

PA PAC Questionnaire for
Durham Board of County Commissioners – 2024

Please return the completed form along with your resume or biographical statement describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by Wednesday, January 3 at 5pm at the latest.

Please also include a high resolution headshot for the PA mailer in case you are endorsed.

Please email your responses to the PAC coordinators at papacboard@googlegroups.com by

Wednesday, January 3 at 5pm

Please note that following the Wednesday, January 3 at 5pm deadline, the People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with each question numbered and organized as it appears here. Type your responses in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Do not use colors or shading.

Please try to confine your responses to no more than 300 words unless another word limit is indicated. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question.

If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.

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Government and the Public Good

1. Of all the issues confronting Durham County, which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if you are elected?

Affordable Housing. Without question. While it was a priority in my first successful run as a commissioner and as an endorsed People's Alliance Candidate, it deserves a laser focus now. Outside of just shelter. Housing effects how a person accesses every other service in this community. I'll start with what I would do in my next term and then focus on the why. This week after over a year of research staff brought forth the potential strategies for my proposed "Revolving Housing Fund" Our neighbors as well as communities nationwide have started collaborating on these funds. In 2022 I asked staff to start working on a collaborative project for Durham County. We moved forward with Developing a steering committee. In Fall of 2023, after the preliminary findings were shared with me, I asked staff During our winter

Policy Retreat to bring to develop the final white paper for the entire board and a presentation to be shared in January of 2024. Developed an affordable housing preservation fund that includes monetary support from financial institutions is going to be key as we move affordable housing forward. As a County Commissioner I would like to work with the city of Durham and local financial institutions to do the same in Durham. The fund includes two different loan options: A short-term revolving loan to help acquire properties to give developers time to obtain long-term support financing since financing for affordable housing can be more difficult to secure. A longer-term permanent financing loan to acquire and rehabilitate property specifically targeted toward “naturally occurring affordable housing.” This would increase our inventory of affordable housing Affordable housing is a critical need in Durham County, as demonstrated by significant investments in this area. For example, in 2019, Durham residents voted in favor of a \$95 million housing bond to fund affordable housing initiatives. This large-scale investment reflected the urgency of addressing housing affordability, which is crucial for the stability and well-being of residents. This plan included \$10.5 million to strengthen the city’s homeless system, \$100 million for affordable multifamily rental units, and \$17.5 million for neighborhood stabilization efforts. While that initiative was crucial at the time since a significant portion of Durham renters (48%) have difficulty affording their homes, it was not enough. Since my election in 2020, I voted in support of every affordable housing initiatives. While historically counties have not worked on affordable housing, we have ventured into a multitude to public private partnerships that have created almost 2000 affordable housing units across Durham County utilizing our Budget, Fund Balance as well as ARPA funding. We have continued that work and the community can sit it coming to fruition with the 300 and 500 Main and Queen Street mixed use housing locations adjacent to our county offices.

Workforce and Affordable Housing should be a top priority: Affordable housing promotes a diverse and inclusive community by allowing people from various socio-economic backgrounds to live in the area. This diversity enriches the community culturally and socially. As Durham and other North Carolina cities develop, gentrification can displace long-term residents. Prioritizing affordable housing helps ensure that development benefits all residents, not just those with higher incomes.

Our aging population is depending on us. Durham, like many areas, is experiencing a growing aging population. Affordable housing is vital to ensure that seniors can live independently and comfortably on fixed incomes. For Durham as well as North Carolina to remain competitive, it needs to attract and retain talent. Affordability is a key factor for many when deciding where to live and work. By ensuring affordable housing options, the state becomes more attractive to professionals and businesses. With rising housing costs, many individuals and families are at risk of homelessness or housing insecurity. Affordable housing initiatives help reduce this risk, ensuring more residents have stable, secure living conditions. Post pandemic we have seen that housing also improves health outcomes. Stable, affordable housing is closely linked to better health. People living in safe and affordable homes have lower stress levels and better access to healthcare services. This can lead to overall improved public health outcomes for the community.

Affordable housing is an essential element of sustainable urban planning. It helps in creating

denser, more efficient urban spaces, reducing the need for extensive commutes, and contributing to environmental sustainability.

