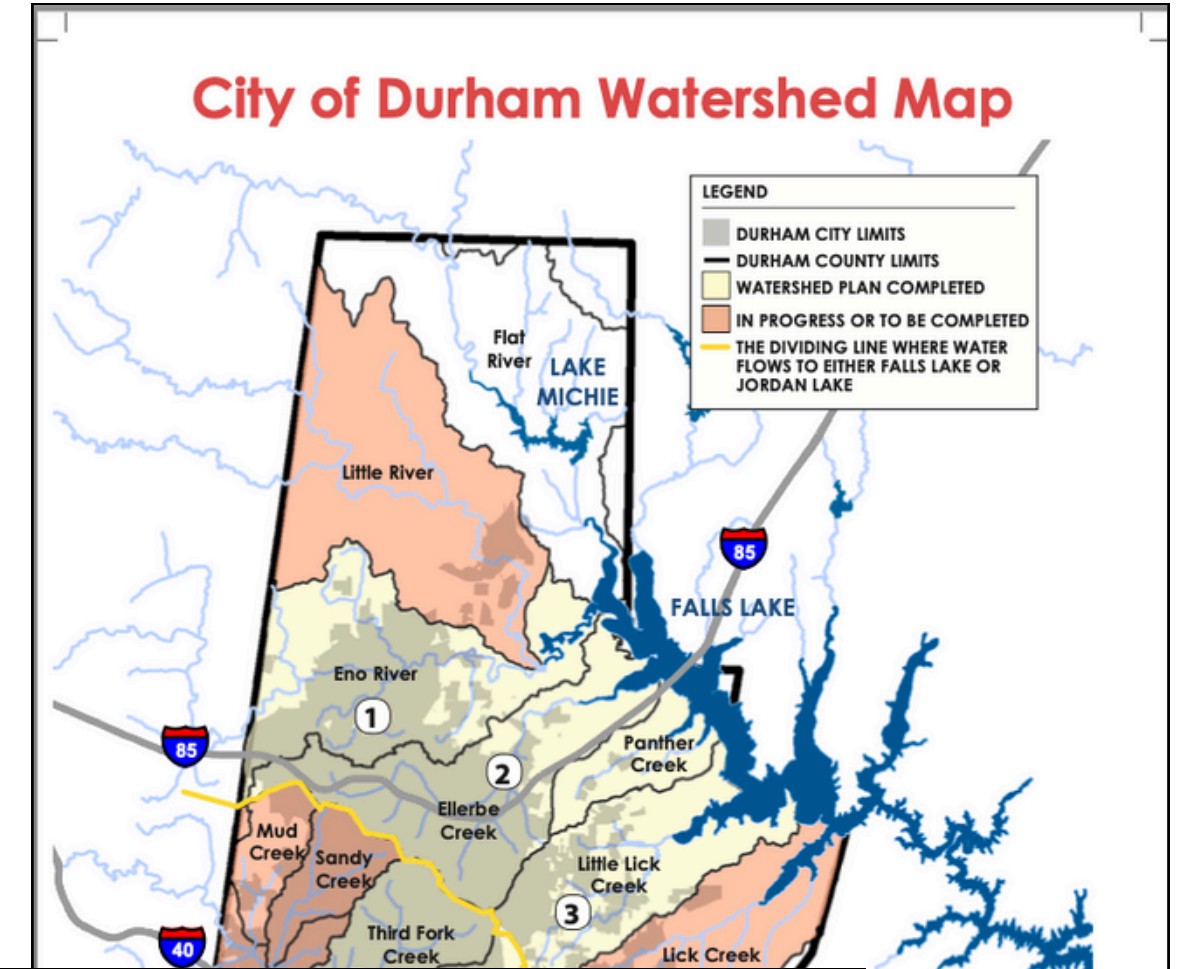
**Passive**

Keep the subject and verb close.



# Original Stream & Buffer Restoration

This strategy refers to repairing the local streams that have already been impacted by increased stormwater flows. Restoration addresses erosion, poor water quality, and damage to natural wildlife habitats. This can be done by restoring the stream shape, stabilizing eroded banks, and providing engineered structures in the stream to improve wildlife habitat.



### What is a watershed?

A watershed is the area of land that drains to a body of water, like a stream or lake. When it rains or snows, water that does not soak into the ground flows over the land and is called stormwater. This stormwater picks up pollutants, such as litter, fertilizer, oil, and animal waste, and flows into our streams, lakes, and drinking water supplies.

