



City of Durham Durham County

Joint News Release

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Share! #Durham recognized with a national 4-STAR rating for excellence in sustainability

Durham Recognized for National Excellence in Sustainability

STAR Communities Certifies Durham as a 4-STAR Community

DURHAM, N.C. – Durham has been recognized as a [4-STAR Community](#) for national excellence in sustainability through the [STAR Community Rating System™](#), the nation’s leading framework and certification program for evaluating local sustainability using standardized performance measures.

Through the STAR certification process, Durham was evaluated across eight goal areas related to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Durham is also the first community in the nation to receive recognition under the STAR Community Rating System version 2.0, which features new and updated metrics from the previous version.

“Durham has long understood that environmental stewardship, community building, and economic prosperity build off each other to make Durham a great place to live, work, and play,” said City Manager Tom Bonfield.

There are [over 60 communities](#) throughout the U.S. that have been certified by STAR Communities since 2013. Raleigh (4-STAR) and Winston-Salem (3-STAR) are the other two North Carolina communities that have been STAR certified.

“This 4-STAR certification is a validation of the hard work and collaborations that make Durham such a thriving and interesting place,” said County Manager Wendell Davis.

City and County staff, local universities and institutions, Durham Public Schools, and numerous community groups worked for almost a year to gather the information required for certification. STAR helps communities evaluate their strengths and weaknesses across eight areas. Some highlights that helped [Durham achieve its 4-STAR rating](#) include:

- **Built Environment:** The City and County manage its built environment in a sustainable way by maintaining the quality of drinking water, encouraging water conservation, addressing stormwater, and planning for droughts. Durham is also a leader in local actions related to urban infill, redevelopment, and public parkland.

- **Climate and Energy:** Durham is making progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in government operations and the community. Greenhouse gas emissions from City and County buildings have decreased 24 percent since 2009. Residential energy use per person decreased by 14 percent since 2008, and residential water use per person decreased by 12 percent since 2010.
- **Economy and Jobs:** Durham supports a strong economy and job growth, particularly business retention and development through focused support, resources, and services available to young entrepreneurial companies through business incubators as well as a high level of collaboration in the community and region to attract and retain businesses. Durham is also working to match educational and training needs with the local market with the creation of the new hospitality certificate program at Durham Technical Community College.
- **Education, Arts, and Community:** Durham's high quality of life is due in part to educational opportunities, a vibrant arts scene, and a strong sense of community. Students in Durham Public Schools demonstrated improvement in graduation rates, reading proficiency, and graduation rate equity in the last three years.
- **Innovation and Process:** Durham's culture of innovation brings direct benefits to residents through programs like the Bull City Bucks program that matches SNAP benefits used for fresh fruit and vegetables at grocery stores and the Water Into Trees program, which allows water customers to round up to fund urban forestry. Durham's Open Data initiative has increased accessibility and transparency of public data.

"The STAR rating process gives cities a roadmap for how they can refine and improve their operations to drive continuous improvement," said Hilari Varnadore, executive director of STAR Communities. "Durham should be applauded for its commitment to sustainability, and for the clarity and transparency provided while achieving its goals."

According to Steven Hicks, director of the City's General Services Department, "Now that Durham has achieved a 4-STAR rating, the results will be instrumental in complementing the City's first sustainability roadmap and revised performance measures for the Sustainable Natural and Built Environment Goal in the City's Strategic Plan."

To view Durham's full report visit the [STAR Communities website](#), or contact Sustainability Manager Tobin L. Freid with the Durham City-County Sustainability Office at (919) 560-7999 or by [email](#) for more information.

About the Durham City-County Sustainability Office

The mission of the [Durham City/County Sustainability Office](#) is to help protect and improve Durham's environment through wise use of natural resources by providing guidance and resources to City and County employees, businesses, and residents. For more information, follow on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the City of Durham General Services Department

The [General Services Department](#) builds and maintains City properties to make Durham a great place for people to live, work, and play. Guided by the [City's Strategic Plan](#), the department's core functions include the acquisition and sale of properties, design and management of new construction and renovation projects, building maintenance, landscaping and urban forestry services, cemeteries management, sustainability and energy management, and supporting the nonprofit [Keep Durham Beautiful](#).

About STAR Communities

[STAR Communities](#) advances a national framework for sustainable communities through the delivery of standards and tools built by and for local governments and the communities they serve. The organization administers the STAR Community Rating System, the nation's first framework and certification program for local sustainability. For more information, follow on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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