



Questionnaire for City Council Candidates 2023

Candidate Name: Shanetta Burris

Date: July 30, 2023

Position Sought: City Council At-Large

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

Members of City Council function as the legislative and policy making body and have the final authority on city matters. Policies should be designed to improve the quality of life for all Durham residents and address the critical needs of our community. As a member of council, I am accountable to voters. I will prioritize building and maintaining relationships with members of our community by being accessible, responsive, and transparent. As your next City Council member, I will treat all residents who come before council with the respect they deserve. We all care about Durham, and our concerns should be heard and taken seriously.

I believe that council members should operate in a space where they do not make assumptions about an individual's temperament or qualifications based on gender, religion, sexuality, or race. Moreover, members of council should provide grace to those they encounter and allow them to show up as their whole self. No one should have to diminish who they are to appease others. We all have our own lived experience which undoubtedly has framed how we view the world. In order for the council to be effective,

members must always respect their colleagues regardless of political or ideological differences. Diversity in thought should not serve as an impediment to good governance.

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?

- Addressing income disparities for City employees.
- Housing affordability (neighborhood stabilization, pathways to homeownership for low and middle income people/families).
- City Infrastructure

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 scale of the affordability crisis is gradually encroaching upon increasingly many households by a massive mismatch between the need for affordable housing and what a market based system is willing to build under the current conditions. Addressing this reality cannot be accomplished by either the myriad of small projects conducted by non-profits or incentive programs for private sector builders. Forever Home, Durham utilizes public and private investments to build homes, renovate properties, and provide essential services for low to moderate income residents. While this effort is laudable I propose that we adjust the metrics of the program to set higher annual goals for the production of affordable housing. To achieve the increased production of affordable housing we can explore policies that will offer revolving construction loans to be used exclusively for the production of equity housing, offer funding to purchase and convert older rental properties, and offer universal housing voucher programs for low to middle income residents. This will require partnership with the business sector. While it is a common practice for developers to offer proffers for affordable housing, this strategy alone simply does not provide housing to address the needs of our community. We must explore a multitude of strategies to ensure that we are able to adequately address the issue of the lack of affordable housing.

I will support policies that will stabilize the community and transfer generational wealth for Black people in Durham. To ensure the transfer of generational wealth for Black people we need to explore strategies that will mitigate the tax burden on elderly populations. One impact of gentrification is increased home value which contributes to higher property taxes. While the increased home value is good for equity, it creates a financial burden for those who are on fixed incomes and desire to remain in their home. Through partnership with private banks and credit unions we can explore the creation of a program that offers low interest loans to offset the burden of increased taxes. Additionally, this program will offer flexibility for those who struggle to pay their taxes in a lump sum. For the younger demographic we can explore affordable housing initiatives, access to upskilling opportunities, support for small businesses,

and special wealth building programs like matched savings accounts.

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?

As a member of the City Council, it is my role to ensure the long term success of this program via the budgetary process. Council members are responsible for legislative and policy making functions, not the overall implementation of the program. However, it does fall in the scope of work of council to ensure that we are maximizing the use of taxpayer dollars.

It is imperative that council members allow our City Manager space to work with her staff to set attainable goals for this department. The management of city employees falls within the scope of work for the City Manager who is held accountable by council.

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?

While I haven't conducted an empirical study on the root causes of gun violence, I can speak from my personal experience. My formative years were deeply impacted by gun violence as I grew up in a once well resourced Black community that was deeply affected by the crack-cocaine epidemic. It is my belief that the root causes of gun violence can be attributed to income disparities, accessibility of firearms, an under-resourced social safety net, prolonged exposure to gun violence, and hopelessness. Widespread exposure to gun violence exacerbates pre-existing social and economic inequalities. I believe that the first step that the City-Council can take is practicing authentic community engagement. It is my opinion that some members of council only engage with communities plagued by gun violence when it is of benefit to their campaign or policy platform. This practice has eroded trust in many communities that are plagued by gun violence. We need to rebuild that trust by centering the voices of those who are impacted. Additionally, we need to expand our social safety net and offer comprehensive family support. Comprehensive family support includes living job training programs for parents and caregivers. Families impacted by gun violence need support in achieving upward mobility. Therefore, it is vital that those participating in programs have access to childcare, transportation, and income during the process. Children also need support via afterschool programs, recreational activities, skills training, and mentorship. I believe class creates a barrier for addressing the root causes of gun violence. Those who are well resourced often impose their solutions on communities they are not in relationship with. While we may have varying theories of change regarding this issue we must accept when the community presents a solution that is not in alignment with our own ideology.

