

## **PA PAC Questionnaire for Mayor and City Council Candidates – 2019**

*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 within the word limits set for each question. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question. If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.*

**Please return the completed form along with your resume describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by August 5, at the latest.**

**You may e-mail your responses to Tom Miller at [tom-miller1@nc.rr.com](mailto:tom-miller1@nc.rr.com) or you may send a printed copy of your responses to Durham PA PAC c/o Tom Miller 1110 Virginia Avenue, Durham, NC 27705-3262**

**Please note that following the August 5 deadline, the People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.**

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.**

Candidate's name: Charlie Reece

Office for which you have filed for election (circle one): Mayor / City Council

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### **Government and the Public Good**

- 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? Please limit your answer to 200 words.**

The rapidly rising gentrification (and accompanying displacement) in and around downtown is the most significant issue facing our community. If we don't address this problem head-on, the Durham we love will continue to recede into memory, and this great city of grit and determination will be transformed before our eyes and beneath our feet – transformed despite our best intentions – into a sanitized, gentrified, Disney Land version of itself.

That's why it's essential that we pass the proposed \$95 million affordable housing bond this November so we can build and preserve thousands of homes for our low-income neighbors, make significant investments in new homeownership, provide property tax relief for longtime low-income homeowners, expand eviction diversion efforts, and much more. The bond is also a lifeline for our downtown Durham Housing Authority communities, funding the redevelopment of those crumbling communities so that current residents can continue to live there.

In addition to attacking our housing supply problem, we must also find ways to boost the wages of low-income workers in Durham so that they can afford more housing. I'll talk more about that critical work below in Question #2. (For more details, please also see our Bull City Together platform at [www.charliefordurham.com/platform](http://www.charliefordurham.com/platform).)

**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? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

The North Carolina General Assembly has not raised the state's minimum wage in over a decade, and the failure of the minimum wage to keep up with the cost of living has had devastating consequences for the people of Durham. Despite the fact that municipalities in North Carolina do not have the legal authority to set living wages in our communities, the city of Durham must be aggressive and creative in finding ways to raise wages here. This is especially critical for our lowest-paid workers, who are primarily women and people of color.

One way to do that is to lead by example, and the city of Durham is doing just that. Last year, we raised the wages of all full-time city employees to at least \$15 per hour, and this year we will do the same for all part-time city employees. We have also indexed our city living wage to inflation so that it will rise with the cost of living – currently the city's living wage is set at \$15.48 per hour. I also pushed our city administration to lead by example on employee benefits as well, and I'm proud that the city offers 12 weeks of paid parental leave to our employees in addition to a fantastic health plan.

The city council has also used its moral leadership in the community to encourage (and cajole) Durham's private employers to pay their employees a living wage. Thanks in part to our public and private lobbying, Duke University – the city's largest employer – now pays its employees at least \$15 per hour. We also lift up the work of the Durham Living Wage Project, an initiative that allows Durham businesses to become certified as paying all of their employees a living wage. I'm also proud to say that our own family business (Rho, Inc.) was one of the charter members of the Durham Living Wage Project. The recent establishment of the Workers Rights Commission should further encourage local businesses to pay their employees a living wage as well as improve overall working conditions.

Finally, the city of Durham can and must push aggressively to find ways to empower our homegrown black- and women-owned businesses with startup capital and technical assistance, and to support our residents with job training and job placement resources. I'll talk more about those efforts in question #5.

**3. Describe your interest in and commitment to public amenities such as playing fields, open space, street trees, traffic calming, and walking and biking facilities. Are you willing to raise property taxes to provide for and maintain these amenities? Are public amenities allocated to neighborhoods equitably? Please explain and cite examples. Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

Public amenities like parks, trails and open space are critical to making Durham an actual community because they bring the people of Durham together in the spirit of recreation and in the enjoyment

of nature and open spaces. Year after year, our residents tell us through our annual resident survey that these types of infrastructure investments are among their top priorities for the city of Durham.

Concerning taxes, I was an enthusiastic supporter of the dedicated half-penny tax for park maintenance, and I would support increasing this dedicated levy to a full penny if requested by our parks department to meet maintenance needs.