### Why Watershed Improvement Plans?

We can better understand how our actions affect local streams, lakes, and water supplies by studying the watershed. The City develops Watershed Improvement Plans (WIP) to assess watershed health and identify water quality improvement projects in the local watersheds. This is part of the City of Durham's continued efforts to improve the health of our streams, protect our regional water supply, and comply with water quality regulations.

### Watershed Management Strategies

As Durham continues to grow, additional pollution will enter the streams, rivers, and lakes if stormwater is not managed properly. There are several strategies that can be used to manage the pollution in our local waterways such as:

**Stormwater Control Measure Retrofits**  
Engineered devices used to control the quality and amount of stormwater that flows off the land surfaces into our waterbodies are called Stormwater Control Measures (or SCMs). SCM retrofits are used in existing older developments that were built without any SCMs.

### Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is a type of stormwater management that tries to protect, restore, or mimic the natural water cycle. Green infrastructure uses plants, soil, and natural ecological processes to manage stormwater where it falls, reducing the amount of stormwater that reaches waterbodies.

### Stream & Buffer Restoration

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### Land Conservation

Vegetated areas adjacent to waterbodies (also known as riparian buffer areas) can play a vital role in preventing the pollutants from entering the streams and rivers. These areas naturally infiltrate stormwater and filter it through the soils and vegetation. The City actively identifies land parcels that can be conserved during the development of each watershed improvement plan.

### Public Education

Public education plays a key role in stormwater management. The City has an active stormwater public education and outreach program. Using a variety of tools the City educates the public about ways to help water quality, such as pet waste cleanup and proper paint disposal. The program also educates the public about such as pet waste cleanup and proper paint disposal.

### Common Water Pollutants

**Bacteria** in the water can cause health issues. Bacteria pollution can come from pet, human, and wildlife sources. Sanitary sewer overflows are a common cause of bacteria pollution.

**Nutrients**, specifically nitrogen and phosphorus, can cause algae to grow too quickly. This can lead to low oxygen levels in the water that can kill animals. Too much algae can also block sunlight from plants growing on the bottom. Sources of nutrient pollution include sanitary sewer overflows, fertilizer runoff, urban animal waste, and air pollution.

**Sediment** pollution can cloud the water and cause harm to plants and animals.

**Metals** such as copper and zinc can harm animals. The metals come from industrial processes, vehicle brake pads, tire wear debris, algacides, and other sources.

### Upcoming Watershed Evaluations

The City has already developed watershed improvement plans for Ellerbe Creek, Third Fork Creek, Northeast and Crooked Creeks, Little Lick Creek, and Eno River. The development of watershed plans for New Hope Creek, Sandy Creek, Mud Creek, and Little Creek are planned for the future.

Creek Watershed 3		
am:	5.7 mi	7.2 sq miles
stream projects:	0.3 mi Preservation	in City: 12% Developed
Projects:	11 NEW	

