

PA-PAC Questionnaire for Candidates for City Council Appointment 2018

When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Please do not use colors. Please try to confine your responses to the word limits set for each question. They should be generous. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.

Candidate's name: **Sammy F. Banawan**

Address: **1208 Vickers Ave, Durham, NC 27707**

E-mail Address: **sbanawan@gmail.com**

Phone: **(919) 402-3108**

1. Of all the issues confronting city government, which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if elected?

Voter disenfranchisement. Voter participation is far too low and it's the only direct impact many citizens have on our democracy. In the 2016 election, 65% of Durham County eligible voters cast a ballot. Secretary Clinton lost the state by 170k votes and 70k eligible Durham voters didn't vote. If we had full voter participation, Durham County alone could have cut that number in almost half. Senator Burr won his seat by around 200k votes. We could have warranted some attention at the very least.

When I canvassed for the Democratic Party in 2008, 2012 and 2016, I was incredibly saddened by the degree of disenfranchisement in areas such as East Durham. Many of the people I spoke to thought their vote didn't matter, that their votes wouldn't be counted, that it doesn't matter who wins. In that scenario, we all lose.

North Carolina has been in the news a lot lately with the Supreme Court recently hearing our gerrymandering case. On a House of Representatives level, there's not much we can do since we tend to vote Democratic. On a North Carolina General Assembly level, however, there may be more that we can do. All politics is local.

I firmly believe that the ideals of the Democratic Party win **when voters vote**. That said, I am not only talking about how we can only get the Democratic vote out. Voting is a right for **all** citizens and the city should do more to support it, making it as easy as possible for everyone to cast a ballot. I would propose voter education sponsored by the city. Using the public transit system to bus voters to the polls. Plaster voting information across city services and include it in utility bills. We can make a difference if we all vote.

2. What can the city do to lift the wages of the lowest paid workers in Durham and reduce growing income inequality in our community?

Where in our community do you see opportunities for city government to address the racial wealth gap?

Income inequality

We should strive for all our residents to be paid a living wage. I propose raising the minimum wage to \$12/hr. ^{1,2}. While we wait for S.L. 2017-4 to expire ³, the city can raise its minimum wage for its employees to \$12/hour and pass a non-binding resolution to encourage employers to do the same.

If the city were to implement a higher minimum wage, we would notice an increased standard of living for our employees and higher demand for employment. This demand would likely put pressure on other employers to compete for the most qualified applicants.

There may be some consequences of a higher minimum wage:

- 1) We know that **wage arbitrage** is a problem.
- 2) For residents who work in areas with a lower minimum wage, their cost of living would increase without an increase in their wages.
- 3) We need to be mindful of making Durham unaffordable for visitors.

Wealth gap

Average net worth for white families is orders of magnitude greater than for minority families and this wealth gap is the result of years of income inequality.⁴ The city should be actively involved in partnering with minority owned businesses and increasing property values in majority minority areas.

¹ <http://livingwage.mit.edu/states/37>

² The living wage in North Carolina is \$11/hour and for a family of 4, with 2 working adults is \$12/hour for each adult.

<http://www.durhamlivingwage.org/why>

³ One of the under-appreciated effects of HB2 is the restriction of municipalities in regulating private business. While HB2 was “repealed”, its replacement, S.L. 2017-4 did not remove those restrictions. It is set to expire on 12/1/2020 and I don’t expect it will even make it that long.

⁴ The **redlining** maps from the 1930’s and 40’s could be maps of today’s minority communities for how well they track our current neighborhoods.

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=13/35.9995/-78.9060&opacity=0.8&city=durham-nc>

The city can improve infrastructure in minority communities by improving broadband ⁵, roads, public transit, schools and parks. We can work to address food deserts by encouraging coops and working with land trusts to foster development. All of these steps can improve property values and will help address the wealth gap.

⁵ The General Assembly has prohibited municipalities from providing their own broadband but we could partner with a private company to provide it.

3. How should the city measure the benefits and costs of incentives to promote development especially as those benefits and costs affect low-income residents of Durham? How would you use these measurements when deciding to vote for or against a proposed incentive?

The city needs to align its decision making with its goals and balancing the costs and benefits of any development. Our operational definitions of livability should be informed by organizations such as the AARP ¹ or the University of Oregon's Sustainable Cities Initiative ².