There is so much great work being done by the city of Durham to expand these kinds of public amenities. Whether it's the recent acquisition of land off of Hoover Road in East Durham for the construction of new soccer fields, or the creation of Durham's first protected bike lanes, or the recent traffic calming work on South Roxboro Street, or the approved investments over the next five years in sidewalk construction and repair throughout the city, Durham is moving forward with an unprecedented series of these projects.

The city is also doing this work while centering equity and inclusion, ensuring that these investments are made in parts of Durham that have been left out of previous efforts. Our innovative street tree program plans to plant 100,000 new trees across Durham over the next three decades. These new plantings will be primarily focused in parts of our city which have traditionally been excluded previous tree planting efforts and have much less tree canopy.

At the direction of the city council, our staff has developed an equitable engagement plan to deepen our engagement with neighborhoods adjacent to future green infrastructure projects like the Durham Beltline. This engagement plan includes city funding for hiring local community members and community organizations to partner with the city to engage in outreach and dialogue with neighborhood residents at the earliest possible stage of these projects. In this way, the people who live closest to these types of projects will have a hand in guiding the development of these projects so that they meet their community's needs as well as those of the city as a whole.

**4. What is your position on providing public incentives to private firms to promote economic development in Durham? How can city government use development incentives to promote more widely shared prosperity, including better jobs and higher wages for Durham residents? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

I am not a fan of the traditional economic incentive programs in which local governments pay cash to corporations in return for jobs or infrastructure or both. It is not at all clear to me that the benefits of such arrangements outweigh the costs (both direct and indirect). But it is crystal clear to me that these kinds of financial incentives encourage a "race to the bottom" in which local governments are pitted against each other – often by large multinational corporations which already earn billions of dollars in profits each year – to see which city or town will write them the biggest check.

But I am an avid supporter of recent community effort to require developers seeking financial incentives from the city of Durham to complete an equitable development scorecard that would help elected officials and the community at large understand exactly what benefits the proposed development would bring to the people of this city. I have spent much of the last year working on the scorecard in partnership with staff from the North Carolina League of Conservation Voters, PowerUp NC and the North Carolina Justice Center. I organized meetings with the four of us and all

members of the Durham City Council to walk them through the equitable development scorecard and to build support for it on the council.

This program would require developers to tell us just how their projects would benefit the actual people who live in Durham and not just our city's property tax base. The equitable development scorecard will allow elected officials and community members to understand with full transparency exactly what the city proposes to incentivize with the money being requested by developers. Moreover, the content and structure of the scorecard means that projects will score better if they commit to paying living wages, hire residents who live in the community where the project will be built (especially residents from low-income communities and communities of color as well as justice-involved individuals), support local businesses (especially women- and minority-owned businesses), and promote affordable housing and prevent displacement. Perhaps most importantly, the scorecard provides a concrete method for holding both developers and elected officials accountable for the decisions they make when granting financial incentives.

An equitable development scorecard is a concrete way that we can turn the traditional economic incentive process on its head, and ensure that it works for the people of this city and not just for corporations.

**5. What are the biggest barriers to increasing business ownership by local people of color, and what is the city's role in reducing those barriers? How could the city's supplier diversity or other practices foster more business growth opportunities? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

The biggest barriers to increasing business ownership by local people of color are access to capital and technical assistance to help get fledgling businesses off the ground. The historical roots of the racial disparity in access to capital are undeniable and unavoidable, as is the fact that government policies have continued to amplify this disparity for generations. The city can and must take action to make it easier for black businesses to thrive in Durham.

To that end, the city has developed an inclusive and equitable economic development strategy that is built around advocacy and support for minority-owned businesses. This strategy calls for the creation of a new advocacy nonprofit funded by the city as well as an entrepreneurial debt and equity fund to address the disparity in access to capital. We're calling this the Bull City Foundation, and the city has already funded the first phase of this work and is working with local lenders and other nonprofits to help raise the capital to make the fund work.

The city of Durham is also moving swiftly to help create a support system for the entire ecosystem of minority- and women-owned businesses. Through our reimagined Department of Equity and Inclusion, the city will now be much more aggressive in promoting contracting opportunities with the city and our contractors for which our minority- and women-owned businesses can compete. We will also be providing technical assistance to those businesses to provide them with the tools that allow them not just to compete but to win contracts with the city and our large contractors. Part of this ecosystem approach will also be supported by the creation of the equitable development scorecard I discussed in my answer to Question #4 above. We can also encourage and cajole other large employers in Durham to take a similar supportive ecosystem approach to

minority- and women-owned businesses, which will amplify the impact of this work and ultimately create the kind of demand for these kinds of businesses to which the market will respond.

