



## Questionnaire for Mayor and City Council Candidates 2021

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**Candidate Name:** Elizabeth Takla

**Date:** 8/18/2021

**Position Sought:** City Council, Ward 1

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

Durham in my ideal vision would be a safe home with opportunities for all. I would advocate for community safety and sustainable economic growth for Durham. I would endeavor to root out mismanagement of the city's resources and foster more effective and efficient programs.

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

I think Durham's growth is a challenge. Unsustainable growth complicates every responsibility of the city government. I would critically look at the investments of the Affordable Housing Bond in which the city participates to ensure symbiotic applications that uplift and direct growth wisely.

**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?**

There exists programs addressing these issues, such as The Durham Emergency Rental Assistance Program for emergency issues of eviction. For ongoing issues with evictions and poverty, Durham must better manage the Affordable Housing Bond so that Durham has housing available and affordable for vulnerable people. This bond should be utilized effectively to address neighborhoods that are in disrepair and then create new safe and affordable housing for residents in Durham.

**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?**

The Durham Affordable Housing Bond has tremendous responsibility to its residents. Durham must manage the Bond so that mixed income communities are diligently cultivated. Existing affordable housing must be habitable and not cost residents their dignity. Rent control measures should be considered for new communities and existing communities.

**The historically Black communities of Braggton, 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)**

Durham City charges more in taxes than neighboring counties and seems to do less. Durham City Council must budget in ways that are effective and sustainable. The city must look at depressed areas and engage in sustainable and beneficial investments in such areas. Proper management of the affordable housing bond, along with its application to existing communities, is essential.

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

Zoning must be applied in a thoughtful way. The existing use of subject areas, demography, topography and traffic patterns must be considered before requests are granted. To me equitable zoning means doing no harm to existing communities but rather creating symbiotic growth in desired areas.

**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?**

No, I am not in support of reducing Police Department funding. If anything, greater funding needs to occur to implement a multi pronged approach to policing, including featuring a team of supplemental services to help deal with special situations such as the new Department of Community Safety and Wellness.

**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?**

I would ask the Police Chief what they need from the city in their budget requests and try to allocate as much as possible to help solve the issues of crime in our community. At one point, Shotspotter was in consideration as a solution for gun violence. Community policing is another consideration to help curb gun violence. There are tools available to help police use better and smarter policing strategies. I would show support for an array of solutions to bolster the confidence and effectiveness of our police department.

**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?**

Durham would do well to extend Free Fares to all medicare recipients rather than the current rate of \$0.50 fares. Already Durham provides Free Fares to folks age 65+, children, youths and students. Moreover, the conditions of bus stops should be improved to where there is seating and shelter provided along with bus route maps, at each location. Currently, the bus stop markers on the side of many busy streets without seating and shelter are not dignified. Durham needs to improve such bus stops.

**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?**

We have learned so much about COVID-19 in the past year and a half. We need to apply science and require employers utilize measures that create safe work environments, be that at home or using PPE. Workers who may be affected by shutdown closings can and should apply for unemployment benefits. The City should continue to base policies on science; I support the most recent reversal back to universal masking.

**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?**

Participatory Budgeting is essential. I would ask all recipients or committees benefiting from public funds to detail their (proposed or planned) use of funds.

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

Yes, I support birthing people's right to choose. All people should be allowed to choose their own laboring practices or space with whom they desire. The privacy and preferences of the birthing party are paramount to their experience and should be honored.

**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?**

Yes, Durham needs more educational mobility. Parents should have a variety of acceptable options in which to send their children. DPS is fighting a battle of public opinion. Schools get rated poorly and then parents do not want to send their kids to a poor performing school. I think its a practical solution to allowing a Charter School to form and make better use of a facility where a failing school existed before. Charter schools, without being bound to the same requirements as public schools, can pursue different models of learning than the State allows. This differentiation in programs or curriculums could greatly enhance our young workforce. Durham needs to cultivate more options that parents are excited about instead of viewing the schools with trepidation. Allowing open choice of schools would allow parents to consider an array of options rather than being bound by school district lines.

**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?**

My husband, without a doubt.