

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: Elijah King

Address: 8 Osprey Ct, Durham, NC 27712

E-mail Address: elijahkingfordurham@gmail.com

Phone: 984-309-8697

Website: elijahkingfordurham.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?

My vision for Durham is one where everyone has stable and safe housing, the opportunity to build wealth for their family, the ability to safely get to and from school, work, and basic necessities, and feels safe in their community. While many may not be able to fathom not having these basics, it is the question of thousands of people in our city. To accomplish this, I have studied cities across our state and throughout the country that are facing similar challenges and looked for solutions that could work here in Durham. You can read [this in depth on my website](#), but examples of specific policies would include implementing an all solar bus fleet like Greensboro has, launching a dedicated local affordable housing fund like Denver has, making parking more accessible for workers and business owners in downtown Durham like Asheville, and increasing access to youth recreation opportunities to curb crime like Baltimore has done.

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

I'm the right person to elect at this moment because what Durham needs right now isn't just more data points or talking points, it's lived experience. It's easy to quote a stat or cite a policy, but it's another thing entirely to *be* that fact or figure. Behind every number we throw around, every eviction, every dollar of rent increase, every student left behind; there is a real person. And I've been one of them.

I'm a born-and-raised Durhamite, and my chief experience is being from this community and knowing how to advocate for it. By the time I turned 18, I had moved 11 times. I've seen an eviction notice taped to the door. I know what it's like to witness the fear and uncertainty that comes with housing instability. That experience isn't unique to me, but what is unique is what I did with it.

I took that lived reality and turned it into action. I co-founded the Durham Neighbors Free Lunch Initiative as a freshly graduated high schooler at the height of COVID-19, serving over 60,000 meals and partnering with dozens of local businesses to keep folks fed and connected. Another student and I co-launched the Durham Youth Environmental Justice Initiative to give young people the tools to fight for environmental justice. I serve as Third Vice Chair of the North Carolina Democratic Party and Vice Chair of the NC AIDS Action Network. I've sat on boards focused on workforce development, sustainability, housing, and transportation, including organizations like Made in Durham.

I don't come from wealth or political pedigree. I come from Durham. And that's what this moment calls for, someone who knows this city not just in theory, but in practice. Someone who has lived its challenges and fought for its people. I'm running to make

sure the people who are usually treated as an afterthought are finally at the center of the conversation.

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?

In my work with Durham Neighbor's Free Lunch Initiative, I worked across Durham political coalitions to deliver what Durhamites really needed - approximately 60,000 meals and other resources during covid. I have built and expanded on these coalitions, with a broad base of supporters across race, religion, ethnicities, and political coalitions, leading to my being unanimously elected for my second term as Third Vice Chair of the NC Democratic Party, 1 of 2 officers able to do so. What I have found in my political work is that it's hard for folks to care about politics when they're worried about being evicted. Although I have relationships with most members on the Council, working folks don't care who gets along with who on City Council, they care if they can get to and from work safely, afford their rent, and have opportunities for their children to get ahead. This is the work I'm committed to as a City Council Member, and I have worked and will continue to work with all stakeholders to meaningfully improve outcomes for our neighbors.

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?

If I had been on City Council during this year's budget cycle, I would have voted yes. This \$772 million budget doesn't go as far as I believe it ultimately needs to, but it's a meaningful start. It lays a foundation for future progress and reflects a willingness to invest in Durham's long-term well-being.

What would inform my decisions would be the tangible steps this budget takes: funding for fare-free buses, an expanded HEART program, investment for eviction-diversion programs, increased pay for city workers, and significant infrastructure upgrades. Those aren't just technical decisions, they're commitments to equity, accessibility, and dignity. For working families, young people, and our most vulnerable neighbors, those investments matter.

I'm especially encouraged to see continued investment in public transit, water and sewer infrastructure, and stormwater systems. These are essentials, not luxuries, and they're often the first to fall behind when budgets get tight. The \$537.6 million allocated to the

Capital Improvement Plan and the \$2.48 billion for long-term infrastructure projects signals that the city is thinking seriously about the future.

Ultimately, I would have voted yes with a commitment to continue pushing. To push for deeper investments in affordable housing and youth opportunity. To push for more participatory budgeting, so that communities have real power in shaping how dollars are spent. And to push for budgets that don't just fund programs—but reflect our values.

Budgets are moral documents. And while this one isn't perfect, nothing is, it moves us in the right direction. My "yes" would come with a promise: to never stop advocating for a Durham where no one gets left behind.

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?