Finally, as individual council members we must continue to do what we do at every work session – ask hard questions of contractors that our staff has proposed we work with on large projects to improve their minority hiring and subcontracting practices.

## **Housing, City Planning, and Neighborhoods**

**6. Do you think Expanding Housing Choices (EHC) will increase or decrease gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents? How can the city ensure equity in the use of EHC by people of color and other homeowners who have not had equal access to financing? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

Expanding Housing Choices (EHC) will soon be before the city council, and as has been my practice for all such development and zoning matters, I will refrain from commenting on any specific proposals or provisions until the conclusion of the public hearing on EHC.

Having said that, Durham does have a residential housing supply problem. Residential construction has not kept up with population growth for quite a number of years, and as a result the scarce supply of housing in Durham is becoming more and more expensive. Compounding this problem is the reality that newcomers to Durham make on average about \$10,000 more per year than current Durham residents, which means that our new residents are in a better position to outbid current residents in this seller's market for housing. Taken together, the result is more and more gentrification in the residential neighborhoods that surround downtown Durham, and the resulting displacement is tearing apart the very fabric of our city.

There are lots of answers to addressing this problem, and the city of Durham should try lots of them. First and foremost, we should make it easier to build all kinds of housing in Durham, especially housing that is affordable to low income families. But gentle increases in residential density can also be helpful in counteracting the supply/demand imbalance in Durham. We must be vigilant to make sure that this is achieved in a way that is sensitive to the context of our existing neighborhoods and is not harmful to our environment. These types of changes also work to reduce sprawl and make it easier for new residents to walk, bike and/or take public transit rather than driving cars, and as a result they help Durham advance our sustainability goals as well.

But as we make it easier for a homeowner to subdivide their home into a duplex or build an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) in their backyard, we also have to ensure that low-income homeowners have access to the capital necessary to do so. While the affordable housing bond has some funds to make it easier for low-income homeowners to build ADUs, the city must also work with local lenders to create additional financing vehicles for individual homeowners to help make this happen.

This kind of gently increased residential density in the urban tier won't solve our housing supply problem, but it can help.

**7. 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? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

There are many different principles and considerations that guide my decisions in zoning and development cases, and I'll discuss those in a moment, but first and foremost I have been clear throughout my time on the city council that the zoning process exists for the benefit of the people of the city of Durham and NOT for real estate developers. The fact that a proposed rezoning has made it to the city council for our consideration is NOT a reason to vote in favor of such a rezoning – that is the bare minimum for our consideration. Our votes should NOT be swayed by the fact that the developer has completed all the necessary paperwork, and attended all of the required public meetings, and jumped through all the hoops that our development process requires. As I said, those are the threshold requirements before the city council even begins its consideration of a rezoning. No developer is entitled to any rezoning, and council members must keep that at the forefront of their minds when we consider these cases.

More substantively, here are just some of the factors I take into account in zoning and development cases:

- For residential developments, the price of the housing to be built and how an increased supply of housing at that price point will impact residential affordability in that area;
- Whether the physical infrastructure in the area (water, sewer, streets, sidewalks, etc.) has the capacity to accommodate the proposed development;
- How the proposed development connects with public transit, existing bicycle facilities, and the city's network of greenway trails;
- Whether there is sufficient transition between differing uses (for example, between commercial and residential);
- Whether the development will adequately address environmental concerns specific to the site such as stormwater runoff or proximity to sensitive waterways and/or wildlife habitats; and
- To what extent the development will contribute to sprawl, or by contrast how it will support the creation of the kind of dense, walkable communities we want to see more of in Durham.

Ultimately, our zoning and development decisions help determine the built environment of our city. We have the opportunity to make these decisions so that we make progress on our sustainability and affordability goals. We just have to be intentional about it.

**8. Do you support the \$95 Million Housing Bond and the city's Five-Year Affordable Housing Plan? Why or why not? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

I enthusiastically support the \$95 million housing bond because it represents an unprecedented opportunity to change the trajectory of the housing market in Durham, and because it is a critical step toward a future in which anyone can afford to live and work and raise their kids in our city, no matter how much money they make or what part of the city they call home.

