

PA PAC Questionnaire for Durham City Council Ward Seats and Durham Mayor – 2025

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 Monday July 28 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 Board at

pac@peoplesalliancepac.org by **July 28 at 5pm**

Please use subject line ‘PA ENDORSEMENT 2025’

Please note that following the Monday July 28 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. ***Please use subject line ‘PA ENDORSEMENT 2025’ when emailing your completed questionnaire to***

pac@peoplesalliancepac.org

Candidate’s name: Anjanée Bell

Address: 555 S. Mangum Street, Suite 100, Durham, NC 27701

E-mail Address: anjanee.bell@bellfordurham.com

Phone: (919) 225-0968

Website: www.bellforddurham.com

1. 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?

1. 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 Durham that works—for everyone. A Durham where no one is asked to shrink to make space for growth, and where housing, safety, opportunity, and dignity are not reserved for the few. As Mayor, I will lead with our people-first agenda: Durham is H.O.P.E.—Housing & Healing, Opportunity & Ownership, People’s Safety & People’s Trust, and Environment & Education. This vision is rooted in equity, shaped by community voice, and backed by actionable policy.

I will prioritize:

- **Housing justice that redefines affordability through residual income metrics, expands public and social housing models, and protects long-time residents from displacement.**
- **Public safety strategies that invest in prevention, community-rooted care, and crisis response—while ensuring accountability and transparency at all levels of law enforcement.**
- **Inclusive economic development tied to ownership, support for worker cooperatives, local entrepreneurship, and expanded access to capital for BIPOC and low-wealth communities.**
- **Climate resilience through green infrastructure, flood mitigation, and investments in tree canopy, open space, and equitable access to cooling and mobility.**
- **A government culture that is transparent, inclusive, and responsive—where policy is shaped with the people, not behind closed doors.**

My leadership centers those most impacted and builds bridges between government, residents, and institutions. A better Durham is not only possible—it is already in motion. My job is to make it real.

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

I am not a political insider. I am a mother of three, an educator, an artist, and a community

builder—shaped by Durham, rooted in service, and ready to lead.

I bring a fresh lens and deep resolve to a city at a crossroads. Our future demands leadership that listens deeply, acts boldly, and stays grounded in the people—not special interests. I have spent my life building bridges across race, class, and culture. I know how to bring people together—even when they do not agree—and move from conversation to action.

This moment calls for vision, not ego. Collaboration, not division. As Mayor, I will show up with clarity, transparency, and follow-through. I will govern with the courage to do what is right—and the discipline to do it well.

My platform, *Durham is H.O.P.E.*, is a call to action. It is a roadmap toward a *better* Durham—for everyone. And I am ready to lead it forward.

3. 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?

Culture shapes everything—from the speed of decisions to the trust the public holds in our process. Council culture is not just about personalities. It reflects how power is shared, how conflict is handled, and whether residents feel respected and heard.

As Mayor, I will lead with clarity, consistency, and care. My leadership is rooted in presence, preparation, and accountability. I believe in welcoming difference, addressing tension directly, and focusing on our shared duty to govern. I do not believe leadership is about appearances, ego, or political theater. I believe it is about listening, humility, and the courage to act in service of the public good.

When the culture of Council is healthy, collaboration becomes possible—even across disagreement. When it deteriorates, public trust follows. I will set a tone that prioritizes transparency, values public input, and keeps the work moving forward with purpose. I will create space for bold debate—but I will not allow dysfunction to define our chamber.

I intend to foster a culture where people do not just speak—but are heard. A culture where the process is clear, decisions are steady, and everyone—staff and residents alike—is treated with dignity and respect. I will model what it looks like to serve and lead with conviction—and I will expect the same of those who serve beside me.

4. 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 am not currently on Council. As Mayor, I will approach the budget with discipline and purpose. A budget should not just pass the test on paper—it must pass the test in people’s lives. That begins with listening. We must hear directly from the people impacted by our choices, and make sure their needs—not just our assumptions—guide our spending.

I believe in a lean budget—one that trims the fat and invests in what truly works. I would make auditing a regular part of the process to help us stay honest and effective. That includes checking whether programs are delivering results, whether money is reaching the neighborhoods that need it most, and whether we are lifting people up—not leaving them behind.

