



Questionnaire for Mayor and City Council Candidates 2021

Candidate Name: DeDreana Freeman

Date: August 17, 2021

Position Sought : Durham City Council, Ward 1

What is your ideal vision for Durham? How will your leadership in elected office get us there?

I aspire to co-create with the Durham community to build an equitable, safe and healthy environment for residents to live, work, worship, and play. To get there, community members must engage in municipal decision-making, which will lead to innovative solutions to issues. I will continue to support community-driven efforts, especially those led by the most marginalized, by connecting community members with other thought leaders, pushing for projects to be brought forward for consideration, challenging people to think differently, questioning our processes and systems that may act as barriers for change, and directing funding for initiatives. In other words, being the connector I have always been to build social, economic, and environmental justice.

What do you think is the biggest challenge Durham is currently facing and how would you address it?

Durham does not have a singular biggest challenge. The challenges we face as a city are interconnected. Residents face inequities around jobs, community health and safety, sustainable housing and transportation, and environmental justice. We must take the tools that we have created, like the Equitable Engagement Blueprint, and push forward in using them to collaboratively face these challenges. We must continue to engage developers around equitable development and affordable housing that incorporates sustainability in energy efficiency throughout the urban and suburban tiers across the city. We must seek to expand coordination of planning efforts with workforce and economic development programs to train and recruit strategically, continuing growth with equity in mind.

There has been a nation-wide push to extend the federal eviction moratorium that was due to end last month. More than 11 million people across the US were at risk of being evicted from their homes if the moratorium had not been extended until October 2021.

Many residents in Durham will still be in jeopardy of being evicted in October 2021 if the moratorium is not extended again. What protections will you push for to ensure that residents are able to stay in their homes, despite state preemption laws? What would you do to support those who are in need of financial assistance?

Currently, I am working with the community and city staff to deliver a tenants bill of rights that would highlight what our City can do, is doing, and should do better. We can also include additional layers of protection for the state and federal government to implement, acknowledging the work is not limited to Durham.

We need to find ways to regulate the rental market, enact a more stringent minimum housing code that keeps homes safe and affordable, and eradicate unenforceable lease terms. We must track the race, ethnicity, and gender of those facing eviction. Required fees for basic property operations (like garbage and water) should be the responsibility of landlords. All homes should be safe, healthy, and energy-efficient. A Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) with the 1st right of refusal and funding to support the purchase of the property they reside in would also benefit tenants.

Durham has been identified as the city with the second-biggest rent increase across the country, with a 46.8 percent jump year-over-year. (data based on two-bedroom apartments across the U.S. - Triangle Business Journal) What are your plans to ensure affordable housing for ALL residents moving forward? In addition to more affordable housing what are the measures you think need to happen to ensure affordability in Durham regarding renters?

As I mentioned, the challenges that Durham faces as a city are interconnected. Residents face inequities around jobs, community health and safety, sustainable housing and transportation, and environmental justice. We must combat these inequities on all fronts for all residents to have affordable housing. While several measures can be implemented, some would not be possible with the current legislature.

The historically Black communities of Braggtown, Merrick Moore, and Walltown are being threatened by displacement due to private investment and development. What resources and support can the City deploy to help longtime residents resist the negative impact of these developments? (Question submitted by Walltown Community Association)

The city has limited tools to control development. But where zoning and planning cases come before the council, there is an opportunity to request support for longtime residents to offset displacement.

The majority of City Council's power lies in zoning. What are your ideas around equitable zoning? How will you implement them?

Implementation of equitable zoning is a matter that takes a majority of the council. If developers continue to plan our city as they currently are, we will not meet the needs of residents by just

adding more housing. We need to fine-tune our land use to allow for equitable tools to address specific community needs in small area planning, which would allow those who are the most marginalized to advocate more for their community needs before zoning meetings. There must be a leveling of the field around who gets to decide how the land in our city is used and how the public can benefit most from the uses. As our comprehensive plan is developed, we have an opportunity to wrap in the tools and resources to continue to open the process for the people who are usually not in the room when the vote is taken.

Additionally, 'Equitable Zoning' could include inclusionary zoning to allow for customization of land use based on community. However, inclusionary zoning is currently preempted by the state.

Durham For All and Durham Beyond Policing collaborated on our 10 to Transform campaign earlier this year. Our demand to City Council was to transfer 60 vacant officer positions in the Durham Police Department (DPD) to a new Department of Community Safety and Wellness (DCSW) and hire unarmed professionals to respond to traffic and mental health crisis calls. The City Council reallocated 5 positions from DPD to the DCSW and froze 15 more in DPD, with an affirmative vote needed in January to reallocate them to DCSW. Do you commit to fulfilling our 10 to Transform demand and vote to reallocate those 15 frozen positions to the DCSW in January 2022? Would you vote to reallocate 20 more vacancies each year for the next two years? Why or why not?

I will continue to have conversations with as many stakeholders as possible, including the police chief and community members, to decide the best course of action. Being inclusive and open about solutions means hearing from a variety of voices. The issue of policing is layered in history, racism and white supremacy. Our criminal justice system, as a whole, works as intended, meaning to harm those that the system does not value. This is evidenced by the deaths of too many black and brown people nationwide. In Durham, we continue to experience an uptick in gun violence. Addressing public safety requires a multifaceted approach that addresses intervention and prevention. I agree that we must continue to invest in alternative forms of policing, but we must do so with policing that keeps everyone safe and includes accountability. The city's community health and safety task force will make recommendations on how to move forward. I look forward to supporting solutions that go beyond policing.