1) **Transportation:** The development of light rail is a welcome move into better mass transit. However, as many critics of this proposal state, rail is incredibly inflexible and unresponsive to changing needs. Increasing city-wide bus availability and shifting our fleet to both autonomous and clean-energy driven vehicles would be a cost effective way to handle this issue.

2) **Equitable and affordable housing:** How many pennies should the city give developers? Where should development occur? This issue hinges on a number of factors including safety, proximity to services such as good schools and retail, and jobs. Given our relatively poor public transportation system and clustering of families around good schools, any new or refurbished housing developments need to include plans for bolstering these deficiencies.

3) **Supporting existing communities:** Revitalizing areas of town such as east Durham by working with the state and federal agencies. Improve parks and infrastructure and provide financial support for families affected by increased housing costs.

4) **Public health costs and availability:** Durham is the "city of medicine" but too many residents are forced to seek medical attention from ERs and urgent care centers. Building out community health centers in underserved areas will pay dividends for the community ^{3,4}. Establishing externships with Duke and UNC could greatly improve the health of our community and be a wonderful training experience.

5) **Crime data:** We cannot implicitly fence off areas of town that have higher crime rates. Extra resources should be devoted to those areas affected.

¹ <https://livabilityindex.aarp.org/how-are-livability-scores-determined>

² Most policy proposals fall short in trying to reinvent the wheel, eschewing research and data in favor of face validity. In the case of urban planning, I'm going to rely heavily on the SCI's principles for creating livable cities and describe how each of these principles applies to Durham. https://sci.uoregon.edu/sites/sci1.uoregon.edu/files/sub_1_-_what_is_livability_lit_review.pdf

³ <http://jech.bmj.com/content/early/2017/03/07/jech-2016-208141>

⁴ <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/prevention08/>

6) **Education:** While DPS and City management are separate entities, we need to do everything we can to both support DPS and hold DPS accountable for improvements.

4. What actions should the city take to expand job creation and job quality? In your answer, please comment on the city's potential involvement in entrepreneurship, worker-owned cooperatives, and union organizing.

Automation is a significant threat to employment security, particularly for lower skilled jobs. To help prevent the imminent job crisis created by automation, Durham needs to provide retraining opportunities for our workforce. The Department of Labor has ended their funding for these types of programs and they're not likely to return. Durham should step into the gap and work on getting retraining programs for all who are interested.

We have a combination of a talented pool of citizens and high-tech companies in the area, along with a highly desirable location for young professionals and families. Our economy was spared the worst of the Great Recession but we should not bank on that happening again. Durham should partner with the companies in the area or those wanting to locate here to provide these retraining programs.

Durham should also look into investing in itself by buying or working with land trusts to buy rundown or underused properties and offer grants to worker-owned cooperatives. With interest rates so low, Durham could finance start-up costs without incurring much in the way of interest payments. We also know that coops tend to provide quality, high-paying jobs for citizens where most of the money stays in the community. They are democratically-based and allow workers to take ownership and a sense of pride in their work. They are also responsive to the community's needs in a way that other businesses may not be

Durham could also provide property tax relief to private businesses looking to partner with coops, either through real estate arrangements or providing seed funding.

North Carolina is a right-to-work state so unions have limited power for collective bargaining and advocating for employee rights. Despite this unfortunate fact, Durham could encourage organizing by emphasizing employee rights in its Comprehensive Plan. The City could work to achieve some of the same goals unions have by working to increase minimum wage and helping workers voice concerns about unfair labor practices.

5. What does “gentrification” mean to you? What, if anything, should be done about it? How, if at all, is the issue of gentrification implicated in the Planning Department’s current review of zoning in East Durham, the proposed creation of an Alston Avenue Design District, and the redevelopment of the former Fayette Place property?

Like your middle-aged friend’s Facebook status: it’s *complicated*.

On the one hand, we have families interested in moving into charming old homes, close to downtown and good schools. On the other, we’ve got families who have been in the area for decades, barely able to scrape together the money for their property taxes. Or, worse, we have landlords who see dollar signs as the property values for old houses skyrocket as some areas of town start to get attention. Somewhere in the middle are those long-time homeowners who may be able to sell but then are left with the unappealing decision of where to move that’s both affordable and near jobs.

