

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 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: _____ _ Joshua Gunn

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

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Government and the Public Good

- 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 most significant issue our city faces this year is the state of our economy. Our city has grown rapidly over the past decade, and with that growth has many significant challenges. This growth has not been equitable, and we need to address the economic inequities by working with our private sector, not against it, and continuing to drive growth for all of our citizens. We must work on addressing the income and wealth gaps, and the poverty in our city, which is contributing to an uptick in crime and safety concerns. We must resolve the affordability and housing crisis in our city. All of these issues are connected to

economics and are directly related to our city's fragmented economic development strategy. I will connect each of these components and work citywide to address not only the symptoms that this fragmented strategy has created (poverty, crime, eviction epidemics, lack of affordable housing, transit, etc.) , but the root, through more intentional and inclusive economic policy.

- 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 city must first implement an economic development strategy that focuses on creating a diverse set of jobs and opportunities for Durham. As Vice President at the Chamber of Commerce for the past 3 years, I've witnessed hundreds of jobs pass through our city monthly, with little to no participation from the city's elected officials. This policy of disengagement with the private sector is costing the very people that our elected officials claim to advocate for; we are literally closing our doors to business. Employers are the driving force of jobs for our lowest-paid workers and we must engage with employers to incentivize the kind of job creation that provides opportunities for all of Durham. I have sat in several meetings and heard the phrase "those aren't jobs for Durham people," and as a Durham native I find that sentiment offensive. It is our responsibility as leaders in this community to work to ensure that every Durhamite has the opportunity at a job that pays not only a living wage, but that offers the upward mobility and pathway to success of a career. This is done by partnering with our existing employers and companies that are prospecting Durham, to not only incentivize a diverse range of jobs, but to gain intel on the jobs of the future, and ensure we are preparing our workforce to take advantage of those jobs. As a councilman, I will advocate on behalf of the people of Durham in rooms with the business community, and not against the very opportunities that our residents need. Today, our elected officials are visibly absent in these crucial economic development conversations, I will ensure that changes, and that the people who are elected to serve, are in the rooms, fighting for jobs and opportunities for all of Durham.

- 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.*

I am fully committed to providing amenities for all of Durham. This is also a crucial component of a holistic and comprehensive economic development strategy. The concept of “Place based economic development” centers around providing a high quality of life for all residents of a city, including public fields, green space, and recreational facilities. Raising taxes is only one way to accomplish this goal; with a holistic economic development strategy, we can increase the overall tax base, through ensuring properties are at their highest and best use and generating profits for the city which can then cover the costs of these public amenities. Public amenities in Durham are not currently allocated equitably, and this is an essential policy change that must be made in our city. While parks exist throughout our city, those that are best maintained and highly amenitized are typically in more affluent neighborhoods, or those closest to the city center. It is my perspective that land in our city’s center, which is the most valuable from a sheer land price standpoint, should be leveraged by selling it at highest possible market value, so the city can utilize those profits to provide amenities (and housing) throughout the city.

- 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.*

-This is a subject matter with which I am intimately familiar with as Vice President at the Durham Chamber, and also extremely passionate about as a native of Durham. Providing incentives to companies to promote economic development is the best way for Durham to hold companies accountable for delivering the outcomes we desire. By providing incentives for development, City Government gives itself “skin in the game,” and the ability to negotiate deliverables such as better wage jobs, jobs for Durham residents as well as jobs for the most vulnerable in our city. We must develop an economic development strategy in Durham that works with companies to promote a more equitable economic environment in Durham; I’ve sat at the table in many corporate recruitment meetings and I hear the amazing impression that Durham makes on companies looking to bring jobs to our community. Those talks are stifled by the glaring absence of elected officials willing to partner with private industry to incentivize those jobs. We can incentivize jobs in Durham while holding companies accountable for promoting the values of our

community, including a share prosperity and the right to fair pay and opportunity for all. In fact, we must.

- 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.*

Institutional white supremacy is the biggest barrier to business ownership by people of color anywhere in the United States. Durham is no different. The lack of people of color in positions of business leadership, coupled with policies that focus only on social issues and neglect economic issues are also a major contributing factor to the current void in business ownership by black and latinx people in Durham. One of the simplest principals of economic strategy is that we will produce what incentivize; a simple analysis of the projects our community has incentivized and the racial demographics of those in positions to benefit from those incentivizes will explain the outcome of that strategy. We must expand our economic strategy to provide city incentives for organizations that promote entrepreneurship and economic opportunity for people of color. Our “Supplier Diversity” initiative is one way to do this, but we must also incentivize ownership of property and large scale projects that create generational wealth opportunities for those most marginalized in our country. The city must also create leadership training programs for people of color, as well as ensure that the spaces where decisions are made are representative of the communities that we serve. The time has ended for simply touting diversity, we must be intentional and put our money where our mouth is a community.

