

D4A POLITICS WATCH



Municipal Election Edition

Friend,

Election season is here!

Welcome to our new email series, Politics Watch: Municipal Elections Edition. . Amidst the differences about the present and future of Durham, we will bring you information about Durham's most pressing issues and the candidates' stances on those issues.

The first issue of Politics Watch focuses on one of the most contentious issues in this year's elections: housing and development.

Politics Watch: Municipal Election Edition #1

Housing Development

Durham's rapidly growing population means that we need more housing to be built in Durham. While most Mayoral and City Council At Large candidates agree with this statement, housing is one of the most contentious issues of this election.

In Durham (and amongst candidates) there are different ideas for **how to protect Durham neighborhoods (especially Black and working class communities) from gentrification and displacement, while creating affordable housing that is responsive to the city's environmental and infrastructure needs.**

Here are views by two candidates that highlight one of the differences being debated in this election for how to address housing affordability in Durham:



"We need to be strategic in how we build housing. [When voting on a development] I look at what the development is, the impacts on the environment. I listen to what the developer has to say, but I also listen to what the residents have to say. *I'm not against building, but I need it to be building for the people of Durham, not for people coming in.*"

Monique Holsey-Hyman



"We've reached a crisis point because of rapid growth and its resulting social and environmental challenges. The environment must be prioritized, but people also need a warm place to sleep at night. We must use every tool at our disposal to prioritize environmental sustainability while also fostering development that meets the needs of our [current and growing] community."

Khalilah Karim



Affordable Housing Bond: A Success Story

In 2019, Durham voters passed a \$95 million affordable housing bond. The Durham Housing Authority¹ (DHA) used \$59 million of the bond for their [Downtown and Neighborhood Plan \(DDNP\)](#), which is developing 60 acres of publicly owned land in downtown. These developments will include housing for low income families.

Durham Housing Authority

units affordable for and restricted to each income level in DDNP:



Forever Home, Durham



2000

New affordable units



3800

improved and preserved units



1700

unhoused people moved to permanent housing

Of the 2023 candidates, Javiera Caballero and DeDreana Freeman were sitting members of the council in 2019. Only Candidate Caballero voted for the bond to be brought in front of the voters as a referendum (Durham voters showed overwhelming support for the bond by passing it with a 76% to 24% margin).

D4A's Take on the Housing Crisis

As successful as the affordable housing bond has been, we recognize that it is still not enough to meet all of Durham's housing needs. Two prevailing factors limit the City's ability to fully address Durham's housing affordability crisis:

1. Our housing market is dominated by private corporations that put profits over people and don't prioritize building and maintaining housing that meets all of the specific and diverse needs of Durham's population.
2. North Carolina has laws that prohibit local governments from passing laws and programs that would benefit working people's communities, especially Black and Brown ones. For example, cities and counties can't raise wages for all workers to keep up with the rises in cost of living, local governments can't set maximum rent amounts (rent control), etc.

It is paramount that the next City Council recognizes these limiting factors while also working to find creative solutions that still allow the city to meet more of our communities' needs, especially the most marginalized. Some of these creative solutions are bonds for affordable housing; rental assistance and

homeowner tax programs that help residents offset the rising costs of housing while also building wealth; and guaranteed income for the economically vulnerable among us (formerly incarcerated, undocumented residents, etc.).

Finally, to keep up with the housing demands of 2,000+ people moving to Durham each month while providing housing for existing residents, the next council will need to vote “yes” on developments that have the following:

- Affordable housing commitments (monetary donations to affordable housing or building affordable units, particularly for households that make between \$10,000 to \$80,000)
- Environmental commitments (stormwater management, open space and/or designated trees areas above the requirements of city codes)
- Infrastructure improvement commitments (widening streets, adding curbs or sidewalks, etc.).

Footnotes:

1: [Durham Housing Authority](#) is a federally funded, state run agency that builds affordable housing for extremely low-income families in Durham.

Politics Watch: Municipal Elections Edition will be back in October for a deep dive on the issue of public safety, where we look at candidate’s ideas for reducing violence and increasing care in our communities.

In Solidarity,
Nahid Soltanzadeh
(they/them/theirs)
Data and Digital Organizer

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