City revenue from our increase in property values rises. Diversity falls as people are priced out of their homes. And we are stuck with a boring vanilla neighborhood with “character”. The incredible blending of Durham’s neighborhoods is unique and we should strive to preserve it as much as we can. One of the best things about Durham is its diversity.

Gentrification is often conflated with neighborhood revitalization and reinvestment. This is a white-washing of the issue. As Duke’s Melissa Norton says, “Gentrification is fundamentally a social justice issue, and it’s happening right off of Duke’s campus.”¹ The City’s motivations are in conflict: Increased revenue on the one hand and maintaining affordable housing on the other. Our Comprehensive Plan outlines some reasonable policy approaches to deal with gentrification. Gentrification is clearly occurring and more needs to be done to manage it but housing support and adhering to our Comprehensive Plan will help curtail it.

We should allocate money in the budget to support the Housing Authority and land trusts which can purchase properties and rent out properties in a way that supports our affordable housing goals. To achieve the funding necessary, we could increase the portion of taxes paid to the City’s housing fund from the current 2¢ to 5¢ of the total tax rate.

With so much focus on new developments, we often forget about community funds for revitalization. The Alston Avenue and Fayette Place plans are two areas where we have the opportunity to maintain our urban fabric while making sure that we plan effectively. Fayette Place is an example where we need to enforce far stronger consequences for a developer not living up to their promises.

¹ <https://today.duke.edu/2015/10/gentrification>

6. What should the city seek to accomplish through its power to stimulate and regulate growth? What principles and considerations will guide your decisions in zoning cases and other development issues? Illustrate your answer with a recent controversial zoning case. Did the city decide the case correctly?

The City has broad economic development authority and we should use this authority to help stimulate responsible growth. Zoning and development issues should be decided in accordance with our Comprehensive Plan and ensure that any exceptions be justified thoroughly.

Further, we should make developers live up to their promises to the City and enforce consequences with strong clawback provisions should a developer or development fail to live up to the promises made in development agreements or in economic development incentives packages.

When deciding on any particular rezoning issue, I would consider how well a proposal fits in with the Comprehensive Plan's goals, how likely the developer's plan is to work, and the availability of alternatives. I would also judge a proposal on its merits. Respectfully, I disagree with Councilwoman Johnson's assertion that rezoning is not a decision on a particular project - I don't want more abandoned strip malls or self-storage in Durham. I would approach the issue with the eye of an investor. How likely is this project to result in a payoff?

The most recent controversial zoning case was the North River Village proposal. I believe the planning commission and the City Council voted correctly in this case. While economic development is generally seen as an important area of growth, the City is in the economic position to be selective about rezoning proposals, particularly in cases where there are other nearby areas zoned appropriately for development. Durham is a highly desirable location and we should flex our muscle accordingly.

7. Under what circumstances would you vote to approve a rezoning that does not include commitments to meet the city's affordable housing goal? If you answered yes, how would you ensure that the city meet its goal? Please illustrate your answer with a recent case.

If the development does not involve housing concerns, voting to rezone might be appropriate provided the proposal is consistent with those areas of the Comprehensive Plan that are applicable.

However, just because a particular development does not directly affect housing concerns, we should be creative in our use of the Comprehensive Plan's guidelines. For example, policy 3.1.1d of the Comprehensive Plan addresses energy efficient housing. We should consider the way that a new development could contribute to the power grid by encouraging the use of solar panels. Policy 3.1.1e discusses transit concerns. For developments large enough, we can encourage developers to shoulder the costs for access roads for mass transit. We should also ensure that developers account for future mass transit by including bus stops in their development plans.

The Comprehensive Plan also specifies distance to public transit for affordable housing. We should consider how close a proposed development is to both current and planned affordable housing developments to leverage new developments' proximity to these housing developments. We can, and should, leverage our area's economic strength to gain concessions from developers for these priorities.

Recently, the City decided against rezoning an area of Cornwallis Road because it did not meet some guidelines set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. In this case, the City did not reject the proposal immediately but gave the developer time to address some of the concerns of residents. While they ultimately made the right decision to reject the rezoning, I appreciate that they were willing to consider exceptions to the Comprehensive Plan.

