



## Questionnaire for Mayor Candidates 2023

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Candidate Name: Sylvester Williams

Date: 7/22/2023

Position Sought: Mayor

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**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?**

Neglect for low income, moderate income and black people in Durham. Push programs that will address the forementioned items and become a spokesperson for the neglected people and communities in Durham.

**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?**

Crime, housing and job creation. 1. Hire more police officers and give counseling to the young people that have been involved in crime. 2. Use reserves to be housing for low income citizens. 3. Black males would be considered as minority when applying for public money.

**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?**

Use reserves to be housing for low income citizens. Take the tax evaluations back to the original time frame instead of every four years. Give long-term low-income residents a tax break.

**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. As a pastor I have talked to people struggling in Durham with both mental and physical problems. Any type help or aid given to people that do not know where to seek help or feel that they are too poor to pay for help is welcomed.

**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?**

Lack of communication. Lack of counseling. Not understanding the brokenness of perpetrators of shootings. Hire more people to become more interactive in problem areas along with more police.

**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?**

Listen to their opinion. Differences are usually based on lack of knowledge of the problem. By listening to a person you can better understand his or her perspective and offer solutions to adequately address the problem.

**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?**

I have always advocated for Hayti. I was the Chair for Economic Development for the Durham Business and Professional Chain which is a black group located in the Hayti area. I have talked with a developer that has already made plans for the Hayti area. We must ensure that blacks are not being overlooked in the development and job creations.

**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?

Communicate with groups such as yours to determine the best alternatives. Affordable in Durham is not affordable for low and moderate income people.

**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.

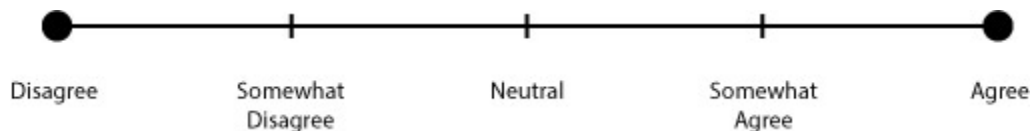
As the cost of living continues to rise, these wages are not enough to afford basic necessities. It is intentional. We must increase more low-income housing.

**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. As a financial analyst studying the economy when wages are increased prices of products sold are increased to compensate for the increase in wages. I would support that the basics, such as housing, be provided low-income workers.

**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.



Agree. Unless separate biking paths are established the money will be wasted. With the population growth and the continued building of roads it will be even more dangerous for biking.

**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?**

Keep bus transportation free and instead of putting money into light rail put it into busing which is more flexible and easier for citizens to access.

**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 a financial analyst I know that the city has enough money if properly budgeted to handle all of Durham's concerns. That is why I need to be the city's mayor.

**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 currently work with different communities in Durham and soliciting feedback on the best way to address some of the problems in Durham. It is their feedback and my own experience as a financial analyst that gives me hope in turning Durham around.

**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 talking with Durhamites, including elected officials I realize that many do not understand finance, budgeting and the consequences for not properly budgeting and understanding finance. About \$200 million was put into the light rail and we have nothing to show for it. About \$1.8 billion has been put into downtown Durham since 2000 but there are businesses still struggling in the downtown area.