

D4A POLITICS WATCH



HOUSING AND
DEVELOPMENT



PUBLIC SAFETY



ECONOMY

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 second issue of *Politics Watch* focuses on another of Durham's most pressing issues: gun violence and policing.

[While we're on this topic, we also recommend reading this independent report from the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General about the impact of ShotSpotter technology on violence crime. There's a lot that we can learn from other cities' experiences with this technology.](#)

Politics Watch: Municipal Election Edition #2

Gun Violence and Policing

Many of us in Durham live day and night in a state of constant hypervigilance, worried that we or someone we love will be shot and either wounded or killed.

Below are the findings of the [2023 Police Satisfaction Survey](#). They show residents' lowest level of satisfaction and confidence in DPD's ability to reduce violence in comparison to their overall performance:

Satisfaction with Major Categories of Services



Level of Agreement with Statements Regarding DPD



The graphs show the mixed views and confidence that residents have about the effectiveness of policing to achieve public safety. Different views on policing in regards to violent crime is also reflected in this year's candidates' stances and plans.

The General Assembly's relaxation of gun laws keeps Durham from being able to comprehensively address gun violence. However, Durham still has to answer a major question: **As we grapple with violent crime in Durham, where should our limited resources go?** Some believe more investments in policing is paramount. Some believe it will be ineffective at best and harmful to Black and Brown communities at worst. *ShotSpotter is a great example of this divide.*

Candidates' Views on ShotSpotter

The conversation about crime and safety in Durham has evolved significantly since the 2021 elections. With the success of the H.E.A.R.T. program skeptics are now believers. Furthermore, some of ShotSpotter's initial supporters are uncertain about whether it will prove to be effective. Below are differing views on ShotSpotter from two candidates:

ShotSpotter is a tool. I do not think it deters gun violence at all. I do think it helps with police investigations to identify the bullets, in a way that's really like data collection. In order for me to vote to keep it, the data from ShotSpotter should be able to show that it's beneficial to the police department. I will lean heavily on the community's response to it.

DeDreana Freeman



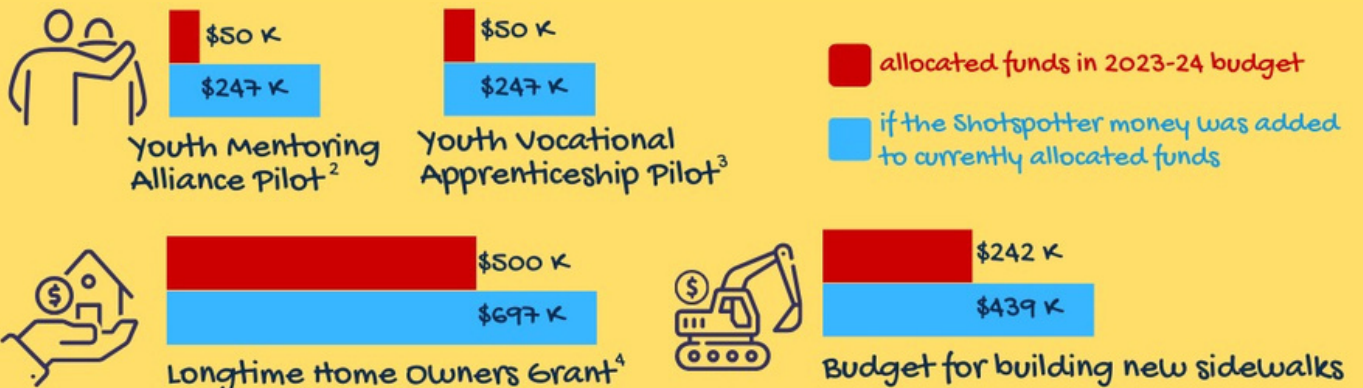
I'll vote against ShotSpotter because I haven't seen any research that shows over-policing actually lessens crime. Continuously monitoring people that are already overburdened with issues is not a way to solve a problem. There's other ways that we can solve our crime problem here. Durham has taken some steps with funding Bull City United and H.E.A.R.T. Both of these programs are doing a great job of actually seeing people for people, instead of adding more violence into that community.

Khalilah Karim



D4A's Take on Gun Violence and Policing

Currently, there is almost no data on Durham's ShotSpotter pilot to assess its effectiveness in areas that its supporters cite as its value add (**helping EMS to reach victims quicker, supporting DPD in finding perpetrators, bringing a felt sense of safety to residents**). What we do know is that **ShotSpotter has proven to be ineffective in other cities who've been using it longer than Durham has [1]**. We also know that the money spent on the ShotSpotter pilot (\$197,000) could have funded other projects that our city desperately needs. **For example, it could fund bonuses for at least 40-50 additional city workers in the [City Manager's most recent proposal](#) in response to sanitation workers' strike. Here are some other tangible examples of what the \$197,000 could have funded in Durham's 2023-34 City budget:**



If approved in next year's budget, the price tag for ShotSpotter only gets more expensive and will continue to drain our resources.

We believe that Durham should not be investing more in surveillance tools like ShotSpotter. Instead, we should invest in reducing the number of violent incidents that result in police intervention. Violence prevention programs like Bull City United and care-based programs like H.E.A.R.T. are successful examples of these types of initiatives.

To arrive at a place where all Durhamites see equitable access to resources as the primary way to reduce violence, we need to continue organizing in the streets and in the halls of power. Finally, we cannot effectively tackle gun violence without including those most impacted by violence: those who have lost neighbors and loved ones in shooting incidents, those who carry the emotional burden of living with the sound of gunshots in their neighborhoods, and many more.

Politics Watch: Municipal Elections Edition will be back in November for a deep dive on the issue of economic equality, where we look at candidate's ideas for Durham's economic growth, equitable access to resources, and more.

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

Footnotes:

1: source: "[OIG Finds That ShotSpotter Alerts Rarely Lead to Evidence of a Gun-Related Crime and That Presence of the Technology Changes Police Behavior](#)", City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, August 2021

2: supports Durham residents at or below 30% of the area median income. Program will award grants to qualifying recipient's to help reduce the amount of property taxes due

3: provides a onestop shop for community members to obtain updated information on access to youth mentoring services. 4: upskills workers and provides non-college track individuals sustainable employment

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