Before I support a budget, I will ask:

- **Did we listen—especially to those most impacted?**
- **Does this help more people stay housed, safe, and supported?**
- **Does it move us toward long-term solutions—or just short-term fixes?**
- **Can we clearly explain why each major expense matters?**

Budgets must reflect our values—but they must also be smart, clear, and built to serve. Listening is not a soft skill. It is the starting point of every sound decision.

5. 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?

Climate change is no longer a distant concern—it is at our doorstep. While no one is immune, it is our most vulnerable neighbors who are bearing the greatest cost: children, elders, low-income families, and those already pushed to the margins. As Mayor, I will respond with urgency, care, and discipline.

I will prioritize:

- **Stronger flood control and stormwater infrastructure—starting in neighborhoods**

that are most at risk.

- **Green streets and shaded corridors near schools, senior housing, and areas with high pedestrian use.**
- **Preservation of open space, creeks, wetlands, and tree canopy—not just for beauty, but for safety, cooling, and long-term resilience.**
- **Deeply affordable, climate-ready housing—so no one faces illness or displacement because of rising heat or stronger storms.**

These choices are not just about protecting land. They are about protecting people. How we build—and how we allow others to build—matters. Durham can be a national example of what responsible, people-first development looks like.

To pay for it, we will trim what is wasteful, audit what is ineffective, and invest in what is working. We will pursue outside dollars and partnerships, but never at the cost of our values.

I will bring trusted voices into the process—residents, first responders, planners, educators, and climate experts—because strong policy starts with listening. A city that is not climate-ready is not people-ready. We must act now—and we must act together.

6. **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?**

Yes, I would be willing to vote for a city contribution—because our young people deserve care, support, and safety, not punishment when what they need is help. HEART is a good tool in the toolbox. Any expansion into Durham Public Schools must be guided by a clear review of how the program is performing—what is working, what needs to improve, and how the public understands its role. We need real data, real input, and shared trust.

Durham has taken important steps by investing in HEART and violence prevention. Still, we lack a unified vision. Too often, our strategy is reactive instead of preventive, fragmented instead of coordinated. Community safety is not just about how we respond to crisis—it is about how we prevent harm in the first place. That means investing in housing, education, youth programs, jobs, and health services.

We must also strengthen collaboration—between governments, departments, and community leaders—so that our safety work is consistent and effective, especially for those who have been left out of traditional models of support.

My approach is shaped by the H.O.P.E. agenda—especially People's Safety & People's

Trust. As Mayor, I will lead a city where public safety begins with listening, prevention, and coordinated action—not just reaction. A city is only as strong as the trust between its people and its public systems. That trust is thin right now. I will help rebuild it.

7. 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 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?

Equity is not a trend—it is a commitment to see, serve, and stand with those who have been left out or pushed aside. It requires more than good intentions. It requires action, accountability, and the courage to change how systems operate.

I do not believe in one-size-fits-all governance. I believe in meeting people where they are, listening to lived experience, and building systems that actually work for the people they are meant to serve. That includes immigrants, refugees, returning citizens, working-class families, youth, and elders—especially those living in our most under-resourced neighborhoods.

To know if Durham is making progress, I would look at real-world outcomes: Are more people staying housed? Are families earning enough to live and save? Are small businesses of color accessing capital and contracts? Are more residents—especially those with language barriers—accessing city services with ease and dignity? Are we closing gaps in health, housing, and opportunity—not just talking about them?

Durham already operates public dashboards on health, housing, and budget performance. As Mayor, I will ensure these tools track equity in plain sight—and reflect the realities people are living every day.

The City has several levers to drive this work forward:

- **Budget decisions that reflect need—not just growth.**
- **Appointments and hiring practices that build real representation.**
- **Data dashboards that show progress in plain sight.**
- **Partnerships with trusted community organizations to expand access.**

Equity is not about charity or compliance. It is about power, trust, and ensuring this city works—for everyone.

8. 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?