Workforce Development Will be a priority in Durham. Durham County, part of the Research Triangle, is at the forefront of industries like biotechnology, healthcare, and information technology. These sectors are rapidly evolving and require a skilled workforce. As per recent data, Durham County has experienced significant job growth. The unemployment rate in Durham County, while fluctuating, generally trends lower than the national average, indicating a healthy job market that needs a skilled workforce. Despite economic growth, income disparities exist in Durham County. Workforce development programs can help bridge this gap by providing skills and training to underemployed or unemployed residents. Durham County's population is growing, with a notable increase in younger demographics and diverse populations. Tailoring workforce development to these groups is essential for sustainable growth. While Durham County has a high level of educational attainment compared to state and national averages, there's still a significant portion of the population without post-secondary education, which workforce development programs can address. myFutureNC aims to ensure that by 2030, 2 million North Carolinians have a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential. The number for students proportionate to Durham is almost 100,000. Workforce development aligns with this goal by providing alternative pathways to traditional four-year degrees, such as vocational training and certifications. Closing the skills gap between what employers need and the skills job seekers have. Workforce development programs in Durham County must tailor their curriculum to meet the demands of local industries.

2. How can county government use its authority and its resources to direct jobs to those who most need them and to lift the wages of the lowest-paid workers in Durham?

On of the things I am most proud of as a Commissioner is my work to add additional benefit items to our community benefits agreement. In Durham County, when doing business recruitment we have each company enter into a community benefits agreement. Those items include making a concentrated effort to hire Durham residents, providing daycare, providing parental leave for employees, hiring justice involved individuals (where possible), spending with minority vendors, providing internships with students at NCCU, Durham Tech and Duke and providing externships for our Durham Public School teachers. I have always pushed for more than just efforts. I have asked for signed MOUS to partner with our local institutions of higher education to provide on the job/paid training as well as setting a specific number of job fairs with key stakeholders that are focused on hiring Durham's most vulnerable populations. Its also important to note that when recruiting a large company they also tend to be a force multiplier for smaller companies to start or expand. This has been especially true since I was elected and worked with all three county managers to set a utilization goal for Women and Minority Owned Enterprises in both services and construction. With the Recruitment of Catalent (pharmaceutical), expansion of Eli Lilly (pharmaceutical) and Kempower (electric vehicle charging) we were able to get the three companies to collectively committee to \$43 million in new spending with Minority and Women Owned Firms.

Education, etc

3. What issues do you see with school construction and student school assignment? What role should race equity play with regard to school construction and student assignment? **Please address cost overruns that have reduced the reach of the last education bond. Race equity should play a significant role in school construction and student assignment policies to ensure all students, regardless of their race or background, have equal access to quality education and facilities. We can start with an issue as simple as transportation. Providing safe and reliable transportation to support equitable student assignment practices should be prioritized. This helps in minimizing barriers for families to access diverse schools.**

Assignments can also pose a barrier to accessing equitable educational opportunities. Until the most recent reassignments, there were very few chances for students to get access to an AP, IB, Montessori or Specialized program that was at a school located close to their home. With the parents, I have talked to they are excited about the new lottery/location placement system. We must ensure that student assignment policies do not perpetuate segregation or inequitable access to resources, programs, and high-quality teachers. I know it might seem new to some parents but it is one many black communities have been asking for since the merger. I also feel confident that we will continue to monitor and adjust assignment policies to address any emerging patterns of racial or socioeconomic isolation. Research shows that diverse educational environments can improve academic outcomes and reduce racial achievement gaps.

The COVID-19 pandemic had significant impacts on the construction industry, leading to cost escalations that affected many sectors, including education. When education bonds are passed to fund school construction or renovation, cost overruns can significantly reduce their reach. The pandemic caused disruptions in the supply chain, leading to a substantial increase in material costs. For example, let's say the cost of steel, a key construction material, increased by 25% post-pandemic. If a school construction project budgeted \$10 million for materials pre-pandemic, the increase would add an additional \$2.5 million to the material costs alone. These same increases were present in labor cost. The pandemic also led to labor shortages in many industries, including construction. This shortage can drive up labor costs as contractors compete for available workers. Suppose the labor costs for a project were initially estimated at \$5 million but increased by 15% due to labor shortages. The project would then face an additional \$750,000 in labor costs. When coupled together labor shortages, wage increases, supply chain slow downs and high material cost all lead to delays. Delays due to COVID-19-related restrictions, quarantine measures, and slower permitting processes can extend project timelines. Extended timelines often result in higher overall costs due to longer rental periods for equipment, increased administrative costs, and inflationary pressures. For instance, if a school construction project was delayed by six months, causing an overall project extension cost increase of 10%

4. What are your thoughts about the expansion of the HEART program to schools? How do you envision HEART interacting with the SRO program, both in terms of funding and within schools themselves? **I cannot speak for the DPS nor can I speak for the Sheriff's department. Those**

are both elected bodies that make decisions for their bodies/enterprises. I make it a point to be respectful and not overreach, especially since the city has a different relationship with their law enforcement structure. We simply approve the budget. They actually can hire a chief of police and have a say so in some policies. Statutorily the Board of County Commissioners does not have that authority.