8. If the city needs more revenue for a basic public service, do you, in general, favor a new or increased user fee or a property tax increase? Residential trash pickup is an example of a basic service.

There are generally two types of public service: public enterprise (e.g., trash collection, water and sewer) and everything else. If the cost of a public enterprise service goes up related to costs associated directly with the delivery of that service, such as a rise in fuel costs or materials, raising user-fees would be appropriate.

If, however, the shortfall is related to general increases in costs to the city (e.g., we are trying to increase wages for city employees) or the public service falls into the “everything else” category, a tax increase may be appropriate. We need to be careful when discussing property tax increases because our homeowners are already struggling under the burden of increased property values. We should look into more progressive forms of taxation if a tax is appropriate.

There are other areas where tax revenues could be generated, such as consumption taxes on non-essential goods. A tiered property tax might also be worth considering. For example, personal vehicles over a certain amount might be taxed at a higher rate. This would be a progressive, rather than regressive tax.

I support more progressive forms of taxation, while bearing in mind the City’s taxation authority is completely controlled by the General Assembly. I will say that user fees should not go up for services that are further our environmental or educational goals to prevent a drop-off in those voluntary and elective use.

9. Do you support or oppose Durham's plans for rail-based transit? If federal funding for the project is denied, what must Durham do about transportation, urban planning, housing, taxes, and infrastructure?

Light rail is controversial for good reason. In the abstract, it can be a clean energy form of transportation. However, the current proposal for light rail is flawed for several reasons. These flaws may not be deal-killers but should be weighed with the benefits associated. One of those benefits is the possibility of federal funding for the project. Should federal funding fall through, we should reconsider the cost-benefit of the project.

Initially, the plan was estimated at \$1.8 billion but that cost has nearly doubled to \$3.3 billion ¹. Some of these increases are due to inflationary concerns, some due to timeline lengthening to maximize funding and, finally, due to a decrease of state funding from 25% to 10% of the cost. Durham is having shoulder a disproportionate amount of the burden - 82% of the costs due by the cities of Durham and Chapel Hill.

If federal funding doesn't work out, Durham should consider alternatives. Clearly, the issue of public transit is one that needs to be solved very quickly. One appealing option is deploying a fleet of electric and, eventually, autonomous buses throughout the city. The cost of the buses has been estimated to be about \$700,000/bus ². For the cost of a light rail system, we could deploy over 4700 buses throughout the city. We would need a fraction of that number. ³

A more attractive solution would be a hybrid approach. For the cost of one station, we could pay for 190 fully electric buses. If we reduce the number of stations from 19 to 15, we could have an entire fleet of electric buses and light rail for a fraction of the current cost with money leftover for needed road improvements.

We can also look at what other cities are doing. Los Angeles, for example, has a comprehensive proposal mixing technologies, including rail and bus systems, improved infrastructure for walking and biking, and data from passengers and drivers to help make their system more efficient ⁴.

¹ <https://www.indyweek.com/news/archives/2017/04/07/the-durham-orange-light-rail-now-costs-more-than-3-billion-and-durham-will-have-to-pay-more-of-it>

² <https://www.curbed.com/2017/11/2/16593004/bus-autonomous-vehicle-electric-public-transportation>

³ Currently, GoDurham has a fleet of 53 buses and only 18 routes.

⁴ <https://losangeles2b.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/appendix-b1-mobility-2035.pdf>

10. Does the city's investment in bus transportation reach the population that needs it most? What else can be done to improve bus transportation access and affordability?

The city has a fleet of 53 buses on 18 routes. There is no way that this fleet is sufficient. To take a bus from South Alston Ave to Southpoint mall would take about 2 hours. For an 8 minute car ride. One could literally walk there faster.

I chose those 2 locations because that seems representative of where one might live and one might work. To add 4 hours of commute time for a retail job at the mall is impractical. We should target our bus system to hit the areas of highest population in ridership and areas of highest destination needs.

To start, we need more, and more efficient, buses. We have the "first mile/last mile" problem to solve, as well. Improving publicly available bicycles would help. Subsidizing ride sharing fleets might also prove to be useful in the short-to-medium term.

