



Questionnaire for Mayor Candidates 2023

Candidate Name: **DeDreana Freeman**

Date: **July 21, 2023**

Position Sought: **Mayor**

Question #1 Why did you decide to run for office? And what do you see as the primary qualities and responsibilities of the Durham mayor?

In 2017, I embarked on a campaign centered around Social, Economic, and Environmental justice, with a firm commitment to equity. My vision was to create a more equitable Durham, where every resident can enjoy a safe, inclusive, and thriving community.

In 2021, I was re-elected, and that vision remains unwavering. I am running to prioritize a sustainable future that fosters growth and opportunity while ensuring equity and shared prosperity for all of Durham.

The primary responsibility of the Durham Mayor is to chair the council meetings and navigate the council to build consensus. My forward-looking leadership will drive positive outcomes and include inclusive decision-making, while fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Question #2 What do you see as the City Council's top 3 governing priorities over the next 4 years? And what specific policies or initiatives would you work to enact in order to address these priorities?

The top three governing priorities in Durham are centered in the inequities residents face around:

- the need for jobs and economic growth that don't displace residents
- sustainable housing that is close to affordable public transportation, and
- environmental hazards in historically marginalized communities.

I have a vision for Durham that takes these important issues into account, which begins with collaboratively addressing these areas holistically. We have a unique opportunity to support the work of the Racial Equity Committee, and I will continue my work on council and in the community at large as an advocate for racial justice.

I advocate for incentivizing mixed-use residential developments with a minimum of 15% affordable housing. These projects should incorporate at least three sustainability features that promote pedestrian-friendly environments, encourage cycling, and support accessibility. I will work towards policies that increase capital access, offering subsidies and grants to landlords and low-income property owners for energy efficiency improvements, raising housing standards and stock. This approach aims to improve living conditions and sustainability while benefiting both landlords and tenants alike.

For affordable transportation, I propose a substantial investment in Bus Rapid Transit, with a strategic plan for hubs in Wellons Village and North Duke Crossing Shopping centers. This investment would enhance public transit by increasing bus frequency and reliability.

To support economic development and address unemployment, I advocate for the use of GIS mapping and community development funding to create walkable pipelines for residents to access fair-wage jobs.

As part of my focus on green spaces, I am committed to restoring wetlands to enhance flood resilience and improve water quality by filtering pollutants from drinking water. Additionally, I prioritize completing the rail/trail loop from Avondale East to R. Kelly Bryant Bridge Trail, Rocky Creek Trail Greenway, and the American Tobacco Trail, promoting walkability and connecting residential and business areas.

Question #3 In 2021 and 2022 North Carolina and the Durham area ranked within the top three in the country for net growth in people moving to the area. What's your plan to address the housing needs of the large influx of people coming to the city while trying to stem the number of long-term residents that are being pushed to the edges of the county or into neighboring counties?

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.

I would work to implement equitable zoning, noting that if we continue to let developers plan our city as they currently are, we will not meet the needs of the current 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.

I will continue to support economic policies that create opportunities for economic mobility. As businesses continue to move into Durham, partnerships across sectors, including higher education, will be essential to building employment pathways for youth and adults. This will require collaboration with the Durham County, Durham Public Schools (DPS), Durham Technical Community College, and community groups and organizations. We must also continue to increase youth apprenticeship opportunities. We can grow the economy by supporting existing businesses and increasing business ventures by aspiring local artists and entrepreneurs, particularly minority and women-owned enterprises. This will require supporting nontraditional and traditional entrepreneurship for access to living-wage jobs, particularly small businesses. We must also create affordable commercial spaces and redevelop historically underserved communities of color without displacing long-time residents. This can be accomplished by using equity-driven strategies that ensure existing residents stay in the community as neighborhood markets revive and distressed neighborhoods are stabilized. Doing all of this will create opportunities for community wealth-building.

Question #4 Do you support the full expansion of the H.E.A.R.T. program by 2026 to be fully staffed and offer 24/7 services city wide? Why or why not?

