

Wendy Jacobs  
Durham County Commissioner, Candidate for Re-election  
Bio

I'm a parent, a former educator, and an advocate for social and economic justice. My commitment to making our world better is rooted in my upbringing and my 40 years living here in Durham. As your county commissioner, I love working with people across the community to make change through local government. I'm running for re-election because Durham is at a moment of incredible growth and opportunity. I want to keep working for affordable housing, walkable and bikeable communities, connections to good jobs for our residents, and community safety.

I grew up in a supportive family in New Jersey, where I was grounded in my Jewish faith tradition and the beliefs of Tikkun Olam (heal the world) and Tzedakah (giving). As a student at Duke, I learned about the power of listening to and organizing with others. I helped to create the Duke Coffeehouse, a space where the Duke and Durham community could come together that still thrives today. I also worked with students and young people in the West End, which cemented my love for teaching.

As a teacher at Holt Elementary, Carolina Friends School, and at public schools in Caswell County, I experienced firsthand the importance of public funding for education, and how lack of funding disproportionately affects low-income, Black and Latino/e kids. My commitment to public education continued as my three kids moved through DPS.

As a DPS parent, I got involved in my kids' schools, then became the chair of my neighborhood group. I worked with my neighbors to create a new park. This was a collaborative effort with local governments, nonprofits, and residents. Today, people from across the Triangle continue to enjoy Hollow Rock Nature Park every day. I learned how persistence and organizing can create real benefits for our community, and went on to serve on the Durham Planning Commission. I ran for County Commissioner in 2012 because as our County grew, I wanted to help make thoughtful decisions about housing and our environment.

As your Commissioner, I work hard to address local issues. I take a collaborative approach and listen closely to community members and County staff. I'm proud of the work we've done to make sure that every child in Durham has access to high-quality, affordable pre-K. We've increased funding for Durham Public Schools, and I will continue to support quality public education for every child. I'm excited about the investments we're making in services for people with complex mental health and substance use needs—individuals in our community who deserve housing and supportive services outside of the justice system. And I want to see through our historic investments in transit and affordable housing in my next term.

Together we can keep building systems and making changes that benefit all of us.