



Questionnaire for Mayor Candidates 2023

Candidate Name: Mike Woodard

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?

When Mayor O'Neal announced she would not seek reelection, I thought about the opportunities and challenges Durham faces in the next few years. With encouragement from a broad range of Durham residents, I decided to offer my experience, knowledge, and skills to continue serving Durham in this new role.

The primary responsibilities of the Mayor are to preside at Council meetings, prepare the agendas, and serve as the chief spokesman for the City. Beyond that, the Mayor makes appointments to Council subcommittees and to advisory committees.

The primary quality the Mayor should have is an ability to build consensus around the City's vision and goals, both on the Council and in the community.

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?

- Maintaining Durham's relatively strong economy and spreading its opportunity to all parts of the community
 - Continuing to recruit a wide variety of businesses to move to or open in Durham
 - Supporting job readiness programs for residents
 - Providing assistance for current businesses

- Maintaining and improving City services, especially in light of staffing challenges
 - Implementing an equity compensation plan for City employees
 - Supporting departmental recruitment efforts, especially in hiring underrepresented populations
 - Working with the administration to provide safe, encouraging, and equitable work environments
- Developing affordable housing and workforce housing options for Durham residents
 - Using all the tools the City has available to provide a full range of options for housing

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?

Market forces are driving housing supply. However, the City can work in a broad-based coalition to provide more affordable options. I've worked actively to remove barriers that have limited those options, like accessory dwelling units, density, and workforce housing.

We should focus on workforce housing for working residents such as firefighters, law enforcement, teachers, other government employees, and other middle-income families.

I will work with my Council colleagues, City departments, non-profit agencies, and the private sector to continue developing ways to protect Durham from gentrification that drives people from their homes. One strategy is helping current residents repair and renovate their homes so they can stay in place and maintain value, especially our senior and our long-time residents. Another strategy should be to continue increasing density in our urban neighborhoods so potential homeowners will be closer to services and amenities they desire.

Because inclusionary zoning is not allowed under North Carolina law, local governments have limited tools in including affordable/workforce housing in the zoning process. However, the Council has done a good job requesting support for affordable housing from developers. I would work to continue these requests.

This year there was an effort in the General Assembly to develop a statute to offer local governments the ability to create workforce housing more easily. The proposal had flaws and I worked hard to stop it without more work. I convened a working group to develop a better proposal, and I hope to continue working with that group after I leave the Senate. This idea has promise.

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?

I fully support the expansion of the HEART program. In its early months it has proven to be a success and has shown that not all public safety responses require a uniformed officer.

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 myriad root causes of gun violence. They include:

- Poverty;
- Income inequality;
- Underfunded public housing;
- Under-resourced public services;
- Underperforming schools;
- Lack of opportunity and perceptions of hopelessness; and
- Easy access to firearms.

The City must continue to work with public and private partners to address all of these causes. In addition, the City should pursue all options it has under state law that limit the easy access to firearms, especially "ghost" guns. Gun buy backs are another program that is not subject to state or federal preemption.

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?

Effective governing is a team sport. It requires the elected board to work together—even if they don't always agree, as they won't, and when tensions can run high—for the betterment of the community. When disagreements become personal and public, people lose confidence in their government.

The necessary teamwork on the Council begins with effective listening by the members. The next step is developing personal relationships, better understanding your colleagues and having them understand you. Then, the Council needs to agree on a set of common goals, a common vision—even when the members may not agree completely on each goal. And communication is essential during all the Council's work.

In the often-contentious setting of the General Assembly, I followed this simple model working with colleagues in my own caucus, in the other party and the other chamber, and in the various issue caucuses I've been involved with. As a result, I have led or co-led a number of work groups (I've dubbed them "huddles" when their work was ad hoc) focusing on a specific bill or specific issue, and I currently co-chair three issues caucuses.

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?

Since my church is located between Fayetteville Street and South Roxboro Road (one block off each), I have seen firsthand over the last 14 years how this critical area has declined and is now on the upswing because of government involvement and of market forces.

Moving forward with the City's investment in the area, an important piece of strengthening the corridor will be the development of Fayette Place. This is because its central location, its size, and the fact it is a blank slate for now. The City must work closely with the Durham Housing Authority in developing this project so it will assist long-term residents and Black families in the area.

Second, the City should consider how many of its existing affordable housing and equity programs could be targeted to the neighborhoods in the corridor.

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?

I will not support any efforts to diminish or limit public input into the development process.

Just before I joined the City Council in 2005, the City and County adopted a new Unified Development Ordinance. Within a few years, we recognized that some environmental protections were minimized too far or not working as intended. As chair of the Joint City-County Planning Committee at the time, I convened a 15-member steering committee that worked for nine months and developed the EEUDO (Environmental Enhancements to the UDO) proposal that was eventually adopted by both the Council and the County Commissioners. I envision a similar process as we move forward with the new Comp Plan and related UDO changes.

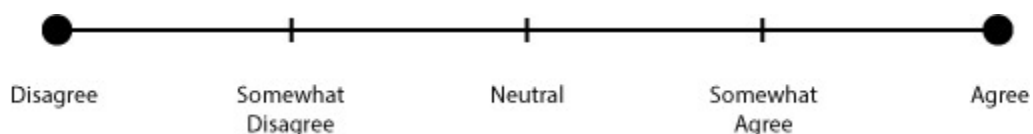
Question #9 Currently, 30 states and Washington, D.C., have raised their minimum wages above the national floor (\$7.25/hour). Meanwhile, North Carolina workers have been stuck with a wage floor of \$7.25 an hour since 2008 and a \$2.13 tipped hourly wage. As the cost of living continues to rise, these 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 such a resolution because it is simply the right thing to do.

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. Improving and increasing the City’s network of pedestrian and bike amenities improves the environment in light of the climate crisis, helps meet our net zero goals, improves the health of residents, and keeps our walkers and bike riders safer from vehicular traffic.

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?

Now that bus transportation is free, we should continue to make the free service a priority in each budget and never go back.

Given the posture of federal and state government regarding public transit, the City should complete its bus rapid transit plan. This will be one of my top priorities as Mayor. At a recent RTA meeting, I learned that Raleigh and Chapel Hill have well-developed plans, but that Durham has not been working on such a plan. An effective BRT network is critical in connecting working-class residents to the jobs and essential services they need.

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?

As the question points out, this is a tricky issue because of state-imposed limitations. However, many national and state-based municipal associations, as well as various government policy organizations, have been studying this question. Working with the City administration, I would like to study revenue enhancements that would be legal in North Carolina and could be applied in Durham.

My top priorities for new revenue would be wraparound services to assist in public safety and initiatives to combat climate change.

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?

First, I would like to spend time working with the participatory methods we have in place now. Participatory budgeting has been successful, and some of the City's PACs and advisory committees are active and effective. I would like to spend time helping the others revive themselves.

Some local governments have experimented with citizens' assemblies, deliberative opinion polls, and e-democracy/liquid democracy. None of these is a perfect solution, and I don't know how well they might work in Durham, but I would like to explore some similar models.

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?

In my 18 years of elected service, I've learned that the best communication with the people you represent is face-to-face. As Mayor, I will continue to be visible in the community and attend as many events as my schedule allows.

I will begin a "Mayor's Newsletter" that will be distributed through social media. And I will hold regular town hall meetings, particularly as we approach the budget season.

I plan to meet with each of the City's advisory committees in the first half of 2024.

I will also maintain an "open door" policy as I have done for the past 18 years.