

**PA PAC Questionnaire for Durham City Council Ward Seats and Mayor**

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## **Government and the Public Good**

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

*This question immediately brings to mind the loss of young lives and the collateral consequences to our families, with the understanding that violence in our city and the county at large is inextricably linked to other pressing problems. My work as chair of the City's first Racial Equity Task Force and our resulting report gave me two years to revisit exactly these issues. These include stable, affordable, and safe housing; the widening racial wealth gap and access to well-paid jobs; access to affordable and excellent health care, including mental health care; and a thriving and well-cared for environment. The solutions are multilateral and must come from the communities themselves. I would begin to implement grassroots efforts and work together with community members to scale them. This will include spending time listening to community members--as I have been doing—to work out ideas and learn from them what they need most and how to make that happen. This may include supporting existing community violence interruption programs like Bull City United and also developing new approaches in partnership with impacted neighborhoods. It's important to recognize the many community organizations that are already working on these issues. My job as Mayor will be to learn from their successes and failures in order to move forward together. Decisions about our most impacted communities must center their voices throughout the entire process, from ideas to actualizing solutions and holding power accountable over time. As Mayor, I want us all to create a new narrative in Durham, one that prioritizes solutions created in partnership and fully-funded investments in one another and our shared future.*

## **Education**

2. Do you think it's appropriate to use the city's zoning/annexation/utility extension powers to hold charter schools accountable? If so, how would you do that?

*We need to hold all schools accountable--public, private, charter, etc. It does not make sense to me to single out one kind of school when we don't hold all accountable. We've got to admit that our public school system has been re-segregated; this is not only a charter issue. As we learned in our work on the Racial Equity Task Force, outcomes in all schools right now, including public schools, can be predicted by race. I believe we can change this together. Since the schools are in the purview of the Board of Education and County Commissioners, I would support their leadership towards a common vision of success for all of our children. Our schools are working very hard to educate our young people during this stressful time and we give thanks to the many hard-working faculty, staff, and other school personnel for all that they do on a daily basis, especially as Covid-19 has compelled them to serve not only as educators but as frontline workers.*

3. How will you ensure that school facilities are incorporated into the long-range

comprehensive planning process so that schools will serve as focal points for communities and neighborhoods?

*I understand that this is part of the Comprehensive Plan for Durham, and that there have been specific recommendations published already. I will commit to reviewing these in-depth with communities directly impacted by these plans. Shared data is critical because you can't address something without fully understanding it. Putting schools in sites that are accessible to the communities they serve is critical. Considering community character in the design of the school offers the opportunity to tell our public history via design. Too often governmental bodies plan without the input of those most impacted by their decisions. In my administration, I will develop ways to engage in conversations throughout this process. And because a race equity lens must be embedded in this process, the new Durham City-County Racial Equity Commission will be part of this conversation and decision-making to help create meaningful solutions. Finally, as with all matters of schools and community, we must make sure student voices help lead this work.*

4. How should the City Council use public dollars to ensure that youth in Durham have equitable access, including transportation, to affordable extracurricular and job training opportunities?

*We need to recognize that each of these issues is linked to the other--there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Government, schools, business, transport, and community-led efforts will all need to operate together in an integrated fashion. As we envision how to better serve our young people, we need to include the ideas and voices of youth leaders, who have often been overlooked and neglected. Covid has taught us a lot of lessons about how to reach the community via technology, but community services for youth need to be in locations in their neighborhood to make them more accessible and to alleviate transportation issues. Funding and supporting our youth should be a priority for everyone— not only is it important to support them as our city's future, but we also know that all systems in our community are connected. Youth do not exist in a bubble, and when a desert of opportunities exists for them, we all feel the hurt. By prioritizing our youth, there will be a widespread positive impact in Durham. Our task force findings suggest this would improve graduation rates, economic development, mental and physical wellness, and more. This is one of the reasons why our report recommended a Race Equity Fund, to specifically dedicate public dollars to address interconnecting issues like these. Solutions will require a race equity lens and youth voice, as well as strong funding. My experience as a youth in Durham was one where people supported me and nurtured me. It's why I am here. I want that for Durham's youth today, too.*

5. What ideas do you have for Parks and Recreation to improve specialized

programming options for different populations? (For example, disabled or religiously adherent members of our communities.)