The most important thing not currently being fully funded is community-rooted infrastructure—both physical and relational. We talk about equity, but we are not building for it. Many of the most effective programs that keep people safe, housed, and connected remain underfunded, under-supported, or treated as optional.

This includes things like third spaces for community, violence prevention teams, workforce pipelines for returning citizens, deep affordability in housing, neighborhood-level climate upgrades, and true participatory engagement. These are not “extras.” They are the foundation of a city that works.

We cannot raise taxes just to say we did something. We must be able to show what it delivers, who it benefits, and why it matters. I would be willing to consider tax increases if:

- **The need is clear and urgent.**
- **The plan is transparent, targeted, and equitable.**
- **The results can be measured—and seen.**

I believe in discipline and accountability. We must start by trimming waste, reviewing contracts, and shifting funding from programs that do not work to those that do. Then—and only then—should we ask more from the people.

People are not asking for perfection. They are asking for proof. If we lead with care, strategy, and honesty, we can deliver both.

9. 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.

I do not believe in blanket satisfaction or blanket rejection. People’s safety is too important for either. My job is not to defend a department or tear one down—it is to ensure every city system is working for the people.

There are good people within the Durham Police Department who serve with professionalism and care. There are also serious concerns about response times, case follow-through, and community trust. Both can be true—and both must be addressed.

In recent years, public debate around policing has added tension and uncertainty—on all sides. That reality has impacted morale, clarity, and trust. As Mayor, I will name what is broken and rebuild what is needed.

We must invest in talent to protect and serve this city—sworn and civilian—and ensure our safety system reflects Durham’s values. We must build safety through care and trust—not just enforcement. That means funding HEART and civilian responders, supporting mental health and youth services, and listening to those most impacted.

The goal is not to arbitrarily increase or decrease funding. It is to make sure every public dollar is used effectively, equitably, and in service of long-term safety. We must ask the hard questions, review the data, and lead with transparency and discipline.

People’s safety must be people-centered, not politics-centered. That is how I will lead.

10. 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.

Every person in Durham deserves a place to live that is safe, dignified, and affordable. My vision is rooted in one simple principle: *housing must anchor people in place—not push them out*. That means homes for every resident, not just profit for a few.

We must go beyond the broken metrics of affordability that distort reality. As Mayor, I will champion housing definitions that reflect real income, transportation costs, and residual income—not inflated regional figures that leave working families behind. We will create a city standard of *housing people before profits—and ensuring everyone gets one before anyone gets two*.

I will pursue a housing strategy centered on four principles:

- **Protect current residents through strong tenant protections, anti-displacement funds, and a Durham Tenants’ Bill of Rights.**
- **Produce deeply affordable housing through expanded public housing, community land trusts, and partnerships with *local and nonprofit developers* who are accountable to the people.**
- **Preserve and repair what already exists by investing in aging units, naturally occurring affordable housing, and repair programs for seniors and long-time homeowners.**
- **Power the people through down-payment assistance, co-op housing, rent-to-own options, and first-look programs for tenants and community-minded buyers.**

We must stop relying on trickle-down housing strategies. Real solutions require real courage—and the political will to challenge speculative development that exploits our growth while displacing our legacy.

As Mayor, I will push for grounded affordability standards, direct city land toward public good, and work alongside residents, local housing advocates, and nonprofit developers to protect Durham's future. *The right to housing is not a luxury. It is the foundation of justice—and I will govern like it.*

11. 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.

Zoning is not just technical—it is moral. It reflects what kind of Durham we are building. As Mayor, I will make those decisions with transparency, integrity, and the courage to say no when no is required.

Zoning decisions are among the most consequential votes a city can take. Each one tells a story about who we value, what we protect, and how we shape Durham's future. I will evaluate every rezoning request through a principled lens—grounded in people's safety, equity, and long-term stewardship.

I will ask:

- **Who benefits—and who is burdened?**
- **Does this align with our goals for affordability, transit, climate readiness, and anti-displacement?**
- **Does this project offer real community benefit—or just empty promises?**

I will prioritize early neighborhood input—not just feedback at the finish line. Many residents only hear about projects when the decision is nearly made. That must change. I will advocate for stronger engagement and clearer public criteria to build trust.

Yes, state law limits how cities regulate development. Still, we have tools: zoning conditions, public land use, comprehensive planning, and infrastructure investments. I will use them to negotiate from a place of strength—not submission.

I will support projects that center community, expand deeply affordable housing, and

reduce displacement. I will oppose those that do harm.

Each decision must answer one question: *Does this move Durham forward without leaving our people behind?*

12. Please provide your analysis of Durham's municipal bonds over the past few years. They are double banking. Take a lot of the tax

Durham voters have approved hundreds of millions in bonds over the past decade to invest in parks, sidewalks, streets, and affordable housing. These bonds represent a public trust—one that must be met with transparency, fiscal responsibility, and clear results.

As Mayor, I will request a full briefing on all active bonds: how much has been spent, where funds have gone, how initiatives are progressing, and how this debt is impacting residents—especially in a time of rising costs. I will also ensure that the public is not kept in the dark. Too many residents have shared that they are unaware of the status of bonds they voted for. That must change.

Municipal bonds are essentially loans that taxpayers are obligated to repay. That means public engagement and public benefit must be front and center—not afterthoughts. The city must provide regular updates in plain language, with public dashboards and diverse communication methods that reach people where they are.

Looking ahead, I will only support new bonds that:

- Align with the city's equity and anti-displacement goals
- Deliver measurable progress for communities that have been overlooked or underinvested in
- Demonstrate fiscal accountability and clear return on investment
- Center public good over private gain

Our borrowing power is not infinite. We must treat it with care, especially in a city where many working families are already stretched thin. I will govern with the principle that bonds are not just about what we build—but *who benefits, who decides, and who pays the price*.

13. 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?

The city has both the power and responsibility to protect its residents—especially those under attack. That includes LGBTQI people, immigrants, and others who are being targeted by harmful state and federal policies. I believe that community safety begins with

care, not criminalization—and that local government must do everything in its power to ensure people feel safe, seen, and supported.

We can do this through our investments, our policies, and our partnerships. That means funding community-based safety alternatives, increasing access to housing, ensuring protection from displacement, expanding language access, and investing in youth and mental health services that reach everyone—not just those already within the system. It also means ensuring city services are accessible without fear—regardless of background, identity, or immigration status.

As Mayor, I will work to ensure our local practices reflect our values. I will advocate for clear non-discrimination policies, safe access to city spaces and services, and public trust protections that make Durham a place of welcome and dignity. We will pursue every legal avenue available to uphold human rights, even when others attempt to violate them.

Durham cannot solve state or federal injustice alone. But we can model what justice looks like here—and send a clear message: *No matter what is happening beyond our borders, we will stand with our people here at home.*

14. 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.

State and federal preemption can limit a city's ability to make decisions that reflect the needs and values of its residents. In North Carolina, state preemption has restricted local authority on housing policy, labor standards, environmental protections, zoning flexibility, and even how local governments respond to federal immigration enforcement.

I do not believe local leadership should be defined by fear of preemption. I believe it should be defined by courage, clarity, and creativity. I am committed to using every tool available—from budget investments to land use strategy, from local hiring and procurement to cross-sector partnerships—to move Durham forward.

Some parts of my platform, including stronger tenant protections, deeper affordability metrics, and expanded community safety models, may challenge or stretch what state law currently allows. Where legal limitations exist, I will seek lawful workarounds, pilot programs, and coalition-building with other cities to demonstrate what is possible. I will also work closely with city attorneys to ensure we push boundaries responsibly—and with the people at the center.

Preemption does not mean powerlessness. It means we must be smart, strategic, and united. I will be transparent with residents about what is possible now, what we must fight for, and what we can build together through advocacy, litigation, or statewide partnerships.

When our values are clear and our leadership is aligned, even the boundaries of state law

cannot block the will of a people-powered city. I will not govern with fear. I will govern with *purpose*.

15. 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?

As Mayor, I would be responsible for making decisions that are not only informed—but principled and people-centered. When presented with conflicting views—from staff, advisory committees, or residents—I will begin by getting clear on the values at stake. Who will be most impacted? Whose voices have historically been excluded? What aligns with Durham’s long-term vision for equity, belonging, and shared prosperity?