Public transportation is an area that is extremely complicated but one with partial technological solutions waiting to be implemented. We should also work to leverage technology effectively.

1) The advanced data analytic techniques that have been developed to study bus routes and work to minimize the time any passenger needs to wait for a bus.

2) One of the advantages of a bus system is its ability to respond to changing demand conditions and we should equip all buses with the technology needed to report arrival times and adapt to traffic conditions.

3) Additionally, the City could partner with a software firm to develop smartphone apps that provide data on travel time and automatically update arrival information. The app would also be able to determine the most efficient route from point A to point B. Google Maps has a transit partner program that would make this a relatively simple implementation of technology ¹ and it is currently unused by the City.

¹ <https://maps.google.com/landing/transit/index.html>

11. Would you support a property tax relief program, for example, a circuit breaker, to reduce the tax burden on homeowners with limited resources and help them stay in their homes? If your answer is yes, please describe the program or programs you would support. If your answer is no, please explain.

Absolutely. The plan passed in August 2017 is a good start but flawed for several reasons and I would revise and extend that plan. Problematically, the plan is for a very limited area of town, Southside, while many other areas are affected. Additionally, the plan was merely a deferred loan for property tax, with the deferred amount due at the sale of the property.

Revision:

This plan is predicated on the idea that property values will not slide. That is, if home values fall before a homeowner sells, they are actually worse off and could be upside down on their mortgage and tax bill, even if they've built equity in their homes. This is not an acceptable solution. **We can't ask our already burdened homeowners to gamble on their homes' future value.**

My proposal is that a portion of the tax increase to be rebated to certain groups, in an income dependent fashion. These groups will include teachers, veterans, the elderly, and socioeconomically disadvantaged residents. The amount rebated would be determined by income change from the previous year. This relief would be applicable to both owner-occupied homes and to landlords *provided they are willing to limit their rental fees.*

Importantly, this proposal is not a loan system. Homeowners who qualify would not be obligated to repay any tax amount rebated.

Extension:

All residents of Durham would also be eligible for this program, based on socioeconomic status. The program would be extended to include residents who are in essential fields such as education and healthcare and perhaps have a higher income threshold for these types of residents. This extension would help address problems in attraction and retention for certain fields such as education.

12. What is the city's most pressing capital improvement priority?

Public transportation cuts across a wide swath of concerns including education, environment, employment and access to services. It is also the domain most directly implicated in a city's budget and one of the only ones of pressing need in which the city has immediate and direct control.

The city's bus system is in great need of expansion and we also need to look at alternative options for transportation through the city and the region as a whole. The light rail proposal is an attempt to address this concern, but as outlined in my response to question 9, is fraught with its own issues.

To start, expansion of the bus fleet from the 53 buses and 18 routes GoDurham currently runs to a much larger fleet with many more routes. We could expand our bicycle program and improve roadways for bicycle travel by including more and better bicycle lanes. Building in autonomous buses now will future proof our transportation plans. We also need to implement some technological solutions to this problem as outlined in my response to question 10.

With a better public transportation system, many residents without the ability or need for private vehicles would not struggle with transportation to and from work, the grocery store, medical facilities and schools. The Comprehensive Plan targets 15% of housing stock within 1/2 a mile of a planned light rail stop. We should go further and strive to have the vast majority of our residents within easy walking distance to a bus route that will get them where they need to go without extending their travel time by orders of magnitude.

The "first mile/last mile" problem can be partially addressed by partnering with ride-sharing services or, as stated above, improving our bicycle sharing programs.

13. What would you push for in the city's upcoming budget?

Budgeting should be based on the city's priorities. I view these as the following:

- 1) **Education.** The city should work with DPS to provide teachers with the tools they need to educate our kids effectively. We need to work with DPS to improve the infrastructure in the schools, provide technology for our students and teachers and improve public safety so our kids can learn without fear.

- 2) **Public transportation.** While we work out our longer term plans for an environmentally friendly and economically efficient solution to this problem, the city needs to improve its current public transportation system. The addition of new routes and buses to the system would likely alleviate some concerns immediately, even if we end up with another system in the next 10-20 years.

- 3) **Property tax relief.** The city needs to help our struggling homeowners now to reduce affordability issues arising from our ever-increasing property valuations. Providing grants to homeowners who qualify would be a good use of funds.