The \$95 million housing bond will supercharge our city's work on housing access and affordability in order to create and preserve thousands of affordable homes for low-income families. The majority

of those affordable homes will be located downtown and in the residential neighborhoods that surround downtown. That means that these homes will be even more affordable because they will be within walking distance of the most robust parts of our city's public transit system. Working to increase creation and preservation of affordable homes near transit is the key to unlocking a future for Durham in which our city is not only income diverse but also racially and ethnically diverse. Much of this work will be accomplished in partnership with the Durham Housing Authority as they redevelop their downtown communities. And the city will be vigilant in ensuring that DHA complies with federal law in enforcing the current low-income residents' absolute right to return to their rebuilt communities.

But the bond is not just about the creation and preservation of affordable homes. The housing bond also sets aside millions of dollars to help folks stay in their homes, whether they're renters or homeowners, by expanding current support for home repair and rehabilitation as well as property tax relief for low-income homeowners, and by supporting eviction diversion for renters. The bond will also make possible an unprecedented surge in resources for street outreach to our neighbors experiencing homelessness, and to build a new coordinated entry system for homeless individuals and families to get them housed right away.

The average taxpayer in Durham will pay an additional \$37 per year to pay for the bond issue. That is a sacrifice, but I believe it is one that the people of this city are willing to make in order to preserve our unique identity. Voting YES on the \$95 million housing bond is absolutely the right choice for Durham.

**9. Would you vote to approve a rezoning that does not include commitments to meet the City's affordable housing goal? If yes, how would you ensure that the city meets its goal? Please limit your answer to 400 words**

Yes – because North Carolina law does not allow local governments to require that a development include affordable housing as a condition of rezoning approval. But we will continue to improve the density bonus included in our Unified Development Ordinance in order to entice more developers to take advantage of the bonus and create more housing opportunities that are affordable to low-income people. At the same time, the city council will continue to advocate for the statutory grant of authority from the North Carolina General Assembly to enact a mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinance here in the city of Durham that would require developers to set aside a certain percentage of units in any residential development at a price point that is affordable to our low-income neighbors. And we will continue to explore all the other ways we can incentivize developers to do so under the current status of North Carolina law. And of course we need to pass the \$95 million affordable housing bond!

**10. How should Durham's Unified Development Ordinance define a "single-family dwelling?" Please limit your answer to 200 words**

Currently, Durham's Unified Development Ordinance defines a "single-family dwelling" as follows: "A residential use consisting of one dwelling unit per lot of record. As described in Sec. 7.1, Housing Types, includes: single-family detached house; zero lot line house; traditional house; patio house; or semi-attached house. Not to include manufactured housing."

I know of no reason to modify this definition, but I'm certainly open to suggestions about how to improve this or any other provision of the UDO.

**11. What non-traditional funding schemes (such as public banking, community investment trusts, community development venture capital) have you been exploring for the City of Durham to implement that can bolster our fight against economic inequality in our community? Please limit your answer to 400 words**

We're already doing a lot of this work. Specifically, the Durham Affordable Housing Fund provides critical capital support for our community's affordable housing developers to be more competitive in the real estate market. This kind of capital support will be especially valuable when multifamily housing that is "naturally affordable" (that is, not legally binding affordability) goes on the market. Under that scenario, the fund would provide pre-qualification for affordable housing developers so that they can access additional capital quickly in order to respond to opportunities to buy these kinds of apartment buildings when they come on the market. This will allow those units to remain affordable for generations.

The city is also working to establish the debt and equity fund for minority businesses I discussed in my answer to Question #5 above.

I've also had a number of productive conversations with my colleague, Mayor Pro Tem Jillian Johnson, about social housing, worker cooperatives and public banking. The city is doing some good work on encouraging worker cooperatives and facilitating the conversion of existing businesses to worker cooperatives, and I want to explore these other ideas that Jillian has to see how we can continue to push forward with our work to reduce economic equality in our community.