*It is clear to me that we need to do better in addressing the needs of people with disabilities and those who feel excluded by traditional planning in our parks and rec areas. I can only understand the needs of different populations by hearing directly from them. I plan to spend time and resources, including our own Neighborhood Improvement Services, to reach out to each community across our city to better understand the programming people want to see. I would also work to understand the diversity within our disabled communities, including those suffering disabilities due to gunfire, violence, or other trauma. This question brings to mind that home isn't a safe place for everyone. I understand that, for years, many of our most-impacted neighborhoods have lamented the closing of rec centers, leading to disconnected youth and the feeling that extracurricular opportunities have been replaced by violence and crime. I commit to understanding and collaborating with other groups who feel disconnected, dismissed, or outright neglected in our city. Programming would be born out of conversations with those community members whose needs we wish to address, and there are already examples of community collaboration out there that I am interested in, including the transportation toolkit being developed by Duke University and Durham Parks and Rec. And because equity needs to be embedded in everything we do, I am interested in processes like the equity matrix being developed by the Asheville Dept. of Parks and Rec. Overall, accessible rec centers and parks with programming that resonates can offer safe spaces and build community so that everyone feels welcomed. I believe in a Durham where everyone is seen, safe, and heard.*

### **Racial Equity**

6. How does race equity play into your view of governance? Will you ensure that race equity is a part of your leadership/governance? If so, how?

*I have lived in this space for my entire life and racial equity will be centered in the way I govern. For nearly two years, I chaired the Racial Equity Task Force--the City's first-ever appointed citizen council to address this issue. I led our multiracial, multilingual, diversely aged, and gendered task force through the process of developing concrete recommendations for the City. As a member of Durham's Black community and a native of a historic Black neighborhood, I understand on a granular level how Black communities have been impacted by racially inequitable systems and the history that produced them. As a Black person, I have learned how to cross cultures and understand how to bridge and bring people together for a common cause. My experiences are rooted in being from "the hood," the bench as a judge, and as former Dean of NCCU Law School. I am able to speak the language of a diverse Durham from*

*the language of the streets to the language of the board room. (acknowledging that I am still learning Spanish). As Task Force chair, I ensured that we had simultaneous translation for our Spanish-speaking neighbors during community meetings, secured youth-centered community engagement, and worked to dismantle the barriers between some of the city's most impacted communities and our work as a city task force. As chair, I worked with the City's Neighborhood Improvement Services to secure translation and dissemination of our report upon submitting our recommendations. Finally, I commit to showing up consistently for our Latinx, Asian, LGBTQ+, Middle Eastern, refugee, and other neighbors who often feel unseen and unheard. I see you. I hear you. I look forward to learning more from you and working collaboratively to create a Durham where we all thrive. I am committed to ensuring that racial equity is not just a box to be checked or a training to complete, but rather the driver of my administration versus an afterthought. I will commit to the recommendations that we as a task force put forth to the city.*

7. What is your position on the county/city of Durham establishing a dedicated Race Equity Fund? Please explain.

*I support the creation of a Race Equity Fund in order for the City to "put its money where its mouth is" when it comes to advancing racial equity. We cannot give lip service to doing the work without funding it fully and meaningfully over time. I chaired this Task Force at Mayor Schewel's request and believe fully in our recommendations.*

8. How, if at all, should Durham utilize the 2020 Durham Racial Equity Taskforce Report?

*I will use that report as a living document to guide us in our work to advance racial equity in Durham. As chair of the task force that produced this report, I fully support our recommendations which were developed by a team of Durhamites over the course of twenty-one months. We called it "An Urgent and Loving Call to Action" and envisioned the report as a guide for the City and as a reminder to envision racial equity as urgent and loving work, and as the driver for policy, procedure, and process. It will inevitably change over time and I am ready to continue these important conversations and do the work.*

## **Housing and Transportation**

9. How will you ensure that new housing development serves the Durham community equitably, including households with income less than \$15/hour?