The goal of HEART is to refer non-law enforcement social and mental health issues to resources instead of law enforcement responding to the calls. I AGREE WITH THIS MODEL. By diverting mental health calls away from police, these programs can reduce the potential for escalations that might occur when law enforcement officers, who may not have specialized training, respond to such situations. It also demonstrates a commitment to addressing mental health and social issues in a compassionate and appropriate manner, which can improve trust and relations between the community and local government. I also want to elevate a few things because I feel like there are individuals who will read these and without proper context think that we, the board, the school board as well as the Sheriffs office are doing nothing to help our students. That is not true, we care very deeply and work to fund initiatives when those come to our board. Durham is currently the statewide leader in lowering referrals from schools which has led to Durham sros leading the state in breaking the school to prison pipeline (see our November meeting) and that we currently support DPS spending approximately \$100k in mental health treatment vouchers. The SRO MOU and operations already refers school discipline and non criminal issues back to the schools, resulting in only 23 juvenile petitions in the last school year with those crimes relating to stabbings, drug distribution and weapons on campus. That working relationship between law enforcement and schools should continue. Our schools already have many resources including DEAR, drug use treatment, and a network of psychologists to whom students have been referred and will continue to be referred. We have also funded social workers and nurses. The next step is collaborating with school leaders to ensure the resources provided are used.

All that stated, I would like to state that I am in support of the co-response model. In our current state we still need both, while that could change in the future that is not the present state of things in our schools. I think if the general public knew how many guns, gun switches, knives, tasers and homemade weapons were confiscated Monthly at schools they would feel the same. This information is hardly share widely and publicly and I think it does a disservice to our schools. I have talked to many teachers and principals who describe their current situation as a “war zone” where students are open to publicly hurting themselves as well as their classmates. Whether it be a crisis response model like heart or violence intervention like Bull City United, I would need to see a series of specialized training for those entering the schools that was focused on school aged children and a school setting. Many of the training that takes place is for the general public in crisis response and mental health. A classroom dynamic is much different. I would envision a very specialized subset of practitioners working within our schools because this population is so vulnerable, impressionable and under a lot of peer pressure. These units are typically staffed with professionals trained in mental health, de-escalation techniques, and crisis intervention,

providing a more appropriate response to mental health emergencies than traditional law enforcement. The violent incidents that I have witnessed at our schools both as a Commissioner and a resident, mirror that of our community. Just last month the NCDOJ, Durham's District Attorney's Offices and WRAL reported that while we are only 1/4 the size of Wake County we had 3x the amount of violent crimes. Additionally data supports that properly ascertaining a crisis is difficult to do until on site. I want members of the HEART team to be just as safe as they are in the public and just as safe as our teachers are in the classrooms. I think we can help students and protect them at the same time. I think as these types of programs can help turn the tide on violence, mental health stigmas and crisis, but I think we are not a turning point where this can be the only option in our schools. The data nor the personnel support a HEART only approach in schools. I also think the entities have done a great deal at beginning to work with each other based on the meetings and interviews that have take place between the Sheriff and the HEARTS director.

5. Library staff have asked for an increased workforce, in part to support Sunday opening hours, but in the bigger picture, to enable one of the highest rated County services to fully function. As County Commissioner, how would you support, preserve, and grow the staff and programs of the library? How would you get input from library staff in the process of doing so? **I want to address this the same way that I have addressed it with the few Library Staffers that I have met with as well as the way the manager recently addressed this issue. We have made no decision nor have we made an effort or directed staff to have anyone work a consistent 7 day work week. This idea is absolutely absurd. I have stated so publicly and have no problem doing so here. I would also never vote for this for any department. No department has such a schedule and it makes no sense that we would choose one department to over burden. The idea that certain political groups have shared this narrative without have one conversation with the Manager, the Board, the Assistant Manager, or the Library Director (all women, I might add) is the real problem.**