**12. What planning policy goals and priorities do you wish to see from the upcoming review and revision of Durham's Comprehensive Plan? Please limit your answer to 400 words**

I'm excited about the work already begun by the Durham Planning Department on our new Comprehensive Plan. I'm especially heartened by the community engagement strategy that the Planning Department has adopted for this critical work, including hiring community members to partner with city staff to engage with city residents on the policy goals and priorities of the new Comprehensive Plan. This kind of deep engagement is essential to making sure that the voices of the entire community are reflected in the new Comprehensive Plan – especially those who are often never heard when we talk about these important issues.

For my own perspective on where we should be headed as a community with the new Comprehensive Plan, we need to manage our inevitable growth as a community in a way that is sustainable and affordable. Specifically, please see my response to Question #7 for the considerations that go into making that happen.

**13. Why do you believe that the recent light rail project failed in Durham? Where do we go from here? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**



The death of light rail was brought about by the confluence of a number of factors: the refusal of Duke University and North Carolina Railroad to sign cooperative agreements; the actions of the North Carolina General Assembly to defund the project and then create deadlines for certain aspects of the project that were unrealistic and unnecessary; the federal government shutdown that delayed necessary reviews and approvals; and many others.

The Durham Planning Department is now charged with revising the Durham County Transit Plan, and there are lots of pieces that need to be put in place quickly in the wake of the failure of the light rail project. The proposed Wake/Durham commuter rail project is still part of the current transit plan, and we need additional community engagement around the possible alignment of this project and potential station stops here in Durham. Our existing GoDurham bus system needs additional investments to increase service routes, reduce wait times and extend service hours into nights and weekends. And we need to come up with a new solution for connecting Durham with our neighbors in Orange County, likely with some version of bus rapid transit, perhaps even in the alignment originally purchased and intended for light rail. As a member of our local Metropolitan Planning Organization, I am pushing for this planning to begin immediately.

In my view, the key to succeeding in all of these areas is early and open engagement with stakeholders. Early buy-in and confidence building is the only way we will be able to move forward in addressing these critical regional transit needs.

**14. What if anything, should the city do to distribute the property tax burden with greater equity and fairness? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

Unfortunately, the North Carolina Constitution mandates that local governments administer a uniform system of taxation, and this mandate prohibits local governments from enacting truly progressive property tax systems. We cannot charge different property owners different tax rates, or exempt certain property owners from taxation, or enforce a tax surcharge on real property in excess of a certain value. Local governments are also unable to expand existing state property tax relief programs.

I have consistently pleaded with our delegation at the North Carolina General Assembly to provide local governments with more authority to make our property tax system more progressive and to provide broader property tax relief for our longtime low-income homeowners. Durham has fantastic representation in our state legislature, and they represent our interests very well and share our concerns about the restrictions of the property tax system under which we operate, but I am not optimistic about the possibility of meaningful change to that system under the current legislative leadership. In the meantime, Durham must find more creative ways to provide relief to our residents.

One such effort is the city's current longtime homeowner grant program, which is intended to help longtime low-income homeowners stay in their homes by providing small grants to qualifying homeowners in certain parts of the city equal to the increase in the taxpayer's tax bill (the city portion) before and after the most recent valuation. But the program has been plagued by low participation, and our staff even recommended eliminating the program this year. At my vocal insistence, the program was continued for one more year so that we can develop a more workable alternative.

Such an alternative program must include participation by Durham County, since 60% of a city homeowner's property tax bill is the responsibility of the county. It's my understanding that conversations are ongoing between city and county leaders on the contours of such a joint city/county program, and I'm eager to learn more about what that will look like and how it might distribute the property tax burden in Durham more fairly and equitably.

## Policing

**15. Is there a trust problem between the people of Durham and the police department? Are you satisfied with the department's leadership and 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.**