- 4) **Public health.** Public funding of more community health centers and creating a training fund to pay residents and attending doctors. Addressing drug addiction as an illness and not a character defect and treating it medically rather than punitively.

- 5) **Parks and Recreation.** Improving our parks and outdoor spaces. Creating a scholarship fund for underprivileged and at-risk youth to pay for equipment and costs associated with extracurricular activities.

14. Is there a trust problem between the people of Durham and the police department? Are you satisfied with the department's responses to issues of use of force, racial profiling, deployment of personnel, searches, and communication with the public? Please limit your answer to 400 words.

The police department provides a critical public service and they deserve so much respect for the hard, important work they do. We owe it to them to fix the problems leading to mistrust between the DPD and the community.

There have been many polls that show a wide racial discrepancy in attitudes towards policing in general ¹, with about only 1/3 of African-Americans trusting police to use the right amount of force and treating people equally, while about 3/4 of whites trust the police in these areas. These are national polls but I don't imagine our local results would differ.

Take, for example, Jesus Huerta's death while in custody. Despite the SBI finding no wrongdoing, many residents of Durham have enough doubt in the police to wonder what happened. The police department should be beyond reproach. In the eyes of many, they are not.

It's clear, then, that the police department and the city have not done enough to address these concerns. I was somewhat heartened by the police restraint in dealing with the protest and removal of the confederate statue from downtown. Though eight protestors were ultimately charged, this was a county action. The way the City's police force did not escalate a situation clearly charged with racial and social justice issue was promising.

Racial profiling in traffic stops has been spoken of extensively. Fortunately, we have a recent study conducted by RTI ² to give us concrete data about this issue. Over the time period studied, 2010 - 2016, there is a distinct race by gender interaction, with black men being stopped disproportionately more frequently than other groups. In a promising finding, however:

There was also evidence of longer-term trends in the data. Racial disproportionality was larger in the earlier years of analysis. By 2014–2015 we saw a convergence of the predicted probabilities for light times and dark times. This suggests that there is little evidence of Black overrepresentation during these 2 years.

Something is working here and we should study, and commend, the department's response to this issue. I think the city would do well to provide corrective feedback along with praise when

¹ <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/09/29/the-racial-confidence-gap-in-police-performance/>

² <http://nc-durham.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/9594>

appropriate. It is my sense that this positive development in policing has not been adequately communicated to the public.

15. To what degree, if any, should the city cooperate with U.S. Department of Immigration & Customs Enforcement? Should the city become a sanctuary city? If your answer is yes, for whom should the city provide sanctuary and by what means should sanctuary be provided? If your answer is no, please explain your reasons. In either case, please be specific. Please limit your answer to 400 words.

This is a moral question more than a legal one.

We should resist the efforts of ICE in every way possible. To the best of our ability, we should refuse to provide information about our residents, refuse to assist in raids or other actions. We should stand with our residents and push back as firmly as possible, extending to providing shelter for families concerned about these inhumane actions.

We should become a sanctuary city and be aware of all the responsibility that entails. HB 63¹ has not be voted into law but may return in the General Assembly. It outlines specific consequences for cities not cooperating with federal enforcement action. Specifically, tax revenue may be withheld from these cities. We have a moral obligation to protect our residents from these types of actions. We just need to be prepared to deal with the consequences of providing sanctuary.

Those potential consequences notwithstanding, the City should provide sanctuary for residents who have no criminal record (entering the country without documentation is not a crime). We should protect families and children. We should support our communities of faith such as CityWell church and others providing sanctuary to those in need.

¹ <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/HTML/H63v0.html>

16. Should the city allocate more, less, or about the same money to policing? Please explain your answer. If your answer is less, would you allocate more money to other services to improve public safety? Again, please explain. Please limit your answer to 400 words.

I can't speak specifically to the budgetary requirements of the police department but I believe that there is a significant need to train our officers to be aware of implicit bias ¹. For example, it's a well-researched finding that young African-American boys are viewed to be older and less innocent than boys of other races ². This bias has the effect of heightening the perceived threat of our young black boys. Tamir Rice's killing in Ohio is a tragic example of this bias.