Yes. I take pride in the ongoing development of the HEART program. I firmly believe that collective efforts within the community are crucial to ensuring our safety. Addressing the impacts of historical traumas caused by societal and cultural issues like white supremacy is essential. We must build a supportive environment for those who have been victimized, fostering healing and resilience. I acknowledge the value of city departments and programs, of which the HEART program is included, in this work.

Question #5 Gun violence is high on many voters' minds due to the uptick in mass shooting events and neighborhood shootings, both of their reverberating impacts in our communities, and the lack of will of North Carolina's General Assembly to adequately address the issue. Please state your understanding of the root causes of gun violence in Durham. What steps do you believe Durham City Council could take to help curb gun violence and its impacts?

There are many factors that contribute to gun violence, including systemic racism, poverty, and classism.

Some examples of what we can do to help curb gun violence and its impacts include:

Economic development and investment in low and middle income communities that pave the way for economic mobility. As businesses continue to move into Durham, partnerships across sectors, including higher education, will be essential to building employment pathways for youth and adults. This will require collaboration with the Durham County, Durham Public Schools (DPS), Durham Technical Community College, and community groups and organizations. We must also continue to increase youth apprenticeship opportunities.

We can convene all youth facing organizations around goals that align with the City.

There are programs we can support like the Hayti Reborn Justice Movement, which seeks to provide comprehensive services and resources for formerly justice-involved individuals. We need to continue supporting violence intervention programs.

Question #6 When tensions are high in a group of your colleagues, what are the values and practices that guide your interactions with others who have different ideas and stances than yours?

As a dedicated leader in our community, I wholeheartedly advocate for the people of Durham, championing the cause of families and advocating for the social, economic, and environmental needs of our city. My journey has been shaped by diverse experiences, both positive and negative, which have made me the authentic and compassionate individual I am today. My heart is committed to service, and my passion lies in serving the people of Durham.

I am always ready to listen to and work with those who have varying ideas and viewpoints. I will continue to do so and continue amplifying marginalized voices.

Question #7 In the 2023-24 Durham city budget, \$10 million was allocated to revitalizing Hayti. In the past few decades, many revitalization efforts in rapidly growing cities have become the beginnings of gentrification of historically Black and Brown neighborhoods. How would you ensure that this does not happen in Hayti, and that Hayti's working class Black people and long-term residents will benefit from the revitalization efforts?

The Hayti Reborn's request for the land to be transferred to the community has the potential

to generate intergenerational wealth for those who have historically been marginalized.

In part, we must create affordable commercial spaces and redevelop historically underserved communities of color without displacing long-time residents. This can be accomplished by using equity-driven strategies that ensure existing residents stay in the community as neighborhood markets revive and distressed neighborhoods are stabilized. See my responses from question #2 and #3.

Question #8 Simplifying Codes for More Affordable Development (SCAD) has been a controversial proposed amendment put before City Council this year. There doesn't seem to be disagreement about the need to reform Durham's development codes (zoning, parking, etc.). The main points of contention seem to be how the codes should be amended, what the role and plan for community input is, and who gets to benefit the most from changed codes. The amending of codes will impact Durhamites' lives in significant ways. How will you ensure the amended development codes will guarantee meaningful community input in decisions about developments? What will you do to ensure that amended development codes will reduce the negative environmental impact of new developments?

We have slowed down the process to allow more time for the community to engage in the process, as requested by groups like the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, the Inter Neighborhood Council, and many other voices. We should continue to slow the process so that voices can be heard, that any code amendments reflect the values of Durham and actually benefit the community. I would like to see SCAD tied directly to sustainable housing development and home affordability.

I am only one vote on council, but I will be sure to voice concerns as I have been doing over the last six years, on the environmental and affordability impacts of development.

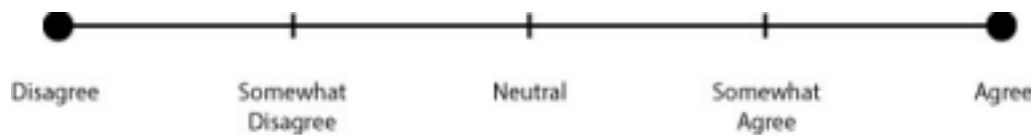
Question #9 Currently, 30 states and Washington, D.C., have raised their minimum wages above the national floor (\$7.25/hour). Meanwhile, North Carolina workers have been stuck with a wage floor of \$7.25 an hour since 2008 and a \$2.13 tipped hourly wage. As the cost of living continues to rise, these wages are not enough to afford basic necessities.