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?

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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?

First, I would like to acknowledge that Hayti is not the only legacy Black community in Durham, there are numerous communities across our city that require support in combating the impact of gentrification. As a graduate of North Carolina Central University and someone who has spent a lot of time on the Fayetteville Street corridor, I can tell you that gentrification has already started in this community. So, any strategy implemented would be a reactive effort not proactive. Support for the Hayti community should be driven by community stakeholders: business owners, homeowners, renters, churches, community partners, and North Carolina Central University. Additionally, the redevelopment of the former Fayetteville Street Projects (renamed Fayette Place) will be a critical force in combating gentrification in this community. There are plans to develop the site into a 1,000 units of mixed and low income housing.

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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?

As someone who has participated in many community meetings regarding SCAD, I would argue that in addition to concerns around how the codes will be amended, a lot of community members have concerns regarding the origin of the amendments and some of the key players. When SCAD was initially introduced it was stated that Habitat for Humanity was a key partner in supporting the plan. However, it was later revealed that an unauthorized third party entered into an agreement on behalf of the non-profit organization. There is also concern about the community engagement process. Many neighbors feel as though engagement was only limited to special interest groups or those who stand to profit from the proposed changes. There are many in our community who have argued that the amendments are poorly written, ambiguous, difficult to administer, and full of unintended consequences or conflicting interactions with existing sections of the UDO. Finally, the amendments do not offer long term solutions for the production of affordable housing. The PATH section in the document only calls for affordable rental units for five years, however, if the units transfer ownership the five year affordability clause is nullified. In summary, SCAD will only exacerbate the issues of affordable housing. I understand that this proposal is back on the Council's agenda for August 2023. If this policy is passed in its current form, I believe that there is little that future council members can do to mitigate the harm to our community as it relates to the production of affordable housing.

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.

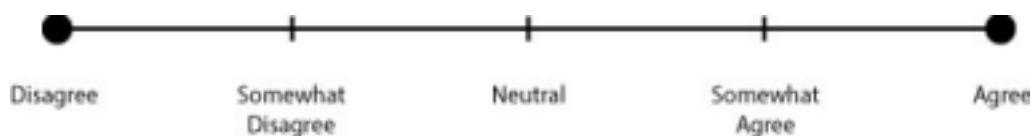
On average in North Carolina, a household of two adults and two children needs to earn a \$33.25 hourly wage to afford the basics—more than four times the current minimum wage. Would you support a resolution stating that the state’s minimum wage should be \$17 an hour and that tipped wages (\$2.13/hour)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

Yes, 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. The current minimum wage is not sufficient for individuals and families to afford basic necessities.

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 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

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?

In an effort to lessen the transportation cost burdens on working class families, I would support allocating funds in the city's budget to continue offering fare-free ridership. Moreover, I support the strategies presented in GoDurham's Short Range Transit Plan. We need to ensure that our residents have access to Durham's job centers, explore shorter routes, improve route timeliness, and ensure that heavily used bus stops have adequate shelter and seating for patrons.

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 should first ensure that we are getting the best use out of our current investments. That means evaluating our current programming. There may already be extra dollars that can be used to tackle priorities like housing affordability and crime.

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?

I believe that in order to be effective in sharing power one must be present in the community and engage all stakeholders for the purpose of creating an actionable plan. Community engagement shouldn't be limited to conversations and strategy sessions with like minded individuals. Additionally, I would like to reinstate "Coffee with Council". I recognize that there are members of our community who aren't able to attend City Council meetings or work sessions to express their concerns. Members of council should be accessible and approachable.

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 a council member?

I will continue participating in community meetings and organizations to receive input and practice active listening.