Chief CJ Davis has done a good job as the leader of the Durham Police Department (DPD), and I am proud of much of the work done by DPD leadership over the last several years to shift the focus of our city's law enforcement priorities toward 1) responding effectively to violent crime, and 2) productive and meaningful community engagement. DPD has also worked very hard to improve how its officers engage with the broader community, and Chief Davis has been the personal emblem of that improvement by being very present and visible in the community. DPD has also created liaison positions staffed with officers working with the LGBTQ+ community, the Hispanic and Latino community, and the Northeast Central Durham community. In addition to more and deeper community engagement, DPD has also made referral to Durham's Misdemeanor Diversion Court the expectation for misdemeanor marijuana offenses and other minor crimes for individuals 26 years of age and younger. Chief Davis has also halted DPD-initiated traffic checkpoints in Durham as a way to reduce the likelihood that our immigrant neighbors would get caught up in this kind of enforcement action. And all DPD officers now undergo required training in crisis intervention, racial equity and de-escalation. All these measures are significant improvements in the operation of the Durham Police Department – traffic stops, vehicle searches and misdemeanor drug charges are all down dramatically since 2015, as is violent crime citywide. Taken together, these welcome changes are responsible for a significant improvement in the relationship of trust and confidence between the DPD and the people of the city of Durham.

But there is still a lot of work to do here in Durham on policing issues. Wide racial disparities continue to persist in traffic stops and misdemeanor marijuana offenses here in the city of Durham, and many Durham residents carry with them the memories of racist policing practices under previous administrations going back generations. DPD's continued focus on trust-building work in communities hardest hit by violent crime will make more progress here possible. Additional reforms at the state level would also be helpful, especially adding real transparency concerning the video footage captured by police-worn body cameras as well as expanding the authority of civilian police review boards across the state to investigate complaints against police officers and subpoena witnesses to investigate those complaints.

**16. To what degree, if any, should the city cooperate with U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Immigration & Customs Enforcement and Homeland Security Investigations? What should the relationship be between local government and federal agencies such as ICE, DEA, and the US Marshals? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

The city of Durham should not participate in the enforcement of federal immigration laws under any circumstances, but especially now in 2019 under this presidential administration. President Trump and his hand-picked leadership at ICE have made it clear that their main priority with respect to immigration enforcement is the terrorization of our immigrant communities to inflict maximum fear on our immigrant neighbors. Cooperating with ICE in enforcing these perverse and morally reprehensible immigration policies would be an outrageous violation of the trust and confidence that the people of Durham have placed in their city government.

Instead, the city of Durham must continue to be welcome and open to all people, including immigrants from other countries and without regard to their immigration or documentation status. That's why I'm proud of the Durham Police Department's strict policy of not inquiring about the immigration or documentation status of individuals with whom our police officers come into contact. It is our priority as a city to do everything we can to protect our immigrant neighbors, not to help federal agents terrorize them.

Concerning cooperation with other federal law enforcement agencies and DPD, our guiding principle should be whether such cooperation would address a clear and present danger to the city of Durham and our residents.

**17. 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 think current levels of city spending on policing are appropriate. I'm also proud that the most recent budget approved by the city council expands the city's commitment to addressing the underlying causes of crime in our communities – lack of living wage jobs, not enough housing affordable to low income families, not enough recreational opportunities for our kids, among others. Continued investment in finding and funding solutions to those problems is how we build true community safety for our city. These problems will not be solved by hiring more police officers.

During the recent budget debate, a coalition of grassroots organizations and community members including Durham Beyond Policing came forward and asked that the city council take the money that would have gone to hire 18 more police officers for District 4 and instead fund community-based efforts that would reduce harm and improve community safety. While I believe that such a community task force is a great idea, the proposal for funding this great idea came too late in the budget cycle to be included in this budget.

Council members are eager to work with those community members to determine what that task force might look like, its mandate, and the timetable for its important work. In my policy platform for this campaign, I take the position that the city of Durham should “[p]artner with members of the Durham community to develop and fund additional strategies to promote harm reduction and community safety separate and apart from law enforcement.” The task force proposed by this community coalition aligns with the vision laid out in my platform, and I'm ready to begin that work. Because no one knows what it will take to make communities safer and reduce harm better than the people who live in those communities. Empowering them with the resources they need to improve safety in their own neighborhoods makes all the sense in the world.

## Civil Rights

**18. Name one issue in Durham that directly impacts, or is directly impacted by, race inequity, and explain how the city can incorporate a race equity framework in addressing this issue? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

During my time on the council, the city of Durham has taken significant steps to expand the city's structural commitment to racial equity. We have established the Racial Equity Task Force, which has as its mandate a number of critical objectives: educating the public on Durham's history of institutional and structural racism; identifying best practices from other communities for policy interventions to address racial disparities; and making both policy and funding recommendations to the city council so that the city can take action as a result of these recommendations. The city council received an update from the Racial Equity Task Force in May, and we expect to receive their final recommendations later this year.

