

News Release

For Immediate Release: October 26, 2018

City of Durham Acquires Belt Line Rail Corridor

DURHAM, N.C. – The City of Durham is now the property owner of the Durham Belt Line rail corridor thanks to the recently completed \$7.8 million acquisition from The Conservation Fund.

The City's purchase of the Durham Belt Line, a 1.7-mile former railroad corridor that extends from downtown Durham near Chapel Hill Street to Avondale Drive near Trinity Avenue, will now allow the project to proceed with the development of a bicycle and pedestrian trail consistent with the [Durham Belt Line Master Plan](#) adopted by the Durham City Council in August 2018.

The rail corridor was purchased for \$7.8 million on September 24, 2018 from [The Conservation Fund](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to creating solutions that make both environmental and economic sense across the United States. The City had previously attempted to acquire the rail corridor, but was unable to negotiate favorable terms with the previous owner, Norfolk Southern Railway. In 2014, The Conservation Fund began work to acquire the property from the railroad, and in February 2017 purchased the 18.8-acre property.

The City's General Services Department acquired the property using a combination of federal funds and local match funds. The federal funds for the project were provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation through the competitive Transportation Improvement Program managed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). "NCDOT is thrilled to support the improvement of Durham's non-motorized transportation network. The purchase of the right-of-way for the Durham Belt Line is a down payment on the City's future investments in safe places to bike and walk, continuing efforts of city leaders to revitalize Durham's urban core and surrounding neighborhoods," said Deputy Secretary for Multi-Modal Julie White with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Mayor Steve Schewel lauded the partnership between the City, NCDOT, and The Conservation Fund that allowed the acquisition to move forward. "The Durham Belt Line will be a critical piece of our trail network that connects many diverse neighborhoods. We are committed to viewing the development of the trail through a racial equity lens to make sure this wonderful community asset is available to all of our residents," Mayor Schewel said. "Our City staff and our community's trail advocates have worked for more than 20 years to make this project a reality, and this is an exciting day for Durham as we are now a major step closer to making this project happen."

Once completed, the Durham Belt Line will connect Downtown Durham, the Innovation District, the Central Park and DIY Districts, the Trinity Park, Pearl Mill Village, North Durham and Duke Park neighborhoods, and the Avondale Drive-Trinity Avenue business district. The conversion of the unused Belt Line corridor into a trail has been envisioned for over 20 years as recommended by both the adopted Downtown Durham Master Plan and the Durham Trails and Greenway Master Plan.

"We are honored to secure this historic rail corridor for the City that will be transformed into a dynamic bicycle and pedestrian greenspace in downtown Durham," said Urban Program Director David Proper with The Conservation Fund. "We're grateful to the U.S. Department of Transportation for the federal funding that made this project possible and to Senator Richard Burr, Senator Thom Tillis, Rep. David Price and Rep. G.K. Butterfield for their ongoing leadership in Congress."

"I'm glad to see the City of Durham is moving forward with the Durham Belt Line Master Plan, which will add to

the city's greenspace network and increase mobility and recreation for residents. Today's announcement demonstrates the impact federal funding can make when local and state officials are able to compete for creative and innovative infrastructure projects that serve as investments for growing communities," said Senator Richard Burr.

"The purchase of the Durham Belt Line is an important step to help transform the City of Durham and serve as a catalyst for the trails and greenways system," said Senator Thom Tillis. "The development of this land will improve safety, increase greenspace, and better connect the communities and residents of Durham."

"The City of Durham's historic population growth is increasing the need for greenspace and recreation areas. As the City becomes more developed, investments such as the Durham Belt Line will enable the City to create areas that can be enjoyed by residents and tourists and ensure the City's downtown remains vibrant for years to come. I applaud the City of Durham, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Department of Transportation for their work lifting this project up, and I thank The Conservation Fund for its work to make it a reality," said Representative G. K. Butterfield.

"The purchase of the Durham Belt Line is a major step forward for connectivity and economic development after years of planning by the City of Durham, The Conservation Fund, and many others," said Representative David Price. "As a lifetime proponent of federal funding for greenways and multimodal transportation, I'm proud to have secured funding for the development of this important project," said Representative David Price.

For more information about the master plan, visit the City's project website at <https://durhambeltline.com> or contact Transportation Planner Dale McKeel with the City's Transportation Department at (919) 560-4366, ext. 36421 or Dale.McKeel@DurhamNC.gov.

About the City of Durham Transportation Department

The [Transportation Department](#) is responsible for a broad range of transportation services, which include traffic signs and signals, transportation planning, [parking operations](#), street lighting, taxicab administration, and bicycle and pedestrian planning. The department also oversees [GoDurham](#) and [GoDurham ACCESS](#) as well as leads planning functions for the [Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (DCHC MPO), which is the regional organization that is responsible for planning and programming state and federal transportation projects in the urbanized areas of Durham, Orange, and Chatham counties. Guided by the City's [Strategic Plan](#), the department helps to strengthen the foundation, enhance the value, and improve the quality and sustainability of neighborhoods that are necessary for a strong and diverse community. For more information, follow the department on [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, cultural and public art program management, and supporting the nonprofit [Keep Durham Beautiful](#).

About The Conservation Fund

At [The Conservation Fund](#), we make conservation work for America. By creating solutions that make environmental and economic sense, we are redefining conservation to demonstrate its essential role in our future prosperity. Top-ranked for efficiency and effectiveness, we have worked in all 50 states since 1985 to protect more than 8 million acres of land, including more than 230,000 acres in North Carolina.

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