

## **2017 Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce City Council Candidate Questionnaire**

Candidate's Full Name: **DeDreana Freeman**

Your current occupation: **Non-Profit Administrator**

Have you held an elected position before? If so, please describe.

### ***Elected***

- **Durham Democratic Party Precinct No.17, Chair 2012-present**
- **Durham Democratic Party, 3rd-Vice Chair 2014-15**
- **N.C. Democratic Party, Convention Delegate 2014-present**
- **N.C. Democratic Party State Executive Board 2016-present**
- **Inter-Neighborhood Council of Durham President 2015-2017**
- **St. Philip's Episcopal Church - Vestry 2013-2016**

Have you ever served on a public board or commission? If so, please state the name of the board and the dates that you served.

### ***Board/Commissions:***

- **Durham City & County Planning Commission, Commissioner 2014- present**
- **County of Durham Transportation Advisory Board (ACCESS), Member 2013-2017  
Chair 2015-2017**
- **Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council, Chair 2015-Present**
- **Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina Delegate 2016-Present**
- **Past President - Inter-Neighborhood Council of Durham**
- **Durham Equitable Economic Partnerships Board**
- **Self Help Credit Union East Durham Advisory Committee, Member**
- **Liberia Medicals Incorporated, Board Member**
- **Workforce and Economic Development Streetscape Steering Committee, Member  
(2009-10)**
- **Workforce and Economic Development - Durham Targeted Neighborhood  
Commercial Areas Streetscape Project (2008-09)**

Have you received endorsements from the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, Friends of Durham, People's Alliance, or any other notable organization? If so, please indicate which ones.

### ***Endorsements:***

- **People's Alliance**
- **Indy Week**
- **Triangle Labor Council, NC State AFL-CIO**
- **Equality NC**
- **Sierra Club**
- **Working Families Party**

among others.

1. What do you believe to be the most important job for a member of the City Council?

**Though the City Council structure is organized directly around our city manager, city attorney and city clerk, we must work to make sure all residents of Durham enjoy living, working, and playing in Durham. The most important part of the job as a City Council Members is to hear the diverse voices within Durham and work towards the collective priorities of our city to develop and implement policies, ordinances and funding that keep Durham fiscally sound. It is of great importance that we do this with a social conscience for those marginalized in our community while preserving supports for our growth opportunities.**

2. Why have you decided to run for City Council in the City of Durham?

**Living in Durham, I have been blessed to be able to have an impact on what happens in my community based on working with my neighbors and having the opportunity to start my own businesses by working with community partners. I currently work as a non-profit administrator with East Durham Children's Initiative where I started as a Community Ambassador sharing information about the programs. Based on the work I have been doing in Durham, I have been encouraged to get involved in our local government as a collaborator with an ear for the solutions that benefit more residents, workers and business owners. As a child of a single parent and the oldest of six children, I've always felt the need to lead by example. I hope to lead by being the change we want to see. I am dedicated to serving my community as a connector to preserve and protect the opportunities that were afforded to me. I understand some of the systems and institutions in place that undermine our communities' progress, and I am dedicated to strengthening and improving Durham. As a person that understands value of the history and culture of Durham, I am also dedicated to preserving its history. Lastly, as someone who has benefited from government subsidies and social programs that provided temporary, and sometimes long term, assistance for food, health insurance, income based housing, unemployment, public education and affirmative action, I am dedicated to creating more opportunities for economic advancement for all. I am dedicated to seeing the people of this community strengthened with the alleviation of the unintended consequences of social injustice.**

3. Please define the constituency for a member of the City Council.

**City Council's constituency include all of the residents, workers and businesses owners of Durham, not excluding community stakeholders who have a vested interest in making Durham even greater than ever.**

4. Please define the role you believe corporations and businesses should play within the City of Durham.

**As a vested member of the Durham community, I believe we all have a role to play in the continued growth and success of Durham and an even greater role for corporations and businesses to create spaces and innovative approaches to tackling the inequities and disparities we face as a city. I am confident that corporations and businesses will continue to be cooperative collaborators in supporting our city priorities on poverty, workforce development, and racism among others.**

5. Do you support public-private partnerships through incentive opportunities for incubating and recruiting businesses? Please explain your answer.

**Yes, where city priorities align. I think it is important to incentivize outcomes that improve Durham's overall quality of life.**

**I would apply a simple checklist in providing business incentives. Does the plan align with city priorities? Do residents of Durham support the plan? Will the plan benefit underserved or marginalized communities of color? And, what will be the impact on local businesses already here?**

6. In 2011, the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce led a sales tax referendum for multimodal transportation. Given recent updates, do you believe the transit plan still makes sense for Durham in 2017-2019? Also, do you believe this plan supports current and future growth patterns? Please explain your answers.