While I will not do the timeline justice here, I will provide some paraphrased context. As the only board member who sits on the library board of trustees, I take great issue with this false narrative. We received a few emails from residents requesting that the libraries go back to the prepandemic standard of being open seven days a weeks. I as well as leadership knew that we could not do this being short staffed and with Stanford L Warren opening back up next year. The librarians have had a tough few years with the public making demands of them both during and after the pandemic and they have had their programming unjustly criticized. They have been targets during the book ban and stood in the face of it by pushing against the tide and promoting the books that the world wants to ban but that I grew up loving. I recognize that even opening one library on a Sunday would need more than a circulation desk and a skeleton staff to fully operate. I knew, as well as, leadership that we needed to look at a plan that could work for everyone. We hired an independent firm to come in and do an audit (that work is ongoing and present) and come back with recommendations. WE also asked our office of strategy and innovation to work with human resources to see if it would even be possible to utilize the current staff for one library to be open on Sunday. The plan they came back with showed that we could actually do so with an employ only work one

Sunday ever three or four months. That was only 3 to 4 Sundays a year and even with that overlay no one would work a 7 day work week. Even with such a low threshold we are still working to recruit more staff and showcase why the library is an awesome place to work. As I stated in the emails I used to respond to residents, while accessing the library is important, I value my work life balance and reducing burnout for both myself and my neighbor. Again no decision has been made and no decision will be made without buy in from those most effected. We have only take steps to draw a picture of what will work best for our employees.

Housing, Planning, and Neighborhoods

6. What planning policies and priorities do you wish to see emerge from the on-going review and revision of Durham's Uniform Development Ordinance? **When a county undergoes a review and revision of its Uniform Development Ordinance (UDO), there are several key planning policies and priorities that could be beneficial to include. These policies should aim to promote sustainable development, equitable growth, and enhanced quality of life for all residents. We need to adopt flexible land use policies that can adapt to changing needs and priorities of the community, including mixed-use developments that combine residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. As always, I want to ensure that all parts of the county are heard. Community participation and increased engagement efforts should be at the forefront. Ensuring that the planning process is transparent and inclusive, allowing for meaningful input from all segments of the community, particularly those who are often underrepresented. I also want to make sure that we are braiding in our other plans. Example our transit, economic development and even our upcoming cultural master plan. Protecting and preserving historical sites and cultural landmarks, integrating them into the community's growth and development plans. I also want to develop a comprehensive plan for public transportation that connects various parts of the county, making it accessible and efficient. This includes pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly infrastructure to promote non-motorized transportation. I also want to see prioritization around sustainability. We need policies that encourage green building practices, renewable energy use, and sustainable materials in construction. This also includes integrating green spaces, such as parks and community gardens, into urban planning. Most importantly a focus on affordable housing. Implementing incentives that promote the development of affordable housing units is possible in Durham. This could include additional mixed-income housing developments, inclusionary zoning, or tax incentives for developers who include affordable units.**

7. Should the County expand permanently supportive housing? What do you see as the role of PSH in community reentry? What other roles does it play? Expanding permanent supportive housing (PSH) offers several incentives for a county, especially in the context of re-entry programs for ex-offenders. **I have been and would continue to be in support of Permanent Supportive Housing. I think there are number of reasons why we should be invested but I'll outline three here. I think it enhancing public health. PSH addresses both housing and health needs, leading to better overall health outcomes for residents. This, in turn, reduces public health expenses and improves community health standards. We know that it aids in reducing**

recidivism rates and homelessness. PSH significantly reduces homelessness, particularly among those with chronic patterns of homelessness. It can also lower recidivism rates among ex-offenders by providing a stable living environment, reducing the likelihood of returning to criminal activity. While we cannot put a dollar amount on this work it is important to not that it also makes good fiscal sense since at the same time that it makes good neighboring sense. Studies have shown that providing supportive housing is often less expensive than the costs associated with homelessness, such as emergency medical care and legal issues. Stable housing can enable individuals to seek employment, further contributing to economic activity. From the re-entry standpoint, if nothing else it reduces barriers to housing that our justice involved neighbors may have. PSH provides an opportunity for housing without the stigma associated with a criminal record. It can also be a factor in aiding individuals with meeting compliance while on probation. Stable housing makes it easier for ex-offenders to comply with parole or probation requirements.