Our officers should go through training first to understand that they, in fact, have implicit bias. This is not the same as saying that officers (or any of us ³) are *racist*, but that we have these processes operating on a level beyond our awareness. The research on how to "de-bias" is currently ongoing, but our citizens can't wait. Education and desensitization training are likely going to be very useful in removing this bias.

Our officers also need to learn deescalation techniques and to understand the mental health concerns of those citizens in need. It's too common that a victim of police violence is discovered to have been suffering from a mental health condition.

I propose a program to identify these issues and train officers in proper techniques to manage them. This type of work may be something our local universities would want to partner in, both from a research perspective and a training one.

¹ **Implicit bias** is an automatic and relatively unconscious process by which we evaluate people. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicit-bias/>

² <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2014/03/black-boys-older.aspx>

³ Take your own test. <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

17. Name one issue in Durham that directly impacts, or is directly impacted by, race inequity and how can the city incorporate a race equity framework in addressing this issue?

Criminal justice reform. While we've seen some strides in reducing racial profiling at traffic stops in 2014 and 2015 ¹, the data show that racial bias still exists in other areas of law enforcement and prosecution ².

The study conducted by the VERA Institute of Justice and Mecklenburg County found significant racial disparities in the charging of crimes and the severity of plea deals. Unsurprisingly, white defendants were treated more leniently than either African-American or Latinx defendants.

The district attorney's office and the police department should follow the recommendations outlined in the VERA report and first research our prosecution data and determine whether there is, in fact, racial bias in offenses and prosecution of those charges.

We should, to the best of our ability, work to make justice blind and impartial. Obfuscation of names ³ and other non-relevant, but identifying information, should be considered. At the very least, a commission that studies the decisions by prosecutors and juries should be a part of the justice system. It is important that this commission have both the authority to make changes and that prosecutors and other law enforcement officials not feel threatened by their work. I believe the professionals in the criminal justice system are working to make lives better and we cannot further increase animosity between law enforcement officers and the community.

We should also work to decriminalize cannabis and push for full legalization on the state level. The data are clear - legalization reduces opiate mortality ⁴. The data are also clear that criminalization of marijuana use disproportionately affects African-Americans ^{5,6} and that decriminalization and legalization are civil rights issues.

¹ <http://nc-durham.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/9594>

² https://storage.googleapis.com/vera-web-assets/downloads/Publications/a-prosecutors-guide-for-advancing-racial-equity/legacy_downloads/prosecutors-advancing-racial-equity_0.pdf

³ We know that something as innocuous as a name can impact our biases. http://cholbrook01.boi.ucla.edu/Holbrook_Fessler_Navarrete_Status_Threat_Size_EHB.pdf

⁴ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/news-events/nida-notes/2016/05/study-links-medical-marijuana-dispensaries-to-reduced-mortality-opioid-overdose>

⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/04/us/marijuana-arrests-four-times-as-likely-for-blacks.html>

⁶ <https://www.aclu.org/gallery/marijuana-arrests-numbers>

18. If the city could adopt an ordinance concerning the civil rights of members of the LGBTQ community, what provisions should that ordinance contain?

Our ability to pass and enforce ordinances on private business is restricted by S.L. 2017-4. If we could pass an ordinance, it would prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in private businesses and housing. LGBTQ rights are civil rights and we should fight for them as fiercely as we fight any discrimination.

We could, and should, make sure that any business receiving any support or concessions from the city, contractual or otherwise, not be permitted to discriminate against our LGBTQ residents and visitors.

Our provisions should also contain reporting mechanisms for discriminatory actions and other violations of the equal protections proposed. These mechanisms can be anonymous or de-identified to protect those who wish to protect their identities.

We should also be aware of the interaction between socioeconomic status and LGBTQ discrimination. It's an unfortunate fact that due lack of employment protections for LGBTQ people and unfavorable tax treatment for their families, poverty rates for our LGBTQ citizens are remarkably high ¹.

As with racial inequality in income and wealth, we need to address this inequality for our LGBTQ citizens. To the best of our ability, we need to make sure that sexual orientation and gender identification be included in our hiring and promotion decisions, as well as contracts awarded by the City. In addition, policies that may affect the LGBTQ community either directly or indirectly should never be enacted without input from the community.