**Yes, I believe that the transit plan is a great start and with the population projections we will need to address it more comprehensively with bus and alternative mode options. It is important to note that the current light rail plan does not connect to Research Triangle Park or Raleigh yet. Understanding there were some hiccups with funding in Wake county, we have much ground to cover in their re-newed commitment to transit.**

**Also with more and more rezoning cases having opposition from surrounding neighbors based on traffic, we will need to take a more thorough look at how our planning and transportation departments will need to work closely with neighborhoods to identify equitable street grid plans.**

7. Do you support tax or other fee increases to augment revenue growth? Do you feel the private sector should pay a greater cost burden? Please state why or why not.

**There is currently a greater cost burden on residents, and I would want to make sure that the cost burden is shared equitably. However, I don't think a tax on business would increase revenues without putting a strain on our existing economy. I do, however, think that public-private investment planning will increase revenues and that our business**

**community will continue to help develop plans for how to support city initiatives around workforce development, sustainable housing, and environmental hazards that can decrease the brain development in children and disparities based on race and class.**

8. Please state the top three infrastructure challenges confronting the City of Durham. If elected, how do you plan to help resolve these challenges?

**Top three infrastructure challenges confronting the city are gentrification with housing displacement, transportation, and environmental hazards. The most pressing issues facing Durham in the coming years are the inequities residents face around jobs and economic growth, community health and safety, sustainable housing and transportation, and environmental justice. I have a vision for an Equitable Durham for everyone, which begins with collaboratively addressing these areas. The lack of racial equity in our city government is played out in the affordable housing conversation and reflected in the displacement of residents by gentrification. I would, in part, work with my fellow council members to engage developers around equitable development and affordable housing that incorporates sustainability in energy efficiency throughout the urban and suburban tiers across the city. I would also seek to coordinate planning efforts with workforce and economic development programs so that we can train and recruit strategically, continuing growth but with equity in mind. Please see more on building an [equitable housing plan](#) online.**

**Specifically in transportation, with our explosive population growth and the need to prevent Durham from grappling with traffic in cities like Atlanta, I am in support of the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project as the next step in the future of transportation. However, we will have to make adjustments along the way to ensure we are serving more of our residents in East Durham. I am certain the Wake-Durham Commuter Rail will provide an opportunity to make the plan more equitable. In the interim, we have to also maximize our transportation options currently available with bus rapid transit, building out a North-South Corridor line and building up and shoring up funding for the East-West Bull City Connector line. I would seek to initiate the fare free model for those lines starting immediately to alleviate parking pressures downtown with park and ride hub locations throughout various shopping centers in Durham with rapidly increasing available parking like at Northgate Mall and Southgate shopping center to start and others as identified. Durham Transportation Department and GoTriangle have been on the cutting edge with bus service, alternative multi modal transportation options and improved transportation demand management systems and customer service. As we continue to prepare and plan for better modes of transportation that enable greater stewardship of our environment, including a decrease in carbon emission with fewer single passenger vehicles on the road, we will need to continue to incorporate building in existing and planned workforce and economic development programs to train future workers that support development with small area planning. Most importantly, this would also include intentional programming around Durham's public transportation system that works for everyone.**

**Additionally another challenge our city faces is the lack of understanding in how toxic material we come in contact with in housing, parks and other spaces can create health hazards. Recently, the issue of shredded tire mulch in East Durham Park raised the question of how the city addresses environmental health hazards, especially in Northeast Central Durham. I am sure that the decision to use this material was not intentionally based on the neighborhood being high poverty and predominantly a people of color community.**

9. What should the City's priorities be in working with other stakeholders to develop and preserve affordable housing?

**In order to make affordable housing a reality that is sustainable (keeping cost below 30% in people's budgets), the city would need to do several things. One part is working with existing providers of affordable housing including Durham Community Land Trustees (DCLT), Habitat for Humanity, Housing for New Hope, private rental property owners, Durham Housing Authority (DHA), and others. DHA and Development Ventures Inc are major partners in keeping housing affordable as public private partnerships that would be able to create 1:1 exact unit replacement (i.e. a 3 bedroom 2 bath unit with subsidized 3 bedroom 2 bath unit) and with additional private partnerships a 1:4 increase in (80% AMI) low income units available in development projects is necessary. Also, we should build and grow partnerships with community property owners interested in providing permanent and semi-permanent affordable income based housing through social impact grants or value capture bonds.**

10. What additional business issue confronting the City of Durham in 2017-2019 do you believe to be the most important? Please explain your answer.

**The economy of Durham is fragile and must be tended to with supports and incentives that benefit the city and its residents as whole. As issues around the need for redeveloping aging commercial real estate as well as creating and maintaining Class A, B, and C office space at affordable rates for startups and existing small business owners arise, I am aware that the city and community stakeholders will need to plan to address our resources for economic development.**

Signature: DeDreana Freeman

Date: 10/25/17