



## **PRESS RELEASE**

*April 26, 2022*

### **Town of Oak Ridge Announces New CORE Grants**

Oak Ridge announced today the launch of its new CORE Initiative. CORE—Conserving Oak Ridge through Easements—is an innovative program with two goals: to educate property owners about how easements can preserve open space and historic structures, and to offer grant funds to offset the cost of putting such easements in place.

Oak Ridge's CORE Initiative has been developed in collaboration with noted preservation organizations Piedmont Land Conservancy (PLC) and Preservation North Carolina (PNC). While both organizations also work directly with individuals, Oak Ridge's CORE initiative positions the town as an advocate for residents and a unique source of funding not available elsewhere.

CORE Grants can cover up to 100% of the costs for either PLC or PNC to monitor a property, in perpetuity, for compliance with the easement terms. These costs can range from \$5,000 to \$15,000, depending on the property size and complexity of easement terms. CORE grants can also offset other costs typically borne by the resident for surveys, recording fees, and the like.

Understanding how conservation easements work is the first step for an interested resident. Conservation easements are legal agreements that restrict changes to the future use or appearance of a property. For example, open space easements can allow trails and recreational use, protect landscape features, and limit further development. Historic structure easements can allow interior changes and modern additions, while protecting historic exteriors and prohibiting demolition. Easements are voluntary and can't be made without the property owner's active participation and approval; they remain in effect regardless of changes in ownership.

The CORE Initiative grew out of the Town Council's Strategic Plan (2018), which prioritized preservation of the town's open spaces and historic structures. The CORE Grants were developed by a working group and are now managed by a standing Conservation Easement Committee comprised of five residents. With \$20,000 currently in hand, the committee hopes to have up to \$40,000 for future CORE Grants by next year. Grants will be awarded by the town, following recommendations from the committee.

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Information about Oak Ridge's new CORE Initiative is available online at [www.oakridgenc.com](http://www.oakridgenc.com) (see Boards and Committees/Conservation Easement Committee/Core Initiative). For questions regarding the new initiative, contact Planning Director Sean Taylor or Town Clerk Sandra Smith at 336.644.7009, or email [ssmith@oakridgenc.com](mailto:ssmith@oakridgenc.com).

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Despite its modest population of 7,500, Oak Ridge continues to be a leader in developing strategies to preserve its small-town character, natural beauty, and historic resources. The new CORE Grants represent the second of two innovative grant programs developed to serve this small community in northwest Guilford County. Launched in 2016, Oak Ridge's Historic Heritage Grant program provides grants to preserve the local historic structures; to date, grants totaling \$22,800 have leveraged an additional \$102,600 in matching funds, for a total of \$125,400 invested in 16 local preservation projects. In yet another new initiative, Oak Ridge recently unveiled a new Village Core Design Guidebook designed to attract and direct innovative commercial development that is consistent with the town's rural and historic character.

Attachments (photos by Sandra Smith, used with permission): Oakhurst and Heritage Farm Park

Oakhurst



Heritage Farm Park