County Finances, Transportation, Incentives, and Services

8. What is your position on providing public incentives to private firms to promote economic development in Durham? How can county government use development incentives to promote more widely shared prosperity, including better jobs and higher wages for Durham residents?

I think one of the best ways is to continue to expand and support the BULLS Initiative and the Hayti Reborn Justice Movement.

We are currently working to add an additional industry to the Bulls Initiative outside of life sciences. We are providing an additional funding of \$500,00 for Durham Tech's "Back to Work (BTW)" initiative and the "BULLS" initiative, the talent pipeline currently in its third year of operation. We know these initiatives are working. Our unemployment rate much like the states has been on the decline for 11 months. As we bring jobs to Durham we want to make sure that our residents are prepared for those jobs and get those jobs. The BULLS Initiative is offering full scholarships to young adults interested in pursuing a career in Durham's growing life sciences industry. The BULLS Initiative is an equity-centered program that seeks to recruit underrepresented students.

The Hayti Reborn Justice Movement is a partnership with our office and Durham Technical Community College. This partnership with Durham Technical Community College has been invaluable. Early last year the county invested \$2 million into the HR-JM for educational support and wrap around services for our neighbors looking for a second chance. We are already seeing the results of this investment with the graduation of our first cohort with another to take place this month. We saw students share inspirational stories about their new career paths, listened to their elevator pitches and also sadly bid farewell to a student that we lost right before he could reach the finishline. Our justice involved neighbors have shown great progress in the classroom and in job placement.

Also as I stated earlier, as a component of the Durham County Incentive and recruitment process, each company enters into a community benefits agreement that we track and monitor for the duration of their incentives. You have to meet your metrics or you don't

benefit from our incentives. We offer target tax breaks for companies offering over 150 jobs and/or a significant real property expansion that will add to the tax value of the county. We offer tax breaks or incentives to businesses that commit to creating a certain number of jobs within the county, especially high-paying jobs or jobs accessible to residents from diverse backgrounds. We can also structure incentives to increase over time as companies meet or exceed job creation and wage targets. We also work diligently to tie development incentives to wage standards, offering them to companies that pay a living wage or have a minimal wage threshold above the minimum wage. By implement wage floors for different sectors we ensure that incentives lead to quality jobs. We recently started to request quality of life enhancement. We ask and encourage developments that contribute to the overall quality of life, such as childcare, affordable housing, public transportation, and access to healthcare and education. We know that developments that improve the living standards can attract and retain a skilled workforce. By carefully structuring development incentives, Durham County can not only attract and retain businesses but also ensure that these investments yield tangible benefits for the community in terms of better jobs and higher wages.

9. What non-traditional programs (such as public banking, community investment trusts, community development venture capital) could Durham County implement to reduce economic inequality in our community? I think that we have many options in front of us to aid in reducing inequality. One such is the most recent DCo Thrive, our recently approved guaranteed income program. Universal Basic Income (UBI) Pilots have shown great progress nationally. Local governments can experiment with UBI programs, providing regular, unconditional payments to residents to reduce poverty and stimulate local economies. I would not have a problem with public banking as it is similar to the Revolving Housing Fund I recently introduced. Local governments can establish public banks, which are owned and operated by the government, to provide affordable credit to local communities. These banks can focus on funding small businesses, affordable housing, and green energy projects, ensuring that the profits are reinvested back into the community. I also want to add a community land trust component to the revolving housing fund in the future. CLTs can be used to acquire and manage land for the benefit of the local community, ensuring affordable housing and preventing displacement due to gentrification. I also think that we could look at social impact bonds. Private industry needs to invest in our community by not only hiring our people but financial supporting many of our new initiatives and special projects. Also known as "Pay for Success" programs, these bonds allow private investors to fund social programs. If the programs achieve their goals, the government repays the investors with interest. If not, the investors lose their money, reducing financial risk for the government.

10. What should be the principal components of a new public transit plan for Durham County? I would want to see from the beginning and throughout the process, a robust public awareness campaign focused on those individuals who most likely will utilize those services. When I started out as a commissioner we were given the results of a survey completed by residents. When we reviewed the crosstab we found the majority of respondents did not ride the bus. After comparing them with riders and noticing different priorities we hired a firm to conduct

a survey specifically for riders and the underserved to get a more accurate picture of what individuals needed. I want to get things right the first time as we move forward with our new transit plan. We need to be consistent with Implement marketing strategies to promote public transit as a convenient and eco-friendly option. This is the only way we can educate the public about the benefits and usage of the transit system.