The city has also created a new Department of Equity and Inclusion, and has named a Chief Equity Officer, to lead on the city's efforts to center the work of racial equity across the length and breadth of city government. The city is deepening its partnership with the Government Alliance for Race and Equity so that we can learn more from other jurisdictions about what has worked in their communities to address racial disparities. And all of the city's senior leadership (including myself) along with hundreds of city employees have attended racial equity training in order to deepen our understanding of the historical and structural realities of how race impacts everything we do.

Policing is one of the primary areas in which the city could make a difference by applying a racial equity framework in addressing racial disparities. Due to a number of the changes in policy and practice described in my response to Question #15 above, the Durham Police Department has already made real improvements in how it works in our community. In addition to my recommendations there, DPD should continue de-emphasizing minor drug offenses in favor of focusing on the problem of violent crime in our community. DPD should also consider phasing out traffic stops for minor equipment violations in favor of notifying motorists by mail that the equipment problem should be corrected promptly. DPD should also explore lifting the age limit on the Misdemeanor Diversion Court so that any Durham resident with a minor drug offense is eligible to participate even if they're over 26 years of age. These changes would allow DPD to make more progress on this important issue.

**19. If the city could adopt an ordinance concerning the civil rights of members of the LGBTQ community, what provisions should that ordinance contain? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

Durham is and must continue to be a city that is welcoming to all LGBTQ+ people. That means that Durham must stand against discrimination in all its forms. One of the most insidious aspects of HB2 (and its successor legislation, HB142) was the ban on local governments passing nondiscrimination ordinances to protect our own residents from discrimination.

If and when local governments in North Carolina are legally permitted to do so, I will author and introduce a non-discrimination ordinance within the city of Durham to protect Durham residents from discrimination (including denial of service) on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression in employment, in housing, in places of public accommodations. The ordinance will also make it crystal clear that people in Durham are free to use the restroom that best aligns with their gender identity or gender expression.

**20. What can the city do to enhance its capacity to facilitate the reintegration of justice-involved individuals into our community, including removing barriers and providing economic opportunities for justice-involved individuals? Please limit your answer to 400 words.**

The Durham Innovation Team (I-Team) is doing some of the country's most impactful and groundbreaking work on these issues right now, and it's work we can all be proud of. In partnership with the Durham District Attorney Office and Durham's district court bench as well as key community organizations like the Southern Coalition for Social Justice and the North Carolina Justice Center (among many others), the city has built a process which has led to the dismissal of over 50,000 pending traffic cases for over 35,000 people. Some of those charges dated back to the 1980s, and were the cause of thousands of drivers license suspensions for Durham residents. Dismissal of these old traffic cases means that those residents are now eligible to get their drivers licenses restored, and that restoration removes a huge obstacle that has kept thousands and thousands of Durham residents from seeking and maintaining employment. This program also provides free legal counsel to folks seeking to have criminal charges previously dismissed by prosecutors expunged from their criminal records, which removes another obstacle to employment and housing.

The I-Team has also pioneered the Welcome Home program, which connects Durham residents returning home from prison with critical resources to make their re-integration into our community easier. These returning residents get a letter signed by Mayor Schewel welcoming them back to Durham and telling them how glad we are that they're coming home. As part of our partnership with our local re-entry council, they also receive one-on-one counseling from peer support specialists who are themselves formerly incarcerated individuals who can help these returning residents make the transition. The Welcome Home program also puts a care package in the hands of each of these returning residents with clothes, some non-perishable food, a bus pass and even a cell phone. The city of Durham is further supporting this important re-entry work by implementing a new jobs program for Durham residents who are returning home from prison, and I look forward to working with local employers to expand this program and to increase these opportunities for our returning residents.

I'm so proud of the work that the I-Team has pioneered in this area, and prouder still that these programs are being held up as national models for what's possible when a community decides to get serious about facilitating the re-entry of its justice-involved residents upon release from prison.

**Personal**

21. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense? If your answer to this question is yes, please describe the charge or charges, the circumstances, and the outcome. *Please limit your answer to*

*200 words.*

No.

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please do not forget to send us your resume or a brief biographical statement.**