



Questionnaire for Mayor and City Council Candidates 2021

Candidate Name: Rebecca Harvard Barnes

Date: 8/17/2021

Position Sought: Mayor

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

My ideal vision for Durham expands the comprehensive plan of Engage Durham and the city's '19-'21 Strategic Plan, where all people prosper due to a growing and thriving local economy. Everyone, especially people who have historically had less of a voice and diminished power in the process, would play a part in making this vision a reality. All Durham residents would have a safe, affordable place to live. Food insecurity would be non-existent and everyone would have access to good, reliable public transportation. Workers in Durham would be paid, at a minimum, a living wage and anyone who needed access to mental or physical health services would be able to access it easily. Durham would provide the best schools in the state because administrators and educators would want to be there and children would be eager to learn. A sense of belonging and purpose would be possible for each of Durham's residents as we strive to create equality for all and establish justice where there has been none. Green spaces in Durham would flourish and an intentional focus on environmental issues would be profound. The emphasis on keeping residents safe from harm would be rooted in the fundamental understanding that violence is a reaction based in fear and pain. It would be ideal to see Durham divest in brutal policing practices focusing instead on loving our neighbors. My leadership will help us toward this ideal vision of Durham by engaging people who are eager for a connector to help make this happen. It is absolutely possible to live into this vision for Durham. It will require everyone to get involved and play their part. It will require organization of the multitude of individuals who are already doing incredible work in the over 1000 agencies, non-profits, ministries and organizations attempting to make Durham whole but struggle because of the vast and overwhelming sense of disconnectedness. This vision will require focused changes of established structures and laws that have impeded civic progress for decades. It will require someone like me, Rebecca Harvard Barnes, who can unify us all and make this ideal vision of Durham a reality. #together4durham

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

The most glaring issue in Durham and in North Carolina, the United States and the world is, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic. Our city will need to ensure that all of its citizens are safe and leading the state, by example, in regards to becoming vaccinated and practicing safety procedures put in place by local policy makers. This is a deadly virus and should be taken seriously, as seriously as the recent increase in gun violence in our city. Gun violence and the safety of Durham residents is a huge challenge and I would attempt to tackle these issues by focusing on root causes of behavior that result in this type of violence. I believe more violence will erupt as the moratorium on evictions is lifted and people are finding themselves in desperate situations. Durham must have a plan that includes a tremendous amount of financial resources to support the evicted and even the landlords (upon establishing a need) if necessary, and so continued work with the Durham Eviction Diversion Program would be crucial. We will need to engage people to help with the emotional crisis that is already happening because of the hardships that so many Durham residents have had during this pandemic. Not everyone in Durham is even fully aware of these issues which most challenge our city. Educating people about them and offering opportunities for how they can assist their neighbors would be a big focus of my work as Mayor.

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?

As was mentioned in my response to question #2, continued work with the Durham Eviction Diversion Program would be crucial in the event that state preemption laws were established in regards to the eviction moratorium. There is so much wealth and prosperity in this city, if everyone, with the means to do so, could do something to help their neighbors in need we could support one another until a plan is in place going forward which is sustainable. The need is urgent, this particular crisis, imminent. Durham is capable of responding to this issue if encouraged to do so by understanding how it ultimately affects us all.

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?

Anyone who has ever either lived here for over the past 10 years or been gone during that time and recently returned can tell you that the city of Durham doesn't look, or feel, anything like it used to. In many ways this is an exciting, wonderful thing, in many ways it is the reason we find ourselves in this predicament and shame on us for not acknowledging that right off the bat. We can not go back and undo what has been done in regards to housing development, city

planning, zoning and more that has contributed to the phenomenal increase in rent in Durham and lack of affordable housing. Is it really a surprise to anyone that a town can be built faster than a committee can talk about how to not have it all get away from us? There is and has been a lot of work being done for affordable housing in Durham. There are groups who have worked tirelessly to ensure that gentrification ceases or at least slows down but despite all of that, we now find ourselves facing down a massive eviction moratorium and nowhere for people to afford to go and live. There is also a national shortage of building material which even further impedes the idea that affordable housing could be built with urgency.

