



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**From: Eno River Association
Classical American Homes Preservation Trust**

HISTORIC PARTNERSHIP COULD BRING ENO RIVER STATE PARK TO DOWNTOWN HILLSBOROUGH

HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. — The Eno River Association is facilitating the sale of over 200 acres near downtown Hillsborough from Classical American Homes Preservation Trust to the Archaeological Conservancy and the State to be added to Eno River State Park. This transaction, contingent on fundraising, would bring total state park lands in Orange County to more than 4,000 acres.

As part of the transaction, the preservation trust will donate 23 percent of the \$2,028,480 land value. The remaining funds must be raised over the next year through public and private sources.

The property is located around the trust's Ayr Mount historic site, a Federal-era plantation house just outside of Hillsborough. The riverside parcels, which the trust began purchasing in 1993 with the significant support of Preservation NC, include four known early settlements dating back to A.D. 1000 and the former Occoneechee Speedway, the only surviving dirt track from NASCAR's inaugural 1949 season.

Classical American Homes Preservation Trust placed much of the land under conservation easements to permanently protect it from development, helped dedicate part of it as a state natural area, and worked with the volunteer Historic Speedway Group to open the Historic Occoneechee Speedway Trail to the public in 2003.

"Ensuring the long-term stewardship of these unique properties was our primary objective for working with the Eno River Association," said Kevin Cherry, vice president of the trust. "With this transaction, the ecology of the area will be preserved, the speedway will remain accessible for low-impact recreation, and the archeological sites will be protected and available for research and teaching. We welcomed the opportunity to help the Association and other conservation groups in their efforts."

The Eno River Association has identified an approximately 20-acre Eno River bend parcel that would best be owned and managed by the Archaeological Conservancy and a roughly 200-acre parcel for ownership by N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation for inclusion in Eno River State Park. Ensuring the

property is properly managed and kept as a community resource is a top priority for the trust and association.

“We consistently strive to fulfill the three arms of our mission in one project — protecting the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Eno River basin. This significant project will do just that,” said Jessica Sheffield, executive director of the Eno River Association. “These 200-plus acres will continue to enrich our local community in perpetuity, in the care of their new stewards.”

The Eno River Association and the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation are applying for local, state, and federal funding to support the project. The association also has secured a \$100,000 gift from the Harkrader Family to inspire new or increased donations made by individuals to the association this year. This match, and the funds raised, will advance the Eno River Association’s role in this project and ensure its ability to protect important properties along the Eno River for generations to come. Donations can be made at www.enoriver.org.

Natural, cultural, and historical resources

The protected land to be sold by the preservation trust acts as a stream buffer and wildlife corridor for over 2.8 miles of river and tributaries, preserving clean water and supporting wildlife movement along the Eno River. The property encompasses 14 known National Heritage Element occurrences: rare animals and natural communities, including the federally threatened Neuse River Waterdog, the state endangered Yellow Lampmussel, and the state significantly rare Mottled Duskywing.

The 20-acre Eno River bend parcel proposed for Archaeological Conservancy ownership is a part of Historic Downtown Hillsborough and contains four known early settlements dating back to A.D. 1000, including the remains of an Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation village on the banks of the Eno dating to A.D. 1690.

“The archaeological sites located at this bend in the Eno River are tremendously significant for informing our understanding of Native American life in the Piedmont region from A.D. 1000 until the early 1700s, a time period that was complicated as Native people reacted to and interacted with European trade goods and settlers coming into the area,” said Kelley Berliner, Eastern regional director for the conservancy. “The Archaeological Conservancy is committed to working with the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation on ensuring the sites are protected and guarantees Native American access to all of its preserves.”

The parcel proposed for Eno River State Park expansion includes the Historic Occoneechee Speedway Trail, of which the dirt speedway is listed on the National Registry of Historical Places. The trail system includes four miles of recreation trails within the speedway and neighboring James M. Johnston Nature Preserve, a state dedicated nature preserve. The trail system connects to the Hillsborough Riverwalk and is an integral part of the N.C. Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

“We are ecstatic to have Eno River State Park coming right to the heart of Hillsborough for the benefit of our residents, our local businesses, and our visitors,” Hillsborough Mayor Jennifer Weaver said about the potential sale. “The speedway property and the river are integral parts of Hillsborough's cultural and environmental health and identity, and this transition would ensure these treasures are protected and open for the enjoyment of the public and benefit to the community for many years to come. Our residents and visitors will be able to enjoy all the terrific restaurants, art, and retail that downtown has to offer and then walk to state parks on either end of Riverwalk.”

“I am thrilled to bring the Historic Speedway into our state parks family! Adding this jewel to Eno River State Park will ensure that the area is protected for future generations through conservation, recreation, and education,” said Eno River State Park Superintendent Kimberly Radewicz. “Our park staff’s management of the area will increase the health of its ecosystem and add educational programming to introduce the public to the history of the Speedway.”

The Eno River Association led the creation of Eno River State Park in 1973.

“Connecting property owners with the resources they need to meet their long-range protection goals is what the Eno River Association does best, and we are honored that the trust approached us for this project,” Sheffield said. “Since 1966, we’ve been bringing together property owners, environmentalists, and state and local governments to protect over 7,500 acres of green spaces, walking trails, farms, and cultural sites. With this historic transaction, this property will remain open to the public for research, education, recreation, and respite.”

About the Eno River Association

Eno River Association is an accredited land trust and watershed nonprofit founded in 1966 with a mission to protect the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Eno River basin in northern Durham and Orange counties. It has protected 7,500 acres of natural and working lands and has helped create six local, state, and regional nature parks, including Eno River State Park, Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area, West Point on the Eno City Park, Penny’s Bend Nature Preserve, Little River Regional Park, and the Confluence Natural Area. The association continues to acquire land and secure easements, as well as provide stewardship, education programs, and events like the annual Festival for the Eno to inspire others to prioritize our local, natural resources. Learn more at www.enoriver.org.

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About Classical American Homes Preservation Trust

Classical American Homes Preservation Trust was founded by Richard H. Jenrette in 1993 with a mission to preserve, protect, and open to the public examples of classical American residential architecture with their surrounding landscapes and scenic trails, as well as fine and decorative arts of the first half of the 19th century. The trust maintains four sites in three states, including its main headquarters in Hillsborough, North Carolina. The trust seeks to inspire learners of all ages and to educate the next generation of preservation professionals and craftspeople through hands-on research, applied preservation, and inspiring interpretation. Learn more at www.classicalamericanhomes.org.

About The Archaeological Conservancy

The Archaeological Conservancy, established in 1980, is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving the best of our nation’s remaining archaeological sites. Based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the conservancy also operates regional offices in California, Maryland, Mississippi, and Wisconsin. Learn more at www.archaeologicalconservancy.org.

About the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation

The North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation manages more than 250,000 acres of iconic landscape within North Carolina's state parks, recreation areas, and natural areas. It administers the N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, including its local grants program, as well as a state trails program, natural and scenic rivers and more, with a mission dedicated to conservation, recreation and education. The state parks system welcomes more than 22.8 million visitors annually. Learn more at www.ncparks.gov.

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