Housing, City Planning, and Neighborhoods

- 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.*

Equal Housing Choice should function as a method to reduce the negative impact of gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents. This should provide more housing stock, addressing the supply/demand challenges in certain areas that contributes to rising housing costs. However, the current strategy only increases our housing stock marginally, and certainly doesn't

address the full need; this is another example of a fragmented policy, absent of a cohesive vision and strategy around the development of our communities. EHC can work, but must be implemented in concert with a full economic strategy that addresses all the factors that contributed to the crisis that we are currently in; we can't simply attack these symptoms one at a time. I am a proponent of EHC, but as a part of a full strategy, not simply in a silo. The city also must ensure, as with any policy, specifically those involving housing, that neighborhood stakeholders and those most vulnerable are included in every piece of the process. And not only included to simply "chime-in" but in positions of leadership to help guide the work with an equitable lens and one that is informed by the lived experiences of the communities we aim to help.

- 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.*

Our city should seek to stimulate growth that is equitable, inclusive and that benefits all residents of Durham, particularly black and latinx residents and those most marginalized in our society. The city should seek to create economic opportunities for jobs and business ownership by establishing partnerships between the public and private sector so that Durham residents can achieve the highest quality of life possible. My life's work has been dedicated to the continued cause of uplifting members of the African diaspora in the United States and throughout the globe, and it is through this lens that I view my work in every capacity. We must deploy practical solutions for the most marginalized members of our community, and that cannot simply be limited to social issues, there must be an economic strategy and scope to this work, and I believe strongly that city governments have a crucial role in this effort. City's have the ability to recruit, grow and strengthen businesses, make crucial zoning and development decisions and establish incentives for private industry to partner in these efforts; I believe this is the best way to achieve a Durham that works for all of us.

- 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 believe affordable housing is a crucial component to achieving the high quality of life that we dream for all Durhamites. I believe it is also one of our most urgent issues to address in Durham right now. I fully support an effort to create a more diverse and affordable housing mix in Durham, however I do not believe the current version of the \$95 Million affordable housing bond achieves that. I think the current bond

overemphasizes downtown, and assumes that individuals in search of affordable housing want to live in the city's core, rather than in neighborhoods of their choosing. While downtown is great, and some people want to live there, we shouldn't assume that all people in Durham want to live in our urban core. Some people want yards, and space, and some prefer a life further from the city. The beautiful thing about Durham is we have all of the options in our city limits, we should focus on ensuring a high quality of life no matter what part of the city we are in. Job Proximity is a critical piece of a person's decision on where they live, especially people with limited resources. We haven't yet created a diverse mix of jobs downtown, meaning that many residents of these new affordable housing communities, may be further inconvenienced by driving longer distances to work. We also haven't created grocers, restaurants, childcare, and other amenities in our city's core that will serve diverse income levels. We haven't addressed the transit needs to effectively get people in and out of downtown from our major employment centers, which today are in areas like RTP, Southpoint, Northern Durham and Southwest/SouthEast Durham areas. We are approaching this backwards, and my fear as a member of the Durham community is that it will be a failure without proper planning and perspective; with roughly 3 months to go, there are just too many questions to answer and we can't afford to rush a decision like this. Land in our downtown core is the most expensive in the city, and we could, by taking a holistic approach to economic development, create a comprehensive strategy that not only returns maximum value for that land back to the city, but that also leverages those returns to create affordable housing all around our city; in areas where the dollar will go much further, and with less of a burden placed on Durhamites as tax payers. The current policy feels fragmented, and views affordable housing in a silo, rather than as a crucial component to our overall economic strategy. People of all income levels deserve to choose where they want to live, and we should fight to ensure that we all have options; not simply telling someone where they must go. To achieve this level of choice we have to not only address affordability, we must address employment, education, safety, transit and all of the contributing factors to Quality of life in Durham. As a council member I will work with my colleagues, businesses, educators, institutions and all Durhamites to create a comprehensive economic strategy that addresses these factors and ensures that Durhamites can not only afford their homes, but that they can afford for themselves the quality of life, and preserve our right to self-determination.