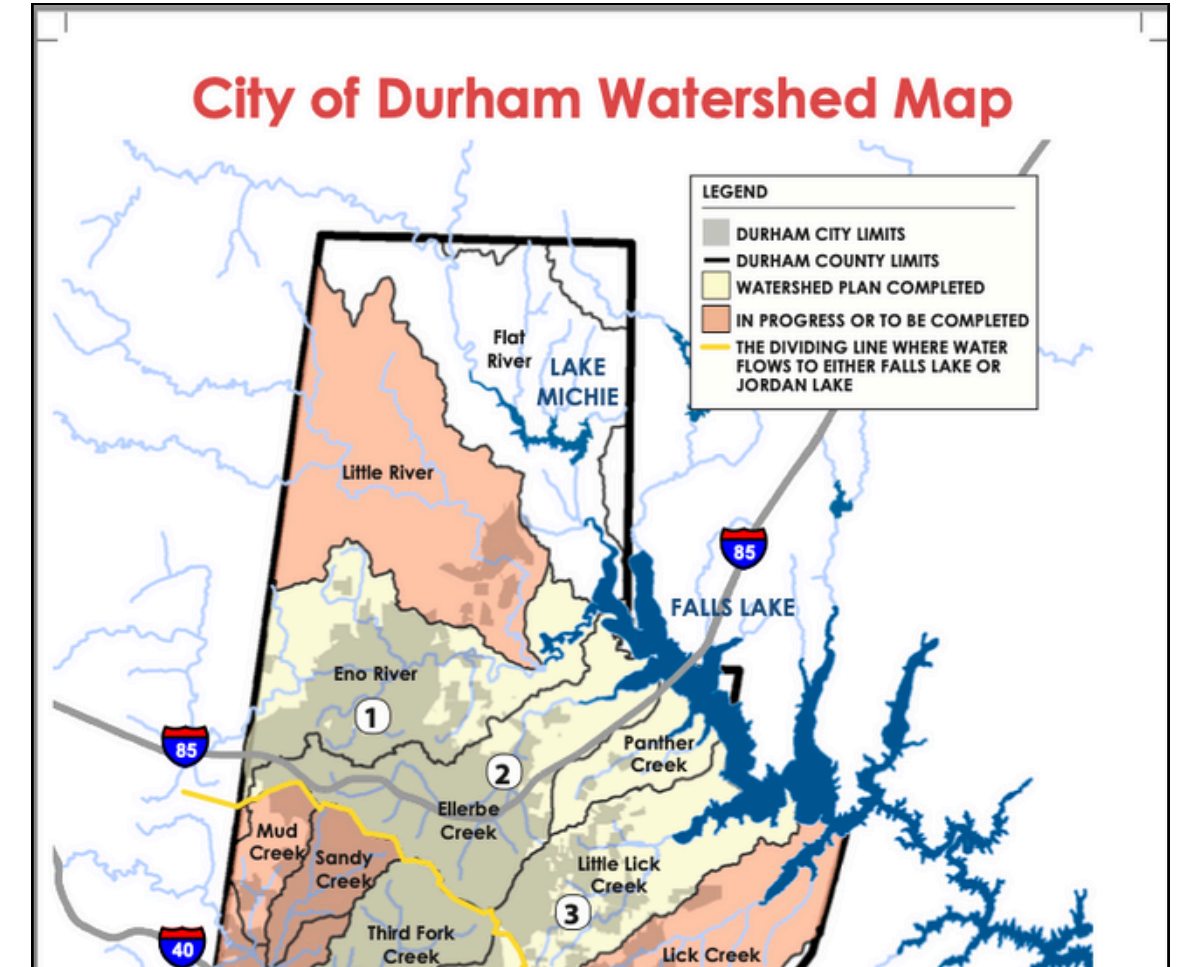
Crooked Creek 5		
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Projects:	75 NEW	