¹ <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/paying-an-unfair-price-full-report.pdf>

19. What would you bring to the city council that is not already represented by the members who are currently serving? You may wish to consider your background, education, experience, and set of skills when responding to this question.

I'm paid to listen. That's *literally* my job. Listening is a skill that's often misunderstood and under-appreciated. All too often, people in decision making roles assume they know the best thing to do. I don't believe I have the best ideas. As I hope my responses to these questions show, I'm happy to lean on the wisdom and experience of others to see what they have done to solve similar problems. My doctorate in psychology has taught me how to both understand and evaluate research.

And my work has shown me how much I have left to learn.

Further, I believe that many of the societal issues we're facing could use a clinical psychologist to help sort through. The understanding of biases, stereotypes and ways to implement effective change strategies is part of my day-to-day work.

My experience developing a successful iOS app and my greater than average knowledge of technological advancements will give city council a voice and understanding of technology that they, to date, have not shown. My proposal regarding using technology to help solve the bus problem is an example of this type of experience being useful.

My experience as a small business owner gives me some insight into what our entrepreneurs deal with on a daily basis. My (failed) technology startup has given me an understanding of how hard it is to get a good idea off the ground.

My experience as a child of immigrants from the Middle East has, unfortunately, given me an acute understanding of the prejudices our minority community faces every day.

When Trump was elected, I was devastated. I shed tears for the first time in many years - no one is safe while anyone is unsafe and the urgency of this moment has prompted me to do something.

20. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence other than a minor traffic offense? If your answer to this question is yes, please describe the charge or charges, the circumstances, and the outcome.

No.

21. For whom did you vote in the 2012 and 2016 presidential and gubernatorial elections? For whom did you vote in the 2014 U. S. Senate election?

President

2012: Barack Obama

2016: Hillary Clinton

Governor

2012: Walter Dalton

2016: Roy Cooper

Senate

2014: Kay Hagan

Professional Background

2006 – Present: Owner, President, Durham DBT, Inc. Following the completion of my post-doctoral fellowship at Duke University Medical Center, I started my own private practice. My focus has been on outpatient work, both individual and group; training other clinicians in group and individual supervision settings and building and designing mobile apps that have a basis in well-established treatment methods.

2013 – Present: Technology advisor, Triangle Area DBT. The triangle area of North Carolina (Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill) has an abundance of DBT therapists and my role with TADBiT has been to develop and maintain their online presence as well as managing the client-focused view of our services.

2013 – 2014: Chief Technology Officer, Elpis Health. As CTO of Elpis Health, I managed the technical direction of a startup which was a Duke Startup challenge finalist, a Charlotte Venture challenge finalist, and Google and Amazon startup award recipient. We were focused on machine learning algorithms to assist people in making positive behavioral changes throughout their day.

2008 – 2010: DBT specialist. Carolina House, Durham, NC. At Carolina House, I was responsible for the implementation of DBT within the residential eating disorders milieu, training other staff members and clinicians in its effective use and managing a full-time clinical caseload of women with eating disorders.

2008: Board member, Division 12 of the American Psychological Association. In 2008, I was selected to the board of the Clinical Psychology division of the APA as their technology advisor. During my time working with Division 12, I oversaw the development of their current website and online presence.

2004 – 2006: Post-doctoral fellowship. Duke University Medical Center. During my time at Duke, I was responsible for the coordination of a multi-site NIH-funded study examining the efficacy of DBT for the treatment of opiate addiction. The position involved designing an adaptation of DBT with the co-investigators Drs. Thomas Lynch and Marsha Linehan, maintaining fidelity to the treatment protocol, ensuring compliance with all IRB regulations and completion of progress reports for our funding source.

2002 – 2003: Pre-doctoral internship. Duke University Medical Center. My APA-accredited internship at Duke involved clinical care of a wide variety of psychiatric conditions and I specialized in the treatment of borderline personality disorder using Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT).

Educational Background

2004-2006: *Post-doctoral Fellowship*

Duke University Medical Center

2004: *Doctor of Philosophy*

Department of Psychology, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

2002-2003: *Internship in Medical Psychology*

Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Duke University Medical Center

2001: *Masters of Science*

Department of Psychology, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

1998: *Bachelor of Science*

Department of Psychology, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill