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One. What is your vision for the Durham community, and what are the specific policies you would prioritize during your term to move us towards that vision?

My vision is a City that works for everyone. If elected, my top priorities would be ensuring that development decisions incorporate community voice, impact to public schools and sustainability, billion-dollar corporations pay their fair share of taxes and a housing system that works. Inclusive decision-making ensures that community, taxpayers and developers all win.

Two. Why are you the right person to elect at this moment to guide our city over the coming years?

Many in the community feel their voice is not being heard and they are being left behind. This election is about choices. A choice between a Mayor who hides behind "Dillon's Rule" or a candidate who will prioritize community voice in development decisions. A choice between a Mayor who is silent on whether or not billion-dollar corporations should pay their fair share of taxes or a candidate who is not. A choice between a candidate who will listen to the people or a Mayor who will not. I have a broad base of relationships and experience working to provide public goods. If elected, I will ensure the City of Durham works for everyone.

Three. In your view, how do interactions among council members influence the larger health of Durham's policy and political environment? As a council member, how would you seek to contribute to the council's culture? If you are running for mayor, how would your leadership influence the council's culture?

Interactions among council members influence the health of Durham's civic fabric. I commit to dialoguing with all my colleagues on Council, including those I may disagree with. A healthy debate is critical to the well-being of our democracy. I will lead by example. Since I declared my candidacy, I have been building relationships with many candidates. That work will continue in the weeks and months ahead.

Four. Building and approving an annual budget for our community is one of the most important acts of governance that city council members undertake each year. If you currently serve on the City Council, what informed your approach to the budget process and your ultimate decision to vote for it? If you are not currently on council, how would you have voted on the budget and what would have informed your approach and decision?

I understand why the City Council voted to approve the budget. They are making the best decision when faced with a set of imperfect options. Some items were funded. Others were not. Property owners will face a significant tax increase. This is an incredibly challenging situation. Due to inflationary pressures and the ongoing trade wars, I would have approved a smaller tax increase. I have concerns regarding a combined City and County 10% property tax increase in this fiscal landscape. As I mentioned in another response, the City should push for large, wealthy institutions to pay their fair share of taxes.

Five. From smoky skies to extreme heat to heavy rainfall events, Durham is already experiencing the effects of climate change – and the most vulnerable people in our communities (including children, the elderly, low-income residents, unhoused residents, and BIPOC folks) are being impacted the most. What policies will you prioritize to reduce climate pollution and help Durham adapt to worsening impacts?

One of the greatest powers the City wields is over the planning process and development decisions. The City needs to prioritize sustainability from beginning to end. For example, what are the impacts to the local watershed, tree canopy and greenspaces? Will the development create walkability or more car dependent sprawl? If elected, I will fight to ensure the development process incorporates sustainability.

Additionally, I commend the City's composting pilot program. It's a great start. If elected, I will request that the program be expanded and made more accessible. (Orange County has a great model we can replicate.)

Six. Would you be willing to vote for a city contribution to partially fund an expansion of the HEART program into Durham Public Schools? More broadly, how is Durham doing in its approach to community safety, and what if anything would you change?

Spearheading collaborative efforts among the three branches of local government is a vital part of the role of Mayor. The City Council would first need to receive a request from Superintendent Lewis and/or the Durham Public Schools Board of Education. Once that has occurred, I would evaluate the request.

The HEART program does good work. I am supportive of the HEART program.

With regards to community safety, there are opportunities with emergency communications, victims of crime and individuals who are challenging the well-being of others.

Seven. How does equity – including racial equity and equitable services for immigrants and refugees – play into your view of governance? What metrics or indicators would you look to know whether Durham is achieving more equitable outcomes for underserved populations over time? What do you see as the main policy levers that City Council can use to impact those indicators?

How local government provides services and supports community absolutely informs my view of governance. I would look at disaggregated data. I would regularly talk to residents and community leaders and ask for their feedback on the City of Durham's service delivery. I would listen to comments from people who live in properties managed by the Durham Housing Authority and simultaneously, review evictions from the Durham Housing Authority and other entities. I will examine traffic stop data and use-of-force complaints against the Durham Police Department. When it comes to immigrants, one thing the Durham Police Department can do is align its U-visa policy to what the Town of Chapel Hill's Police Department has instituted.

Eight. What is the most important thing that is not currently being funded by the City? Would you be willing to raise taxes to fund this item?

A living wage. I would be open to raising taxes with one caveat: I would aggressively explore all other sources of revenue, including ensuring billion-dollar entities pay their fair share, before agreeing to raising taxes. An honorable mention goes to significantly increasing funding for the arts and, in particular, offering small-dollar grants to local artists.