City staff offer important technical and legal expertise. Advisory committees often reflect broader lived experience and subject-matter knowledge. Residents bring the truth of what they are living every day. Leadership is not about picking favorites. It is about understanding the full landscape and weighing it against the values and goals we are accountable to.

In moments of disagreement, I will ask:

- Who benefits—and who bears the burden?**
- Are we solving a short-term issue or creating a long-term problem?**
- Does this move Durham forward without leaving anyone behind?**

Transparency and accountability will guide me. I will make my reasoning public, so residents understand not just how I vote—but why. I will also create space for feedback and learning, especially when decisions have unintended consequences.

I do not believe leadership means pleasing everyone. It means listening deeply, weighing evidence and experience, and making hard decisions with integrity. That is the kind of leadership Durham deserves—and the kind I will bring.

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

While Durham Public Schools are governed by the Board of Education and not City Council, the conditions that surround our students—housing, transit, safety, aftercare—are shaped by city leadership. If we want Durham’s children to succeed, we must build a city that supports their learning before, during, and after the school day.

As Mayor, I will pursue bold partnerships with DPS, Durham County, nonprofit providers, recreation staff, and community-based organizations to build toward *Aftercare for All*. This vision includes expanded programming at recreation centers, faith spaces, and trusted neighborhood sites—so children have a place to go that is safe, enriching, and accessible for working families.

We can start by:

- **Mapping existing aftercare gaps by school, age group, and neighborhood**
- **Leveraging city recreation staff and facilities to extend hours and offerings**
- **Piloting universal aftercare zones in high-need areas**
- **Creating a city-county-school partnership table focused on youth care infrastructure**
- **Exploring funding mechanisms including grants, public-private partnerships, and federal dollars**

This is not charity—it is infrastructure. Aftercare keeps children safe, improves academic outcomes, and allows parents to work without fear or financial strain.

I also believe in centering youth voices in shaping these programs. If we want young people to participate, they must see themselves in the design—from the snacks and staffing to the hours and activities.

Durham has the creativity and will to lead on this. We should not wait for the state to solve what we can build together.

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

Every child in Durham deserves the freedom to walk or bike to school safely—without fear of traffic, violence, or environmental hazards. Safe mobility is not just about infrastructure. It is about care, equity, and dignity.

As Mayor, I will work with the Durham Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission to assess needs, develop solutions, and identify funding for safer routes to schools and other key public spaces. That work will prioritize historically underserved neighborhoods where dangerous streets and missing sidewalks have long put children at risk.

My approach includes:

- **Improving sidewalks, crosswalks, and protected bike lanes near schools and**

transit routes

- Implementing traffic-calming measures such as speed humps, signage, and enhanced lighting
- Creating safe passage zones in collaboration with DPS, parents, community groups, and trusted safety partners
- Supporting “walking school buses” and “bike trains” that allow students to travel together with adult supervision
- Engaging youth and families directly to identify barriers and co-create neighborhood solutions

These steps will not only improve daily safety. They will also reduce emissions, improve health, build stronger community ties, and foster a culture of shared responsibility.

I will also align this work with Durham’s broader goals for environmental justice, equitable transportation, and neighborhood well-being. Children should not have to cross dangerous intersections or walk in the street just to get an education.

A *better* Durham invests in freedom of movement—not just for cars, but for people. That begins with protecting our children.

Biographical Closing Statement:

Anjanée Bell is a mother of three, an organizer, a former educator, and a lifelong public servant. Raised in Durham, she is a proud graduate of Durham Public Schools and North Carolina Central University. Her campaign for Mayor is rooted in lived experience, deep community ties, and a bold, principled vision for what is possible. She is leading with courage, care, and clarity—grounded in the belief that local leadership must meet the moment with both moral direction and measurable results. Through *Durham is H.O.P.E.*, she offers a clear path forward. A vote for Bell is a vote to move Durham toward a future that is more just, more inclusive, and more prepared to meet the needs of everyone. Because she believes: Durham can be a city that works—for everyone.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Please do not forget to provide us with your resume or biographical statement, as well as a high resolution headshot.