*We need to deepen investments in and deploy local finance tools (ex: Durham Affordable Housing Loan Fund) to ensure private developers build as many units as possible affordable for families making less than 30% of the Durham-Chapel Hill Area*

*Median Income (AMI). Current HUD rules set Durham's AMI as that of Durham and Orange County combined, so AMI in 2021 is \$86,000+, more than 50% higher than Durham County's median household income. If we build "affordable" homes at 60% or 80% of AMI we are building middle-class homes. Wages for thousands of our quality-of-life and care-sector workers have not increased for more than 20 years.*

*When we expect new development (built by private, for-profit developers) to provide low-cost housing, historically this yields low-quality newly-constructed housing at best (see the origins of HUD and Open Communities program). In today's housing market, the demands of for-profit developers have led to "affordable housing" being built only in small numbers of homes and those largely for middle-class people. The City's investment and collaboration with DHIC to build the Jackson Street apartments is a fine and unusual example of low-rent units being of the same quality as full market-rate ones. More of that is key.*

*Otherwise, prioritizing public support to for-profit development also leads to an implicit reliance on the concept of "filtering" in housing policy. This suggests that newly-built high-quality homes, while not affordable to folks of low-income today, may be so one day in the future after years of wear and continual disinvestment. That is, market-rate units built today may be affordable to working people in the future when homes are no longer high-quality or as desirable. We can't afford to displace our people today for the promise of substandard housing in the future.*

10. Would you support adding a city policy to the Comprehensive Plan which favors the inclusion of at least 20% small dwelling units in new residential developments? If such a policy were adopted, under what circumstances would you let it guide your vote on zoning/annexation/utility extension cases? Under what circumstances would you make an exception to such a policy?

(Note: 'Small' in this context would mean smaller than 1,200 sf in single-family units, whether attached or detached, and smaller than 1,000 sf in two bedroom apartments in multifamily buildings.)

*The movement toward requiring size-restricted affordable homes, whether through zoning or otherwise, is a piece of the puzzle to be sure. But it will always exclude larger families and intergenerational households. And furthermore, this is a housing policy suggestion that does not include shifting power to Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and poor families. I would prioritize cases in which at least 20% were "small" in the manner described \*and\* dedicated to cooperative or individual ownership by poor and low-income residents, naming explicit racial equity goals.*

11. How will you make the development process transparent to neighborhoods and ensure they have a seat at the table with planning staff and developers? Would you

support Durham neighborhoods in creating small area plans?

*First, because I value and center transparency, meetings with developers will not happen behind closed doors and without community knowledge. I will work to ensure that the Planning Department staff establish equitable engagement as a standard procedure (as outlined in the Neighborhood Improvement Services' Blueprint for Equitable Engagement), in all cases possible - prioritizing participation from low-income residents-- traditionally but not exclusively Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. I would support in all my capacities the creation of small area plans for historically disinvested communities when the process is led by residents of those communities. I would endorse the use of City funds to dedicate staff planners, community-, or 3rd party consultants to support the leadership of these communities in determining their own future land uses. Finally, this problem will not be solved until there are real checks and balances over whoever is responsible for approving development projects. I am committed to envisioning and operationalizing what that might look like. Suggestions for this direction and for holding power accountable are stated in the Durham City Racial equity Task Force Report.*

12. How will you expand bus service, so riders can connect across Durham? What transportation infrastructure is most pressing to fund and expand?