Curbing climate change and moving towards climate resiliency are embedded throughout my platform. Additionally, I have developed a specific [environmental position paper](#) to detail ways that I will fight for the environment on the Durham City Council. Specifically, I believe moving away from car-centric development, increasing connectivity, and providing infrastructure for automobile alternatives is a great place to start.

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?

As somebody who advocated in high school to replace SROs with restorative practices, I am certainly not opposed to this, but I haven't actually heard from Durham Public Schools that this is something they are interested in. Currently, DPS, HEART, and the Sheriff's Office are collaborating to call HEART to provide mental health support to DPS stakeholders (staff and students), and I would work to support collaboration across bodies for any potential expansion. Durham is doing its best with the resources and thought partners currently at the table. If elected, I would be one of only two DPS graduates (and the only Black one) who could speak to the ways overpolicing shows up in our schools and the need for additional mental health resources. With me elected, we could further explore what is working well in other municipalities and consider evaluation tools for expansion of HEART. I am interested in how the city and county can partner with Durham Public Schools to ensure mentorship and recreation opportunities are available to all Durham youth in order to improve community safety for everyone.

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, especially racial equity and equity for immigrants and refugees isn't just a policy lens for me, it's a personal and political commitment. In 2023, there were an estimated 1,003,467 foreign-born residents in North Carolina, making up about 9.3% of our state's population. That's not a small number, that's our neighbors, our coworkers, our classmates, and our community. And in a time where the political climate is increasingly hostile to immigrants, Durham is in a position and has a responsibility to step up.

There was a time when Durham could proudly claim to be a Sanctuary City. But that's no longer the reality. Today, when housing is unaffordable, wages aren't keeping up, and public safety is politicized, the folks already pushed to the margins and immigrants, Black and Brown communities, low-income residents feel the brunt of it.

For me, this is a rising tides lift all boats moment. We start with making sure every person has a safe place to live and the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families. That means affordable housing, wage equity, language-accessible services in schools and workplaces, and strong local protections for immigrant communities.

In terms of metrics, I'd look to data by race, language, income, and immigration status on everything from eviction rates and homeownership to employment and access to city services. Are fewer families being displaced? Are more immigrant residents accessing city programs? Are we closing the gap in public health, safety, and education outcomes? If we're not measuring equity, we're not managing it.

City Council has several tools it can use to move the needle, many of which they have done: passing inclusive policies, funding culturally competent services, supporting sanctuary practices where possible, and ensuring our budget truly reflects the needs of underserved communities. But it's also about how we govern, who is in the room, whose voices are centered, and whether we're building trust through transparency and accountability.

Equity is currently, but can't be a buzzword. It has to be baked into how we lead, who we listen to, and what we're willing to fight for.

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?

I would like to see greater investment in youth opportunity, from mentorship programs to job development resources because our youth need options to prevent them from engaging in risky, illegal, and/or dangerous behavior. If we ensure that tax increases

minimally impact our most economically vulnerable neighbors, I would be willing to vote for a tax increase to ensure our youth are safe and working towards a successful future.

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.

My primary focus with Durham Policing is ensuring that we can attract, train, and support staff, allowing us to fully staff our current needs. This does, effectively, increase resources allocated to the Police Department, but does not increase positions. I don't want anyone carrying a firearm in our communities to be overworked or stressed because they aren't paid a fair wage. I am hopeful that as we increase resources allocated to HEART, parks and recreation, and crime prevention resources, we will be able to move away from so much funding for our police department, but currently, we are just not there.

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.

I know what housing insecurity feels like. Before I turned 18, I had already lived in 11 different places. I've couch-surfed. I've relied on the generosity of family and friends. My family has both relied on Section 8 vouchers and experienced the pain of being turned away because of them. My story isn't unique. It's the same, or even harder, for so many Durham residents who have had to rely on Red Roof Inn rooms, extended stays, or the kindness of others just to survive. My story is unique to Durham City Council and it is what informs my platform on housing. One woman told me she's living in an extended stay hotel because it's cheaper than rent. No one should have to make that choice. Housing is a human right, and I'm running for City Council because we can do more, and I have solutions.

Durham is growing quickly, but too many of our neighbors are being priced out. While rent in Durham is 7% lower than the national average, the median rent has surged to over \$1,500 per month, and nearly half of renters are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income just to stay housed. For a wide variety of people, including young people like me, homeownership is unattainable and slipping further out of reach, with the median home price now exceeding \$400,000. A harrowing fact is that this housing crisis is hitting Black renters the hardest: while Black tenants are 43.5% of Durham's renting population, they are 75.8% of the renters facing eviction. These numbers aren't just statistics- they're barriers to dignity, stability, and generational opportunity. To keep Durham a place where everyone can afford to live, we must act intentionally, and with equity at the center of our housing policies, not just in words, but in action.