- 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*

I would need additional context on any rezoning decision; I also would like to develop a comprehensive affordable housing strategy as a part of a broader economic strategy to ensure that we are providing affordable housing, transit, safety, jobs, opportunities, amenities, green-space, etc. throughout our city; I believe this level of planning is necessary to truly execute on a vision of a Durham that works for all of us. Viewing these discussions as isolated, “case-by-case” issues has contributed to what feels like a very fragmented economic strategy, and fragmented community, where very different versions of Durham exist for different people. My vote on any issue would depend on the overall context of the questions, and whether or not it contributes to the goal of a Durham that works for all of us, and affordable housing is not the only component of that strategy.

- How should Durham’s Unified Development Ordinance define a “single-family dwelling?” *Please limit your answer to 200 words*

A single-family dwelling is a space with one or more people, living together as a family. Family can of course be defined in many ways, and isn’t limited to blood-relatives, or partners. Essentially a group of people living together, sharing space, using one kitchen, to prepare food, eat, etc. , It should of course (as most definitions state) be distinct from a boarding house, hotel or motel. I don’t think a designation is necessary between attached and detached homes however, and am an advocate of increased density in our neighborhoods as well as diversity of housing stock. I’m also in favor of offering people the ability to build “in-law suites” or small apartments on their property that can be rented out as an additional way to address housing affordability.

- 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*

Community investment trusts are particularly interesting as a tool to help eliminate barriers for our marginalized communities for financial empowerment; these and other methods of group investing are interesting and I believe they can be applied to Durham through both partnerships with our government entities and creative engagements with our university and private sector partners. As with any financial tool, education is a critical component and we as a community should leverage our wealth of knowledge

to not only explore these options, but to educate members of the community on how they can benefit from these types of programs.

- 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 would like to see additional focus on a holistic strategy to grow our economy, one that develops a true strategic plan for building a Durham that works for everyone. Not a fragmented policy that cobbles together different pieces of economic policy, but a truly, comprehensive approach to economic development, beyond just downtown, and toe compass all of our city. Secondly I'd like to see a priority around funding for Black, Latinx and minority businesses and property ownership. We must incentivize, with our dollars and our resources the full economic participation of all members of our community, and this has to happen through intentional economic policy. Policies that grow our tax base, while ensuring that those additional revenues are allocated to finance initiatives for the most vulnerable in our community.

- 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.*

As Vice President at the Chamber of Commerce for the past 3 years, I've been adjacent to and involved in several discussions surrounding light-rail. I witnessed, what felt like mismanagement on many sides. I felt like the rail failed for several reasons; early on, Raleigh/Wake County not agreeing to participate was a major hurdle for the rail, as much of our commuting patters are in and out of wake county, and really much of the need from a sheer volume standpoint is along that corridor. Secondly, the Durham-Orange route really didn't address enough of the pressing community needs to rally enough broad support for light rail. It didn't go to RTP, it didn't go to the airport, our south point, and only touched a few Durham neighborhoods. I feel like it was poorly positioned to the community by those championing it, and especially as we moved into the "end" of the project, it felt a lot like a project that was forced down our throats. Duke obviously was a critical partner if Light-Rail were to succeed, and rather than engaging in a way that showed a true understanding of their objections, I witnessed Duke being chastised and an attempt to force their hand, which backfired. At the last minute, the downtown business community was told that Blackwell Street would need to be cut-off, a "non-starter" for many downtown business owners and residence as this would essentially bifurcate our city, which already has some serious issues with a poorly designed loop and the natural bifurcation that our current rail system creates. These objections were also

poorly managed, and then a rushed version of a solution was provided at the last minute (that also increased costs even further). Poorly managed, too expensive, and poorly communicated are a few of the issues. We should move forward with Bus Rapid Transit, a far more practical and affordable method for Durham, and ultimately for our region. We saw this firsthand in Richmond, VA, a city very similar to Durham in size and demographics, and they were able to deploy it faster and at about a 1/10th the cost, and service many more neighborhoods in the process. This is what we should work towards in Durham. Not a \$4 billion dollar project that doesn't even get us where we need to go.

- 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.*

We should focus on driving economic growth, catalyzing opportunity and providing jobs for Durham people. A holistic approach to economic strategy will increase our tax base and revenues for the city, allowing us to provide more services to those in need. This will also create opportunities for people to improve their economic situation, and quality of life. This strategy also does not rely on an overemphasis on increased taxes for those members of our community who are already paying the highest percentage of our property taxes as it stands. We should partner with the private sector to increase overall revenue for the city, while not penalizing companies for doing well. We must move passed the mindset that economic development and equity cannot coexist, because they certainly can... in fact a comprehensive economic strategy is our best pathway to a more equitable Durham. Not simply trying to raise taxes on those who already thriving, but a focus on stimulating opportunities for us all to thrive.