On average in North Carolina, a household of two adults and two children needs to earn a \$33.25 hourly wage to afford the basics—more than four times the current minimum wage. Would you support a resolution stating that the state's minimum wage should be \$17 an hour and that tipped wages (\$2.13/hour) should be eliminated? Why or why not?

Yes, I would support a resolution stating that the state's minimum wage should be \$17 an hour and that tipped wages should be eliminated. I would do this because of the reasons you state, fair wages for labor is a principle for me.

Question #10 This past year the Council adopted a budget that included funding for a Vision Zero Coordinator and more than \$40 million in projects to make walking and biking safer in Durham. However, there remain extensive gaps in the networks of well-maintained sidewalks, safe street crossings, and protected bike lanes.

On the following scale, indicate how much you agree to support annual funding to complete city-wide networks of sidewalks, safe street crossings, and protected bike lanes and to bring sidewalk conditions and accessible curb ramps up to standard. Please explain your response.



I AGREE. Funding the position is just the start, our Capital Improvement Plan lays out a timeline for many areas that have sidewalk needs, planning for the street crossings and networks are still to come.

Question #11 The Fiscal Year 2023-24 city budget includes funds to keep bus transportation free which benefits many of our working-class residents. What is your plan to continue lessening the transportation cost burdens on working class residents and increasing their access to means of moving around the city in a safe and timely manner?

To improve transportation, I propose a substantial investment in Bus Rapid Transit, with a strategic plan for hubs in Wellons Village and North Duke Crossing Shopping centers. This investment would enhance public transit by increasing bus frequency and reliability. We can have more mixed-use developments with affordable residential units on city owned land and partner with the county and DPS for additional locations that align with bus rapid transit.

Also see my response for question # 2.

Question #12 There are state restrictions placed on the city's ability to raise property taxes on the wealthiest residents in order to increase the city's income. What are ways you'd work with council members to creatively increase the city's income? What would be your top priorities for the money to go towards if the city's income was increased?

We can creatively increase the city's income through investing in income producing projects to generate rental income which is beneficial to the community, historical and eco-tourism, green investments, and public-private initiatives like Fayetteville St. One of my top priorities for the money if the city's income was increased is basic city services and infrastructure. As

was previously mentioned, the city is continuing to grow. We need to invest in our infrastructure to meet this capacity and make updates.

Question #13 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?

We need to create intentional budgeting practices that incorporate an equitable lens that includes the voice of those most impacted. For example, in the eviction crisis, it would be beneficial to have families facing homelessness due to displacement and others voices not often at the table in discussion about city funding for housing. Currently, we have many boards and commissions that have engagements limited to monthly meetings. We need to be intentional about creating engagement beyond these standard meetings that support resident and community stakeholder engagement to create an equitable Durham for all residents.

There are many spaces to invite resident and community engagement not only into the governing process but also to lead the process. I would start with small area planning by neighborhood groups with budgeting, planning and prioritization. Also, including a year round discussion with roundtables led by community voices and supported by city staff.

Question #14 Like any other rapidly-growing city, Durham is facing complex issues with multiple stakeholders and no simple solutions. What is your plan for seeking input from community organizations on these issues and incorporating their constituency's perspectives in the difficult choices that you will have to make as mayor?

I have always prioritized being in the community with Durham residents. That includes listening in and participating in PAC meetings for each district, participating in meetings for other groups and organizations, talking to residents at community events, and being part of several community organizations. This effort has continued while in office as community voice is critical to the work in Durham. Because of this intentionality, I can stay informed and consistently advocate on behalf of the community. This work will continue. It is important to hear the diverse voices within Durham to develop policies, ordinances, and direct funding that keep Durham fiscally sound and reflect the collective priorities of our residents while being socially conscious of our Durham values.