




Homes, Trees, & Creeks - Oh My!

Welcome to the Durham County Sustainability Team's monthly blog! Each month, we spotlight a different sustainability-style topic in a fun format with simple tips, local resources, and creative ideas about how to live more thoughtfully in our communities with the wonderful planet in mind. Learn more about our work at Durham County Sustainability at [GreenerDurham.net](https://www.greenerdurham.net) 

Welcome to the Durham County Sustainability Blog! This month, we're sharing a whole zoo of new opportunities - one to **save you money and energy** at home, another to celebrate a **student-powered tree planting** (and how you can get your hands in the dirt), and lastly, an invitation to get your boots muddy for **Creek Week!** Let's dig in.

Homes!

These recent snow days remind us how nice it is to feel extra cozy at home. And we know what's coming... extreme heat over the summer when we need to stay cool for both our comfort and safety. But drafty rooms and outdated HVAC systems don't just make the home uncomfortable - it wastes energy, leading to more expensive energy bills. Your home is working harder, your bills are getting higher, and there's not much to show for it!

That's where [Energy Saver NC](#) comes in 

Offered through the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's State Energy Office, Energy Saver NC includes two statewide **REBATE PROGRAMS** designed to help you **improve energy efficiency**, **lower those energy bills**, and **increase comfort in your home**. These are fantastic opportunities for us in NC! Check them out



1. [HOMES \(Home Owners Managing Energy Savings\)](#)

Supports **whole-home energy efficiency** improvements such as:

- Insulation
- Air sealing

- HVAC upgrades

Rebates may cover:

- 100% of project costs (**up to \$16,000**) for households with income under 80% Area Median Income (AMI), dependent upon modeled energy savings
- 50% of project costs for households with income between 80-150% AMI, dependent upon modeled energy savings



2. HEAR (Home Electrification & Appliance Rebates)

Provides rebates for **home appliance and system electrification** purchases when upgrading from non-electric, including:

- Heat pump water heaters
- Electric stoves
- Insulation, air sealing, & ventilation
- Electrical wiring

Rebates may cover:

- 100% of project costs (**up to \$14,000**) for households with income under 80% AMI
- 50% of project costs for households with income between 80-150% AMI

Who can participate in HOMES or HEAR?

Single-family homeowners, renters (with homeowner approval), and multifamily building owners may all be eligible. Rebates are dependent upon income levels and modeled energy savings. Easily confirm your eligibility [HERE](#).

Trees!

In late February, students at **Northern High School** helped plant 32 trees on campus in collaboration with Mr. Gary Lyon (teacher & gardening guru at Northern), Durham County Sustainability, Durham County Stormwater, and [Trees for the Triangle](#). Check out their wonderful work below:



And there's more! We've also planted 22 trees at **Southern High School** back in December, with plans to plant 23 more with students this month.

🧻 Get your hands dirty!

VOLUNTEER Opportunity: Help plant the remaining trees at Southern High School on Saturday March 21st from 1:00-4:00pm. Bring your friends! Sign up [HERE](#).

Why we love trees at schools:

- 🌳 Shade helps kids stay cooler during these hot NC summers
- 💧 Roots help absorb stormwater and reduce flooding
- 🌍 Trees improve air quality and help us breathe cleaner air
- 📖 Students watch a living, growing outdoor classroom
- 😊 Greenery is proven to make us happier and healthier

Want to get more involved? Sign up for Trees for the Triangle's volunteer newsletter [HERE](#) to stay looped in!

💧 Creeks!

Coming up is **Creek Week!!!** 🎉 Hosted by Keep Durham Beautiful and partners including Durham County, Creek Week is a community-wide celebration of our local waterways with TONS of interactive and engaging ways to participate. For the 18th year, Durham is coming together to discover and explore our local streams and lakes by diving into educational programs, recreational activities, and volunteer projects so we can all do our part to protect these treasured waterways.

Dive into Creek Week with:

- Fun stream cleanups!
- Guided nature walks & paddling!
- Trivia nights!
- Educational workshops!
- And more!

BINGO! Don't forget to download your 2026 Creek Week Bingo card [HERE](#) ([En Español Aquí](#)) and submit to win a Creek Week Patch plus enter to win a drawing for some awesome prizes!

👢 Get your boots dirty!

VOLUNTEER & EVENT Opportunities: Join any number of Creek Week's events and festivities from March 14th-22nd. Check out the calendar and sign up [HERE](#).

💚 Oh My!!!

Durham is becoming more resilient by improving our homes, planting trees, and caring for our waterways. Let's continue to do this good work - together!

See you out there,

Your Durham County Sustainability Team 🌿

GreenerDurham.net