

2018



THEN &
NOW

HAZARD MITIGATION SITE REFORESTATION
NEW HANOVER COUNTY, NC
2020 LEGACY TREE FUND GRANT



THEN:

In September 2018, Hurricane Florence dumped 30+ inches of rain and spawned several tornadoes in and around New Hanover County, resulting in disastrous flooding and thousands of destroyed trees. More than 20,000 households – 20+% – in New Hanover applied for FEMA assistance after the hurricane, and the National Flood Insurance Program paid \$593.1 million in claims (as of April 2019).

After the storm, New Hanover County acquired several flood-damaged parcels of land using FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The program provides funds for projects that help communities eliminate or reduce disaster-related damage. The houses that were on these properties were removed and the land has been preserved as open space to restore or conserve natural floodplain functions.

Structures cannot be built on the land, but some sites can be used as passive recreational space and educational opportunities. In 2020 the New Hanover County Parks & Gardens department applied for, and received, a North Carolina Urban Forest Council (NCUFC) Legacy Tree Fund Grant to plant trees on three Hazard Mitigation sites.

"We were proud to award a Legacy Tree Fund Grant to New Hanover County Parks & Gardens to support their storm and hazard mitigation efforts," said NCUFC Executive Director Leslie Moorman. "Tree planting and education programs help North Carolina communities battle the effects of climate change – including erosion, storms, floods, and increased temperatures – and the billions of dollars in damage they cause each year."

NOW:

In 2021, New Hanover County Parks & Gardens, the Parks Conservancy of New Hanover County, and the Alliance for Cape Fear Trees partnered to plant 48 native trees on three of the Hazard Mitigation sites. County Parks staff chose tree species taking into consideration the soil conditions of each site, and the trees' ability to withstand large amounts of water, as these locations have previously flooded.

The Alliance for Cape Fear Trees provided volunteer labor for the tree planting event, and New Hanover County Parks & Gardens supplied the necessary tools, mulch, and staff labor for the initial planting event. Parks & Gardens also provides ongoing maintenance of the project sites with recruited volunteers from each site neighborhood.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Parks Conservancy worked with NCUFC to plan and execute an online educational workshop before the event that taught residents the benefits of trees, and proper planting and maintenance. County parks staff also created educational handouts, website pages, and onsite signage that express the important role of trees in flood mitigation, clean air, wildlife habitat, and overall quality of life for the community.

"These project sites are now models that can be easily replicated by homeowners, governments, and other landowners," said Parks & Gardens Project Manager Jodi Rich.

Each year, the North Carolina Urban Forest Council awards Legacy Tree Fund grants to community groups, civic associations, block clubs, garden clubs, and other non-profit organizations for urban forestry projects involving tree planting. Since 2011 the Legacy Tree Fund has helped plant thousands of trees in communities across North Carolina. Visit <https://www.ncufc.org/Legacy-Tree-Fund.php> to donate to or apply for a grant.