CM - stormwater control measures

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13.2



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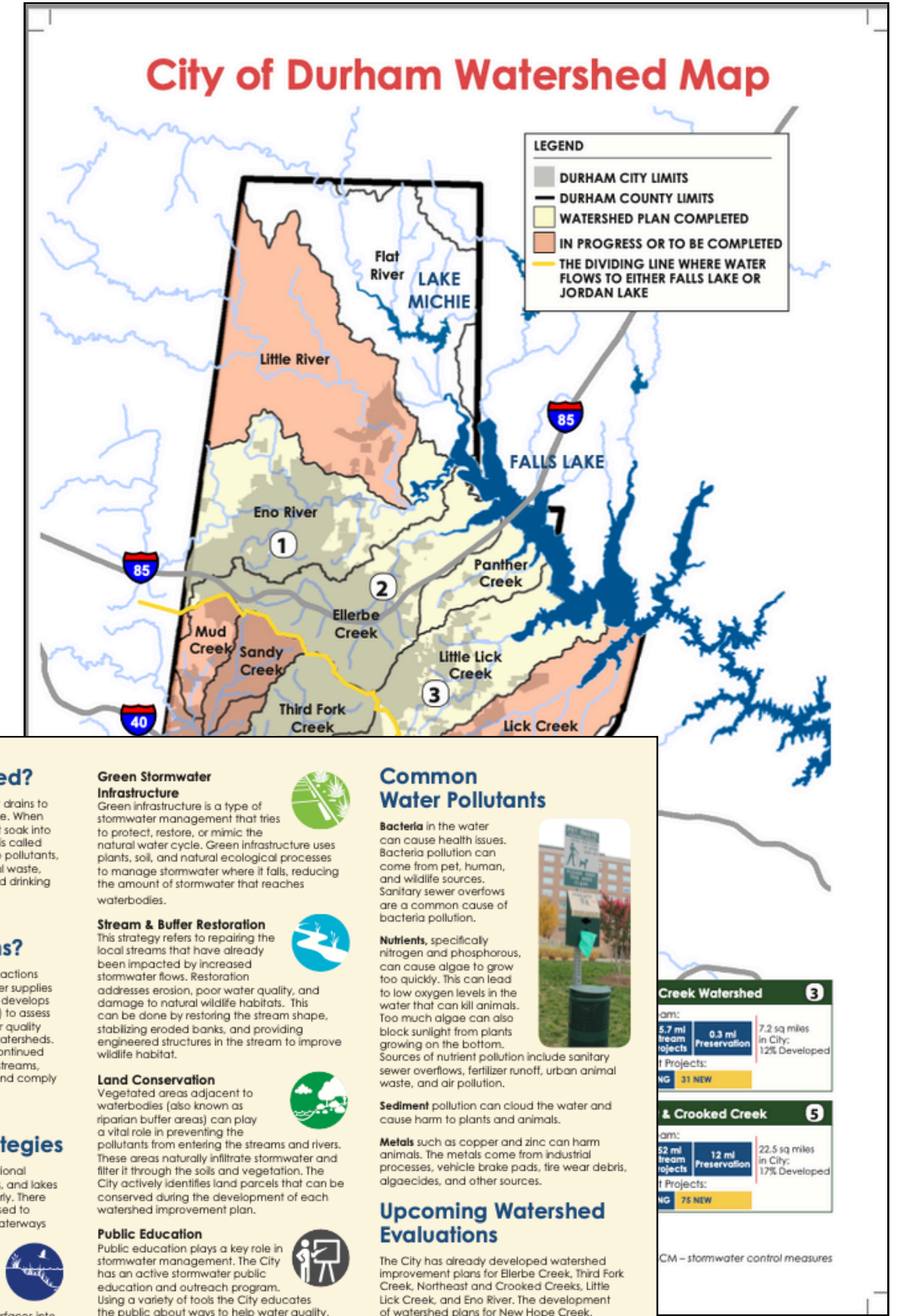
# In Plain Language Stream & Buffer Restoration

This strategy focuses on **fixing** local streams that **have been damaged** by increased stormwater flows. Restoration efforts aim to address erosion, poor water quality, and damage to natural wildlife habitats. **We achieve this by:**

- Reshaping the stream channel
- Stabilizing eroded banks
- Installing engineered structures in the stream to improve wildlife habitat

10.6

# Active or Passive



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5

# Group Exercise





5

# Group Exercise

Break up into groups of 3-4.

Choose sample content for the group to work on.  
What plain language tips did you use?

**Share** with the broader group.



# Plain Language

Your content matters. That's why we've put together these tips to help you communicate clearly and simply.

**16%** of people actually read word-by-word **79%** of users scan text that they read

- 1 Know your audience.**  
What do they already know?  
What do they need to know?
- 2 Organize your thoughts.**  
Guide your reader.  
Leave out unnecessary info.
- 3 Use everyday words.**  
Use familiar language.  
Avoid jargon and limit acronyms.
- 4 Be concise.**  
One idea per sentence.  
Eliminate unnecessary words.
- 5 Aim for active voice.**  
Keep the subject and verb close.  
Use the passive voice rarely.
- 6 Make it personal.**  
Directly address the reader.  
Write in conversational tone.
- 7 Use inclusive language.**  
Use accessible language.  
Avoid labelling people.
- 8 Design your work.**  
Make content scannable.  
Use visuals to simplify info.
- 9 Measure readability.**  
Measure the reading level.  
Target lower reading levels.

## EXAMPLES



This team requires that these applications follow the Town's standard submittal requirements.

**All applications must meet town submission standards.**



You can access the following application to make additions or alterations to commercial properties on OpenGov.

**Use OpenGov to apply for commercial property additions or alterations.**



Concept plan review by the Planning Commission is needed for the following applications.

**The Planning Commission must review concept plans for the following applications.**



Go with  
Do  
Gain  
You  
Some  
Very  
Start  
So  
Speed up  
Change  
Before  
Use



Accompany  
Accomplish  
Accrue  
Addressee  
A number of  
Immensely  
Commence  
Consequently  
Expedite  
Modify  
Prior to  
Utilize

# Thank you!