As mayor, I would work tirelessly to access funding for Durham Housing Authority and oversee it's work to be sure that new, safe housing would be built and existing housing would be improved. I would also encourage programs such as Home Share Durham to become more viable and prevalent. I would ask citizens to strongly consider not allowing their property to stay vacant while people are desperate for an affordable place to live. I would continue to seek ways to creatively incentivise people to 'do the right thing' in regards to keeping everyone in a home and not having to choose between paying rent or taking care of the many other expenses in daily living. I, most definitely, would engage in conversations about how to establish reparations to Durham citizens who find themselves in a housing crisis because of the systemic laws that have existed in this nation intentionally meant to keep them from being homeowners in the first place or having led to them being marginalized and lacking necessary resources today.

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)

I'm not sure if the city has placed incentives upon these investments that would speak to this issue yet or not, if they haven't that is the first place I would start. If you want to invest or develop in Durham, you will have to work with the city as a whole to create, going forward, an all inclusive community. Smart growth in Urban planning must be implemented in cases like this where continued development is encroaching. Assuming these types of programs are being implemented then it would be the duty of the city to make sure that the residents have all of the information they need to work with the city to resist these negative impacts and demand positive growth.

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

I believe it is the ethical duty of elected officials to promote equality and stability in the municipality they serve. Any negative or biased zoning practices in Durham must cease. Public housing will be built based on Fair Housing Laws and not relegated to particular areas of the city. Continued growth and development of Durham would go under even more intensive scrutiny than has ever been seen before. Our city depends on it. The earth beneath our city depends on it also.

Durham For All and Durham Beyond Policing collaborated on our 10 to Transform campaign earlier this year. Our demand to the 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?

Yes! Because mental health issues can not be resolved in the city jail. Schools, public libraries, social workers, therapists, families, friends, communities of faith and civic engagement are all associated with deterring criminal behavior.

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 look to programs like Bull City United to assist in these strategies. I would find ways to equip local influencers with the means they would need to have positive persuasion on the people who are most inclined to resorting to gun violence as a means to having their agenda being made known. I would get unpermitted guns out of the hands of unlicensed carriers. The City of Durham would work with local law enforcement and the justice system to ensure that perpetrators of gun violence face severe and appropriate consequences.

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?

I will support the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit. D-O LRT is the way of the future for affordable, safe and environmentally sound transit in our city.

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?

I am gravely concerned about the spread of Covid-19 and variants such as Delta and believe that in many ways the wave of the Delta variant may be like another, almost separate pandemic. Centralized, reliable communication from the NC department of public health, and the

encouragement and/or mandates of all Durham residents to follow these guidelines would be in constant review. If another shutdown were to happen, the financial, mental, physical and educational hardships would likely be overwhelming for many. The City would have to respond with every bit of financial and public health resources it has at its disposal. Durham would do its part to assist the NC department of employment security in helping its citizens access all means accessible to them.

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 would continue the partnership with Engage Durham's Comprehensive plan and work to establish more collaboration and action, within the community, similar to this work. The Durham Strategic plan would continue with its vital work of engaging Durham citizens. I would listen to the members of the Durham community and genuinely attempt to work together.

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 absolutely do, 100%. Non Binary individuals, all individuals' bodies are their own and should not be mandated by anyone. Equal rights for ALL people!

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?

I do not believe that Durham needs more charter schools. Durham, in my opinion, has enough choice in regards to education for their children. Durham Public Schools is doing amazing things and deserves assistance and support from the entire city. A focus of the schools in Durham should include a progressive look at what is being taught to ensure that practical living skills, relational communication skills and historical truths are part of the curriculum.

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?

1. God
2. My therapist, Dawn Clark
3. My family; my daughters, Jennings and Maryn Leonard
my parents, Joe and Carlilse Harvard, my brother and his family, Banks Harvard, Katie, Kate and Emma.
4. My friends in ministry- too many to name
5. My friends who are not churchd - too many to name
6. current and former elected officials who would agree to be my mentors
7. acquaintances in the Durham community who are also in leadership roles that require

making hard choices