Policing

- 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.*

Yes, there is a trust problem between police and communities throughout the United States, and this includes Durham. Communities of color in particular have a well-documented and fully justified trust issue with law enforcement. I do believe our current leadership is working hard to address these issues through new and innovative approaches to policing. Chief Davis and I have a few conversations around her efforts towards better training on implicit bias, de-escalation techniques and many of the systemic issues within law enforcement. I wouldn't say the work is complete, nor should we be satisfied,

but I do think we have the right leadership in place to improve the way the Durham Police Department serves our community. These issues are decades in the making, and are engrained in the fabric of law enforcement in this country, so it is understandable that transformative change can't happen overnight, or even in the couple of years that Chief Davis has been here, but I do believe she is competent and committed to doing the work to make Durham safer while restoring the trust between communities.

- 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.*

I don't advocate for any cooperation between ICE, and our city. Our City should thrive to become a sanctuary city for immigrants, and while I recognize our abilities are limited to truly exists as such, we should do everything in our power to ensure our immigrant communities are safe from harm, and the looming threat of injustice and deportation. Local governments should not only advocate against cooperation with ICE, but also advocate for our immigrant Durhamites to do all that we can to keep racists and xenophobic federal policies from threatening their safety and security.

- 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.*

Our city is growing by 20 people per day, at minimum we should allocate the appropriate funds to provide the services that our police departments offer our community. As our community grows, it makes sense to also increase funding for this and all services to ensure all Durhamites have access to the things we need to function, and be safe in our community. Police aren't simply there to respond to crimes, but they provide a host of services from responding to accidents, crosswalks, changing tires, many very valuable services beyond crime prevention and intervention. We also recruited a highly competent and a leader committed to transform our police departments culture in Chief Davis, and we should give her all of the resources she needs to do her job well, and that includes the funding she requested. This investment is crucial if we are going to be able to truly hold our law enforcement officials accountable; we are right as citizens to require a lot of them, but we must also ensure they have all that they need to get the job done. In tandem, I would also advocate for the creation of a Community Safety Task force, to help

explore and implement innovative ways to keep our community safe, but I recognize that this will take some time to develop and implement, and our community must be kept safe in the meantime. Durham residents and families deserve a “right now” solution while we work towards and evolved public safety strategy. Both are possible.

Civil Rights

- 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.*

This is a difficult question to narrow down to one issue. As a black man, I am keenly aware that all aspects of our society, and every system with which we interact is impacted by institutional white supremacy and racial inequities. All of my policy stances, as well as my life’s work is committed to addressing these inequities and eliminating barriers based on race. For the sake of this question, I’ll refer back to my point regarding the investment in and catylyzation of black and latinx business and property ownership. The wealth and income gap in Durham is a direct product of racial inequity, and we must adopt a policy that provides access to investment capital, loans and pathways to ownership for the most vulnerable in our community.

- 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.*

Our communities response to HB2 a few years ago was beautiful. I was extremely proud of the way Durham stood with our LGBTQ community members and ensured that everyone knew that we were specifically a safe and inclusive community for all members of the LGTBQ community. From an ordinance standpoint, we should implement a more robust and enforceable LGTBQ non-discrimination ordinance city-wide. I would also advocate for more investment in the LGTBQ Center of Durham, and ensure that LGBTQ Durhamites have access to safe spaces to convene, services and resources that they need.

- 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.*

I believe an equity lens is a crucial component of any social-justice effort, and

this requires the voices of those most impacted by a decision to have a leading role in this decision. This applies to our re-entry programs as well; re-entry programs should be designed by and for justice-involved individuals. We, as allies to this work, should allow justice-involved individuals to guide our work, empowering them to decide for themselves what their desired outcomes will be. Once we are properly informed, we should then create a program in public/private/higher-ed partnership to provide access to the services and opportunities needed to eliminate barriers for re-entry; of equal importance are the services that will end the cyclical nature of our justice system. When people are released from the criminal justice system, we must ensure they have all they need to stay out, and to not only survive, but to thrive. This requires access to jobs, housing, education, training, physical and mental healthcare. This also requires work on a macro-level to keep our communities safe, and to eliminate the systemic elements of poverty from our community so that individuals do not simply walk back into an environment that contributed to their initial justice-involvement.

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.