Nine. Are you satisfied with the Durham Police Department, including its administrative, law enforcement, and security functions? Should the City government increase or decrease resources allocated to the Police Department? Please explain your answer.

The individuals I have met who work for the Durham Police Department are nothing but professionals. I am satisfied with the work of the Durham Police Department but I have concerns regarding how they engage and support victims of crime. In terms of resources, it's critically important our public servants, including the Durham Police Department, are paid competitive salaries for their work. With regards to increasing or decreasing resources, the details matter. Is the funding going to ShotSpotter, salaries, new vehicles or something else?

Ten. Please detail your plan for affordable housing in Durham, including a discussion of current programs here in Durham and other programs across the state that have been effective in maintaining and creating affordability.

There are multiple components to my plan. First, as part of the planning process, developers should make contributions for affordable housing. Second, the City of Durham needs to modify some of the Area Median Income rules that govern loans to homeowners who elect to make affordable housing commitments. Third, the City of Durham needs to leverage its own real estate holdings and partnerships with local organizations to make real the promise of housing for our most vulnerable. Fourth, the City Council needs to conduct greater oversight over the Durham Housing Authority.

Eleven. Describe your decision making process in voting to approve or not approve zoning requests. In particular, what do you look for in a development plan that leads you to vote for it or against it? In your answer, please take into consideration state restrictions on the power of cities to regulate development.

As I mentioned earlier, this election is about choices. As Mayor, I will ensure development decisions incorporate community voice, impact to public schools and sustainability. In terms of questions, I would ask the following: Did the plan conduct meaningful community engagement? How did the initial plan change after community engagement? What is the plan's impact on local public schools? How will the applicant address the additional students who may enroll in our local public schools? What is the plan's impact on our watersheds and greenspaces? How will the applicant mitigate the proposed impact on the environment? What is the impact on other public services and infrastructure? What is the recommendation of staff? The answers to those questions will guide my decision-making process.

Twelve. Please provide your analysis of Durham's municipal bonds over the past few years.

Infrastructure is expensive. Because developers historically were not required to provide public infrastructure, such as sidewalks, the most recent municipal bond regarding sidewalks and parks was a step in the right direction.

Thirteen. Many vulnerable populations in our city are under attack from both the federal government and the state legislature. This includes LGBTQI people and immigrants, among others. What role can the city play in countering these attacks?

A lot. The City of Durham, including the Mayor, can play public and private roles. I want to be unequivocally clear. I will not sacrifice the values that make this incredible city special. I have a long history of standing up to policies that seek to disenfranchise marginalized communities. Additionally, I have a record of changing policies and funding decisions. Going forward, I will listen to community and take direction from them.

Fourteen. Please describe your understanding of the role of state and federal preemption on local government. Are there any parts of your platform that might run up against preemptions? If so, please explain how you would overcome such obstacles.

I understand preemption. I do not believe any parts of my platform run-up against preemption.

Fifteen. What guides your decision making process when presented with contradictory views? For example, when advice from city staff contradicts advice from advisory committees (such as the Planning Commission and others), and residents present multiple and conflicting opinions, how do you reach your decisions on how to vote?

I seek to understand. Why does a person believe that their position is correct? I would consult content experts. I would, then, weigh all the information and make a final decision. Part of the challenge with the City of Durham is that the process is broken. In an ideal world, there should be no need for advisory committees, because the planning process has, already, thoughtfully incorporated community voice, including opinions that may conflict with staff. The expectation should be that zoning decisions become unanimous votes or as close to unanimous because the process allows for an initial proposal, feedback, revision, more feedback, more revisions and, finally, the best thinking of staff. The Planning Department is bringing recommendations that in my opinion are not incorporating community voice, impacts to public schools and sustainability. This is placing the City Council in an untenable situation.

Sixteen. How can the city engage with Durham Public Schools and work toward implementing an “Aftercare for All” program that could benefit all DPS families?

Durham Public Schools is primarily responsible for providing aftercare. That being said, the City does play a role. Particularly, with Parks and Recreation and the various programs they offer. As an administrator, I see families’ frustrations finding quality and affordable aftercare on a daily basis. We need to find a sustainable solution to this ongoing challenge. It will require all the players in local government coming together.

Seventeen. What steps would you take to create and improve ways for children to be able to walk or bike to schools?

We need to build more sidewalks and protected bike lanes by ensuring adequate funds are appropriated by the City of Durham and developers pay for these public goods as part of the planning process. Additionally, the implementation of the Vision Zero action plan will ensure children can safely walk or bike to school. Finally, I believe the City of Durham has a role to play in ensuring speed limits are observed near schools.