I want to make sure that we have an integrated system that is multimodal. We have to develop a network that integrates various modes of transportation, including buses, trains, bike-share programs, and pedestrian pathways. This Ensures seamless connections between different modes for efficient transfers.

I want to make sure it makes good economic sense for riders. I remember days when my car did not work and budgeting made my life and that of my families a lot easier. The transit system should be financially sustainable with a mix of fare-box revenue, government funding, and potential private partnerships. I would work to Implement fair and affordable pricing structures, with options for subsidies or reduced fares for low-income residents.

This brings me to my last point about my hopes for this new system to truly connect the region. I have worked in the surrounding counties for almost 2 decades. It's my hope to establish connections with neighboring counties and cities to facilitate regional travel.

11. What, if anything, should the county do to distribute the property tax burden with greater equity and fairness? I want to first provide some context about the state's uniformity clause: **North Carolina's Constitution contains a uniformity clause which mandates uniformity in taxation. This means property must be taxed at a uniform rate within the same class. However that doesn't mean we can't do some things to ease the burden.**

With the new tax appraisal and tax reevaluation taking place over the next two years, its is my hope that raising taxes will be a last priority. It is my hope that over the next 4 years we do not have to raise taxes more year after year. We have not done so since I have been elected and I would like to maintain that trend as not to tax Durham's longest termed residents out of their forever homes.

I feel confident that our newly appointed tax administrator will run a robust outreach campaign to education our residents on the appeals process. I also look forward to sharing information about our ever successful and ever expanding Low Income Homeowner Tax Program. While many claim to take credit for the program, previous iterations failed and the community never felt comfortable applying that changed during this administration when I along with another colleague worked with the late great Lowell Siler to look for best practices. We worked with the tax office and social services to come with a program that could not fail and that residents felt comfortable applying for with our the burden of pay back. I also look forward to expanding outreach out our circuit breaker tax credits (a 'circuit breaker' tax credit that caps property taxes at a certain percentage of a homeowner's income. This ensures that individuals are not overburdened by property taxes relative to their income) and our Homestead Tax Relief Programs. Homestead exemptions or tax credits offer

homeowners who occupy their property as their primary residence a need break. This reduces the burden on low-income and middle-class families.

We also focus on targeting these tax relief programs for seniors, veterans, and low-income residents to help them cope with property tax expenses.

A top Priority for Durham should be the upcoming tax evaluation and reappraisal. We have got to reappraise property because have gone too long without doing so. The tax office had to put things on hold during COVID. We are also going to be doing a tax reevaluation. That evaluation post appraisal will guide us in reducing our tax rate so as not to profit off our community but have a neutral tax rate. The tax appraisal and tax evaluation process are crucial for Durham County's future for several reasons. It is a primary revenue generator: Property taxes are a significant source of revenue for the county. Accurate appraisals ensure that property taxes are fairly assessed, providing the necessary funds for essential public services like education, public safety, infrastructure, and health services.

We also want to maintain equitable distribution of the tax burden: Fair and accurate tax evaluations are critical to ensuring that all property owners pay their fair share of taxes. This helps prevent a situation where some residents are overburdened while others are under assessed.

We need to make sure we are reflecting market changes. Regular appraisal and evaluation reflect changes in the real estate market. This is especially important in a growing and evolving county like Durham, where property values can change significantly over time due to development, economic factors, and demographic shifts.

This is also the primary way to effective plan and budget. Accurate property valuations are essential for effective government planning and budgeting. They provide a predictable revenue stream, allowing county officials to make informed decisions about long-term investments and budget allocations.

Durham has become a magnet for business and this will improve our economic development. Fair tax assessments contribute to a stable economic environment, which can attract businesses and encourage investment in the county. This leads to job creation and stimulates economic growth.