For me, this means implementing two main priorities: 1) Smarter development, and 2) Supporter cost-burdened renters.

When it comes to development, I believe we should be investing in affordable housing, down payment assistance, community land trusts, and infill development. We cannot just hope Durham will be affordable for everyone. We have to be strategic in ensuring that every member of our community has a place to call home.

I also believe we have to do more to support cost-burdened renters. We must move beyond piecemeal solutions and take bold, proactive steps to protect renters in Durham. That includes exploring new forms of direct support, such as city-funded housing grants for qualifying families and renters. These grants could help cover rent shortfalls, emergency relocation costs, security deposits, and even legal assistance for tenants facing eviction or unsafe living conditions.

Additionally, I have created an [entire housing platform](#) that details exactly how I would work to eliminate housing-insecurity in Durham.

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.

This is a challenging question because it's difficult to pinpoint any one issue. Some of the things I am considering are as follows: 1. Impact on availability of housing within lower income brackets (both affordable and "missing middle" housing options). 2. Environmental impact, especially how this development will affect neighboring communities and their climate resiliency. 3. Consistency with Durham's place-type plan including greater density within the urban tier. 4. Connectivity, including potential connectivity as the city improves sidewalk and bike lane access.

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

I'm pleased that our neighbors have continued to invest in community projects like parks and sidewalks. Investing in parks, while expensive, are necessary to ensure our residents, especially youth, have ways to engage in recreation in healthy and safe ways. Additionally, so much of our city is entirely car-dependent, and sidewalks, especially those that connect to public transportation, are vital to ensuring that we not only move forward equitably, but in a way that takes environmental justice into account.

Bonds obviously result in a property tax increase, and I don't take that lightly. But I believe residents, like me and so many others, deserve to see those dollars come back to them in the form of better services, safer communities, and stronger public infrastructure. That said, we must ensure these investments are equitably distributed and

that low-income residents are not disproportionately burdened.

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?

As the only out member of the NC Democratic Party's Officer Board, I am very familiar with how to fight for vulnerable populations – my own included. I lead the fight against NC GOP's "slate of hate", continue to recruit LGBTQ+ candidates to run across the state, and support our party's caucuses, auxiliaries, and local activists in organizing PRIDE events, even in unsupportive communities. I think a similar approach can be taken with other vulnerable communities, including recent attacks on immigrants. I am prepared to fight back on unjust laws and policies, ensure clear communication so our neighbors can protect themselves, and promote visibility across our community.

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.

As a blue bubble in a state with a Republican-run legislature, in a country with a Republican Congress and President, I am acutely aware of how difficult the work of the Durham City Council will be. Protecting immigrants when doing so may be illegal, fighting for affordable housing within a state that discourages this, fighting for climate resiliency within a context of climate-deniers – this work will be difficult, if not altogether impossible. However, I have been able to build relationships across the state and country and rely on these relationships to help me understand how other communities are working for their residents within this context. Because of that, I have ensured that my platform is realistic within our current legal context. The only piece of my platform that pushes against this is implementing a Tenants' Bill of Rights, and I am ready to work with legislators to make this possible.

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?

Durham is growing, which is great, but it also presents challenges. It's important to think about who benefits and who gets left behind. As Durham finds a way to move forward, it's important to me that everyone have a voice in our decision making, not because we need to do whatever we're told, but because everyone deserves to be heard. I can't tell you that I'm always going to agree with certain people. Instead, I'm looking at data, at solutions that have been tried elsewhere, and at decisions that promote equity, especially for those communities that have historically been pushed

to the margins.

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?

I think that the primary goal of Durham Public Schools is education, and we need to be mindful of that as we determine ways to ensure sufficient after-school care for working parents. In terms of the city responsibility, I am interested in opportunities to create a partnership between Durham Parks and Recreation and Durham Public Schools to potentially use DPS facilities to house youth programming that eases the burden on DPS transportation and allows parents to work more traditional hours. As somebody with strong relationships with elected officials across Durham, I feel confident I will be able to have the sort of conversations to move this level of collaboration forward.

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

Moving away from car-centric development is a big part of why I'm running for city council. I've collaborated with transportation experts across the state to develop a [detailed transportation platform that makes sense for Durham](#). As somebody who doesn't drive, I understand the importance of sidewalks, bike lanes, and other transportation infrastructure that helps us get around. Austin has embraced Design-Build contracts which streamlines timelines by allowing concurrent design and construction. Implementing something similar will allow Durham to build pedestrian and bike friendly infrastructure much more quickly and save lives by making [Vision Zero](#) a reality.

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.