

Priority Issues

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Wake County has an affordable housing crisis. The past decade of development has left working class families behind – luxury housing is being created on an unprecedented scale while over 41% of tenant households (55,714 families) struggled to pay rent last year and young families are increasingly forced to look outside Wake county for affordable homeownership options. Families who find affordable housing in mobile home parks report difficulty getting written leases and issues with predatory owners refusing to provide titles after completion of rent-to-own payments.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for affordable housing and protections. Impacts have been devastating and far-reaching and though the CDC has released an order halting evictions for a broad group of renting families, some evictions are moving forward and an increasing number of landlords are pursuing illegal “self-help” evictions to get rid of their struggling tenants.

JOBS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Over 107,000 Wake County residents have filed for unemployment since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Entire industries have been upended, with job losses especially severe in the hospitality and food service sectors. North Carolina, Wake County, and the City of Raleigh expect major revenue shortfalls as a result.

Despite the upheaval in the economy, massive developments such as Downtown South march forward. At 133 acres, the south Raleigh development will be anchored by a stadium larger than the PNC arena surrounded by 1.7M ft² of office space, 1200 hotel rooms, and 1750 residential units, and could potentially create close to 6,000 new jobs over the next 15 years. Though mega developments like Downtown South have the potential to revitalize the local economy and put Wake County residents back to work, they also have the potential to harm our communities through flooding and other environmental impacts, gentrification, displacement and more.

Starting with Downtown South, ONE Wake will explore how nearby communities can partner with developers of these projects to secure community benefits such as workforce development and protections such as flood mitigation in exchange for approvals and direct and indirect public subsidy.

EDUCATION

Of ONE Wake’s top three priorities, education is the arena that has changed the most dramatically since the organization voted to approve our agenda in December 2019. COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way students are educated in Wake County, and the field continues to change rapidly. Furthermore, the election has the potential to shift the ideological composition of the NC legislature, which could have significant impacts on local schools.

Given the unprecedented speed and scale of the changes in this arena, ONE Wake proposes that the organization launch a targeted listening campaign after the November election to engage 1,000 parents, students, teachers and staff to identify the current issues and inequities within our schools, and to caucus in the first quarter of 2021 to review the themes from the campaign and to identify specific priorities for research and action.

External Actions:

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 1) **Build affordable housing on County-owned land within municipalities across Wake County.** The Wake County Housing Department has already inventoried five parcels of county-owned land in Raleigh, Holly Springs, Wendell, and Wake Forest that have strong potential for affordable housing development. ONE Wake calls on candidates from Districts 1, 2, 5, and 6 to:
 - a. Take responsibility, if elected, to secure financing and a developer for affordable housing at the site for people earning 60% or lower of the AMI.
 - b. Be the chief negotiator with municipal partners to help overcome barriers such as zoning and other regulations that may diminish the number of affordable housing units.
 - c. Meet with ONE Wake leaders within 3 months of being elected to report on your progress towards these goals.
- 2) **Increase penalties for self-help evictions and provide tenants with a clear point of contact for assistance and redress.** ONE Wake calls on the candidates for Attorney General to commit to use the consumer protection power of the office to penalize landlords who illegally evict tenants and to allocate increased staff resources to field calls and reports from tenants.
- 3) **Support tenants in local mobile home parks who are at risk of losing their housing due to unfair practices by management or owners.** ONE Wake calls on the candidates for Attorney General to commit to use the power of their office to intervene to prevent predatory practices that put mobile home park families at risk of losing their homes.

JOBS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- 1) **Delay approving the rezoning request for Downtown South to allow for a community-led listening campaign to engage residents of all impacted communities¹.** ONE Wake calls on the Raleigh City Council to delay approval of the rezoning request until residents are given the opportunity to provide inputs on how the project can meet community needs.
- 2) **Require community benefits agreements with developers of large projects that receive direct and indirect public subsidy, starting with Kane Realty and Downtown South.** ONE Wake calls on John Kane to negotiate a community benefit agreement to mitigate flood risk and to address other community needs, such as jobs and workforce development.

Internal Actions:

EDUCATION

- 1) **Recruit ONE Wake members during the October 13 Founding Assembly to form a large, diverse, countywide team to lead a 1,000+ person listening campaign after the election.**
- 2) **For every ONE Wake institution to recruit 10 parents of students, students, teachers or other school staff to attend the October 13 Founding Assembly.**

¹ Project developer Kane Realty has held some neighborhood meetings to satisfy the outreach requirements of the rezoning request, but the City of Raleigh only requires mailed notice to property owners within 500 feet of the development. This is clearly inadequate given the exceptional size, and impact of this proposed development. Residents of nearby downstream neighborhoods like Rochester Heights (~2,400 feet away from site) are not required to be notified, but without substantial environmental safeguards this development will exponentially worsen the severe flooding that already affects the community.