In the meantime, we must also take steps to ensure that our youth have access to enrichment activities and opportunities to express their talents. We must also ensure that all residents have access to quality jobs, housing, food, and health care to prevent desperate and/or violent action. Communities that are directly impacted by gun violence in Durham should be centered in the conversation as we move along together. Having these conversations absent those community members will not lead to everyone in our community feeling safe.

During our 10 to Transform campaign, there were deep conversations with our community and elected officials about what safety looks like for our community. The uptick in gun violence was a consistent thread in many of these conversations, with many different views around how we address the gun violence in our city. What are your

strategies to address the gun violence in Durham? How would you ensure that Durham has safe communities?

As mentioned, I believe we must take a multifaceted approach to public safety that addresses intervention and prevention. There are many strategies that we can implement. I will continue to support funding for violence interrupter programs like Bull City United and Luv & Respect. We must make space for the formerly justice-involved to lead and support programs like Jubilee Home to prevent recidivism. Other programs focus on investing in our youth like the county's My Brother's Keeper initiative, which provides enrichment opportunities for youth. There is no one size fits all approach or program that will meet every one of our city's needs.

To ensure safer communities, we need to continue providing quality jobs while improving housing stability, food security, and health care. We must foster partnerships across sectors, including education, to build stronger employment pathways for youth and adults so that community members can take advantage of the jobs coming into the area

In March 2020, bus fares were suspended on public buses in Durham, Raleigh, and Cary. This freeze on fares has now been extended until June 2022. What's your plan for continued affordable transit in our city?

Our goal should be to make buses fare-free in Durham. The federal funding we have received has helped offset the cost. Moving forward, we have to decide on how we prioritize buses in our transit system. With the current bus driver shortages and COVID-related conditions, I am concerned that 98% of our bus riders say they are reliant on buses as their only mode of transportation. These riders could face major challenges if our bus driver shortage deepens. Yet, this issue must be addressed in order to increase route frequency. We need to find the funding now to account for the fare-free model moving forward with raising taxes as a last resort.

With a commitment from City Council to increase bus transit service levels, Go Triangle could build out its transportation system, creating a more equitable approach to support coordinated pipelines of bus rapid transit service. They can work with our local colleges and universities like Duke, Durham Technical Community College and North Carolina Central University to coordinate and cross-pollinate routes.

Due to increasing cases of Covid-19 and the spread of the different variants, there is a possibility of another shutdown. Many people faced financial hardships during the last shutdown. How would you support workers if there is another shutdown? What measures do you think the City should take in responding to the ongoing emergence of Covid-19 variants?

The City can offer a municipal stimulus payment to workers impacted by COVID to help offset their financial hardships and emergency needs. The City can also continue to support Durham-based small businesses to keep residents employed.

As we move forward and COVID variants emerge, I am supportive of the indoor mask mandate. We must continue to encourage residents to get vaccinated and support locally-led efforts to help community members in doing so

Participatory Budgeting is one example of how elected officials can democratize the powers of their office. If you are elected, what is another example of how you would share your power and give more people in the community the ability to make decisions that directly impact them?

I am a strong advocate for making sure those most directly impacted have a seat at the table. When I first ran for office, I stated I would seek to form a Fair Shake Commission to address inequities in our decision-making, policies, budgeting, and contracting. Instead of implementing one commission, all of our boards, committees and commissions have either established or are working to establish tools to address inequities in our city government.

The Tenants Bill of Rights is one aspect, but more people are engaging in our boards, committees and commissions than when I ran for office. I will continue to host roundtable discussions led by community voices and supported by community leaders and city staff. I will continue to advocate to address inequities, including supporting our City-County Racial Equity Commission to address issues of race and racism in our decision making, policies, budgeting, contracting and around human rights.

Not all people who give birth or become pregnant are women. Do you support birthing people's right to choose? Why or why not?

I support people's right to choose around their bodies.

Our local elected bodies need to share a collective vision and work together for education for all Durham students. Do you believe Durham needs more charter schools? Why or Why not?

While the City Council does not have any fiduciary responsibility or decision-making authority for the school system, we can support workforce development efforts, like the city's funding of internships, and support before, after, or out-of-school services. As it relates to the number of schools, we should have a sufficient number of schools to have reasonable class sizes for the number of school-age children in our county.

Holding elected office requires one to make hard choices. If elected, who (please be specific) will you turn to for insight and support in counseling you in tough times?

During tough times, I have turned to several resources and people for insight and support. I lean most heavily on the people in the community who are proximate to the benefit or harm of the decision. I have also gained valuable counsel over the years from the University of North Carolina School of Government, the Honorable MaryAnn Black and Andrea Harris before they

passed away. It's been difficult to replace that wealth of knowledge and expertise, but the lessons learned live on in my public service.

I also lean heavily on the Brookings Institute and PolicyLink for resources. My husband and social circle 'kitchen cabinet' of supporters and experts often offer valuable feedback and thought-provoking reading material to help me decide on my own. I value their judgment based on their service to our community and their commitment to honoring and valuing the people of Durham, who I serve.