*First, it's important that we recognize that transportation, like all of the issues presented in this questionnaire, is interconnected with other systems and must be addressed using that perspective. Additionally, I use racial equity as the driver for my understanding and policy framing. Transit Plans too often do not address the urgent needs of the Bragtown Community and other Legacy communities. It is critical to prioritize and allocate funds to ensure safe streets, sidewalks, bus stops, and bus shelters in minority neighborhoods. Transportation not only serves as a connector to communities and jobs but also to polling places. At a time when the voting rights of Black Americans are directly under attack, Durham must be at the forefront of ensuring all residents have equal access to the polls. Further, as we think about the future of Durham's transit improvements, it concerns me that out of the 945 bus stops in Durham, more than 800 of those stops are not ADA compliant. This impacts all of us-- we need to be prioritizing this. Being ADA compliant is a low bar to meet, and we have so many who would benefit-- folks with disabilities, the elderly, people with children, and more. Our transit taxes fund this and should be serving all.*

13. Black communities in Durham are being threatened by displacement due to private investment. What resources and support can the City and County deploy to help longtime residents resist the negative impact of these developments and facilitate self-determined visions for the future of each community?

*I am very passionate about this issue and it is one of the primary reasons why I chose to run for office. Regarding self-determined visions, we need to give the power of leadership and \*ownership of real estate and land use decisions\* to Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and low-income residents, particularly those with long histories in our community and those with low and fixed income. Until we find a way to change the present system of people with power making decisions for people with less power, this problem will persist and our neighbors will continue to feel the harm. Our staff and elected leaders need to invite community members into meetings requested by developers; we need to endorse and advocate for the wishes and needs stated by community members. We also need to push for community benefit agreements within new real estate developments that \*directly\* support impacted residents. And we need to negotiate shared ownership or shareholding arrangements where impacted residents can also benefit from the wealth generated by for-profit developments. The City must establish powerful and effective roles for its staff in this advocacy for resident benefit and autonomy. In order to encourage community involvement, stipends, parking, etc should be provided.*

14. Energy affordability is an underappreciated aspect of housing affordability. What steps can the City take to ensure high electricity bills do not force residents out of their homes?

*Again, I see this question as related to a number of other intersecting issues. For example, sparse or non-existing tree canopies in some of our most distressed neighborhoods contribute to skyrocketing energy costs that cannot be borne by poor or low-income residents. I would work with Parks and Rec and other council members to work to secure funds from the City to plant and care for those improvements. Additionally, in the past, the City has participated (in partnership with the County) in home energy retrofit programs that extended subsidies to homeowners to make targeted energy-saving upgrades. Similar programs could be established in unison with broader anti-eviction programs to extend energy-saving benefits directly to households, owners, and renters alike, who are most impacted by high utility bills. To be clear, cities do not set the cost of utilities, but we can work with utility companies to make sure they establish reasonable and fair prices. The greater concern is to increase the income of families such that they are no longer threatened, and we can do this by giving incentives to companies who participate in job training programs that seek to employ people from economically challenged communities.*

15, How would you act to ensure that development in Durham is done in an equitable way that benefits long-time residents as well as new arrivals?

*I love Durham and all of our people. I want everyone here to live their best lives. I grew*

*up on the West End, a historic working-class African American community that is rapidly gentrifying. So, I am intimately familiar with this issue, which by the way is not new, and fixing it is not as simple as having good intentions. We have to learn from well-intended efforts, but mainly we've got to get all of the principal stakeholders at the table early in the process and get them talking to each other - old community residents, new residents, developers, and the city. Each has something to teach us and something at stake. Durham is going to continue to grow, and I support that and hope that it does, but it must grow in ways that serve all the residents of Durham and not just new residents or just old residents. We get there by bringing the stakeholders together and pushing for everyone to win - and I believe that's possible.*

### **Environment and Climate**

16. What do you see as the most critical environmental and climate justice issues facing Durham, and what do you believe the city should do about them? Specifically, what opportunities do you see at the intersection of climate action, environmental justice, and Durham's economic development strategy?

*Global climate change is real. We've all probably seen images of the draughts, raging wildfires, and shifting weather patterns on the news. Climate change is affecting all of us. But we also must recognize that vulnerable populations are the most adversely affected by our changing environment. Historically, poorer people have lived in lower-lying areas where property is less expensive. This is particularly true of poor and BIPOC. I take environmental and climate justice issues very seriously, understanding that the challenges they create do not affect all of us the same. We need to establish priorities based on having determined who is most impacted and the ecological areas that are most threatened by these changes. This can be done by engaging with the many NGOs and local academic institutions where this type of work is already being done. We certainly will protect Durham's important watersheds. Fortunately, we already have community members who have organized themselves to do that very thing and have been doing important work on this for a long time. My administration will work with them to keep our water safe and the watershed habitats healthy.*

17. American city government officials have the unique power of regulating real estate through zoning. Will you accept donations to your campaign from major real estate interests? Please explain your position.