Justice and Law Enforcement

12. Explain how you see the County's role in overseeing the Durham jail. Under what circumstances, if any, should the county take intervening action to improve the lives of incarcerated individuals? **As of January 1st, 85% of the people in jail were awaiting trial. One detainee is approaching 1800 days without his case being heard. Our incarcerated residents want stability, the ability to move forward and to have their day in court. I support collaboration with our state reps, DA, and defense bar through Justice Resource Center to identify and eradicate the speed bumps to the courtroom. The victims, the accused and their families want their day in court. That's the first step. While the County Commissioners nor**

the Sheriff Department send people to jail, it is our duty to make sure that their experience is humane. Sadly, the Durham County Jail is the next largest medical facility outside of the Duke Healthcare system in the county. We have made major investments in our M.A.T program to curb opioid use as well as made jail renovations to make sure we have acceptable classrooms and meeting spaces. We have supported the purchase of tablets to keep families connected and to improve literacy rates. I know in conversations that I have had with JRC staff as well as the Sheriffs department that we would all love to see improvements in peer support in jail and additional Expansions of Medicaid to incarcerated as well as state demonstration waivers that will provide housing funding.

13. What is your position on expanding the HEART program to be county-wide, fully staffed, and available 24/7? **Which of those are your top priorities? How would you work to overcome resistance to HEART from some in law enforcement?** I am not aware of any resistance from Law Enforcement. I have not heard that from our Deputies or Our Sheriff in the conversations that I have had so I cannot opine on the last question. That's not to say that there isn't I have just not been privy to those sentiments from either Sheriff Birkhead nor Chief Andrews. However I can tell you that from the conversations I have had they all agree that a co-response model works. Orange County has done so effectively for almost 20 years in certain situations with social workers and mental health specialist. I can say that the 911 center within the Sheriff's department has been meeting state standards, is appropriately staffed and has had infrastructure improvements that make it a far better fit than other systems.

Health Care and Social Services

14. As profiled recently in a 3-part *Assembly/WBTV* series, Durham County has the second-slowest reunification rate in the state for children in foster care. As a County Commissioner, what steps would you propose to help families thrive in Durham County and prevent involuntary family separation? **I did read the story and view the complete report. In a County of almost 350,000 people, with plenty of services, I do not want to see any families separated. That percentage accounts for about 32 families and I am sure that many agree that even one broken family is one to many. I think that sentiment at times for many in the public of large majority of these situations is absent of the real context of the level of mutilations, sexual assault, broken bones and drug usage that our staff has to see on a daily basis in our offices and that our folks see in courtrooms. Reunification is a priority for Durham's DSS staff and for our board. To help families thrive in Durham County and prevent involuntary family separation, a multi-faceted approach that addresses various social, economic, and health-related factors is essential. I know that as a county we can increase the availability of affordable housing to prevent homelessness, which is a key factor in family separations. We can also continue our housing subsidy programs to support families struggling to afford safe housing.**

We must also offer parenting classes and support groups to help parents develop healthy parenting skills and build supportive networks. Provide specialized programs for different family structures, including single-parent families and blended families. We can also provide legal assistance to families dealing with issues like domestic violence, housing disputes, or

immigration-related concerns. I also think we need to advocate for policies that protect families from unfair legal practices that could lead to separation on the state level.

15. What do you think about the balance between confidentiality and transparency related to families impacted by involuntary separation in the foster care system? Should these courtrooms be open to the public? What should Durham parents do if they feel their child has been wrongfully taken from them? Would you meet with and listen to a parent in this situation? **I have met with and made attempts to meet with parents in the past as well as their advocates. This also holds true for our classified staff of IAs and bus drivers, our librarians and our sanitation workers. My reputation is that I have no problem meeting with the people most affected. While I have met with families in the past and have might be open to meeting with them in the future, the current climate of this issue leads me to say that I would honestly find some difficulty doing so presently. That is not a no, but I would have to be situational based on the meetings that have been had with colleagues and staff. With ongoing litigation, coupled with misinformation about the real responsibilities a commissioner has in this situation (which is tantamount to zero) it sets up very unrealistic expectations for families that are already suffering. I am sure that they some candidates will answer an automatic yes to this question, because they haven't done this work and they don't understand that the courts make the decisions in these separations nor do they understand that we don't adjudicate those cases nor can we legally pressure a social service director to make a determination. As far as the confidentiality and transparency in the courts, I can honestly say that I am have to err on the side of the victim. No child wants to look online today or 5 years or 20 year from today and see a news story about what their parents did or did not do to keep them safe. No kid wants to see in paper or have their classmates whisper about the abuse their parent or sibling had to endure. That information is not for public consumption. The information should not be used to categorize a family in the community or in the schools. These proceedings are closed by state law for those reasons.**

Civil Rights

I want to stress that these answers are coming from a place of discussion with my peers within the community as well as stakeholders in the community. I often see individuals making statements about what women need, what black people need and black women need and they do not sit in the skins of those groups as I do. They uncomfortableness that I feel when listening to other groups assign when and where my agency begins/ends or the cultural appropriation that follows is not something I am willing to do here if for no other reason, I do not want to make residents feel the way I have felt listening to certain politician falsely make recommendation for individuals of my race/gender.

16. What are the principal issues facing the Latinx and immigrant communities in Durham and how should the county address them? **The Latinx and immigrant communities in Durham County, North Carolina, face a range of challenges, some of which are unique to these populations. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that involves both community engagement and policy initiatives. Many Latinx and immigrants may face language barriers, particularly if English is not their first language. The county can address this by providing language assistance services, such as bilingual staff in government offices, translating important documents and websites into Spanish, and offering interpreter services.**

We have been testing out our closed caption and interpretation software for meetings as we upgrade our county systems.

While I have always been champion for Black Maternal Health, the data has show us that a rising tide lifts all ships but it also amplifies additional needs. My first two years I outlined Black Maternal Health as a top priority, securing new birthing room, new birth nurses and radiologist to improve our ultrasound services post Roe v Wade, additional blood pressure cuffs and improved/new funding for culturally competent birthing specialty non-profits. What we saw with many of the newer services were that the majority of them were being utilized by Latinx women. In some cases, 70 percent utilization. This rate in service usage has had me ask staff to refocus and expand how we do outreach to the Latinx community because the data showcases a clear need. The county can expand healthcare services that are accessible regardless of immigration status and promote community health programs targeting these communities.

I also think we can do a better job work working with our local entrepreneurs. Since my Disparity Study initiative moved forward last year we have seen low numbers in the Black communities but especially low numbers in our Latinx community. I worked with staff to hold a series of outreach events called Empower to bring in those business owners. I had a chance to have long conversations with those owners and work to have them fully integrated into our upcoming Minority Economic Development Week and Secure their HUB certifications. Most recently we also awarded \$1.5 million dollars to a non-profit who is focused on providing technical assistance to Latinx business owners to aid them in pivoting out of the pandemic as well as accessing local and state contracts. Immigrants may face difficulties in securing stable employment, often working in low-wage jobs and lacking job security. The county can support workforce development programs, provide job training and entrepreneurship resources, and ensure labor rights are protected.

17. At a time when the LGBTQ community is under attack by the NC legislature, what can the County do to provide as much protection to this community as possible?

In response to legislative actions that negatively impact the LGBTQ community in North Carolina, county-level governments have several strategies they can employ to offer protection and support. According to a 2021 report by the Williams Institute, 21.6% of LGBTQ people in the U.S. report experiencing discrimination in employment, and 22% in housing. Local ordinances can address these issues directly. I'm proud to say that we implemented local non-discrimination ordinances that include protections for LGBTQ individuals in employment, housing, and public accommodations. I am proud to say that during my first year in office in Nov of 2021, we adopted a ordinance prohibiting discrimination. This ordinance established protections and promote the equal treatment of all individuals and provide freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, creed, color, sex, pregnancy, marital or familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin or ancestry, marital or familial status, pregnancy, military status, religious belief or non-belief, age, or disability in employment and access to all places of public accommodation.

I think we can do a better job of continuing to support/fund LGBTQ resource centers and support services, including counseling, healthcare and outreach. My first year in office I brought forth the Pride Proclamation because no one else did. While I was patting myself on the back that I did so on my own, I think the problem is I did so on my own. While I thought I included everything, I didn't include the people it would affect the most. The next year I sought assistance from the LGBTQ Center Durham and they shared their resources. By year three, we had brought in experts from the center to provide In person training for our staff so that we could all start to take on the "yall" mentality and discuss how this not so uncomfortable conversation is really about respecting people the way you want to be respected. Period. Our staff was so open to the discussion and we are moving forward with additional department integrations of the curriculum. We can go to drag shows and march in parades, but until we work on opening our minds as well as the minds of the ones were are elected to lead we are a part of the problem. I'm working to make sure that I along with staff are a part of the solution.

I also look forward to getting help in supporting/launching campaigns to educate the public about LGBTQ issues, aiming to reduce stigma and promote acceptance. A 2019 study in the Journal of Adolescent Health found that LGBTQ-supportive policies led to a 7% reduction in suicide attempts among high school students. The numbers are higher now post pandemic. These are areas where I would continue supporting programming in Durham Public Schools.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please do not forget to provide us with your resume or biographical statement.