*I will never compromise my principles. So, whether we're talking about real estate or some other interest group, it really doesn't matter because at the end of the day, I have to live with Elaine O'Neal and I have to face my family and our community, and I'm not changing that for anyone.*

### **City Finances, Incentive, and Services**

18. What is the most important thing that is not currently being funded by the City? Would you be willing to raise taxes to fund this item?

*The most important thing that's not being funded by the city is not a thing, it's people. We've got to do more to improve the living standards and quality of life of people who are barely getting by financially. We've got to pay towards a brighter future, by investing in and encouraging businesses to invest in people. I believe we have to keep all options open in order to help our neighbors, and in turn, help our city to thrive.*

19. What is your position on providing public incentives to private firms to promote economic development in Durham?

*I am going to remain open to hearing what developers have to say if they are attempting to assist us in addressing the acute problems we have, with for example affordable housing or transportation issues. I am going to remain steadfastly committed to assuring that Durham is a city with equitable economic opportunities, assuring that we do not overlook our own residents.*

### **Justice and Law Enforcement**

20. The newly elected Council will have to decide whether to transfer fifteen frozen positions by the current Council from the Durham Police Department to the newly created Community Safety Department. What is your position regarding the new Department, and would you support the transfer? If the Department's pilot programs are successful, what other resources would you be willing to commit to it, and where would they come from?

*I think new is the keyword here because it rightly implies a lot of unknowns, which has many of us wondering and worried about how this will play out and whether, ultimately, we will be safe. As mayor, the safety of our citizens is of the highest priority for me. As a former Chief District Court Judge and Superior Court Judge, I have many years of professional experience addressing crime and criminality. Rather than policing, I would like to frame the conversation in terms of community safety. We reviewed several community-led approaches to safety in our task force report. We also have the new Durham Community Safety and Wellness Task Force with their ear to the ground in understanding how best to keep each other safe. We need to invest in community-led and community-driven approaches, evaluate their effectiveness and continue to innovate.*

21. Are you satisfied with the Durham Police Department, including its administrative, law enforcement, and security functions? Should City government increase or decrease resources allocated to the Police Department? Please explain your answer.

*I know that our Durham community is split on the issue of policing and that is ok. All voices are needed and welcome to help keep our city safe for everybody.*

*Last night, seven people were shot in Durham. Our neighbors are often afraid or unwilling to come forward to the police or other governmental agencies for fear of retaliation. We have to understand the experiences in Black and brown communities of being both overpoliced and under policed at the same time. How does a budget increase or decrease impact those problems? We have work to do.*

*I have had the opportunity of working with the members of DPD and other law enforcement agencies all over the state of NC for over 24 years as a Judge. I have also served as a Commissioner for the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agency, Inc. (CALEA) for many years. As a Judge, I had to review the actions of the Durham Police Department in cases on a daily basis. At that time, I was satisfied that they performed the core functions of policing in a manner that is consistent with what the law requires. However, there is always room for improvement in any government agency. I am unwilling to answer whether the city government should increase or decrease resources to Durham PD without a thorough understanding of the budget and how resources are currently being spent, and how any increase or decrease will affect their ability to serve our neighbors. But as I mentioned above, my work on the task force and the city's development of the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force will help guide my decision-making.*

### **Political**

22. For whom did you vote for in the 2016 and 2020 presidential and gubernatorial elections? For whom did you vote in the 2020 U. S. Senate election? *Please limit your answer to the names of your selections.*

*Hillary Clinton and Joseph Biden*

*Roy Cooper, Roy Cooper*

*Cal Cunningham*

*Thank you for completing this questionnaire.*

*Please do not forget to provide us with your resume or biographical statement.*