

## **2017 Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire**

**Candidate's Full Name:** Farad Ali

**Your current occupation:** President/CEO, The Institute Of Minority Economic Development

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

Yes, I was elected to the Durham City Council and served four years from 2007-2011.

**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.**

Yes, I have had the honor and privilege to serve on several corporate and non-profit boards.

Currently Serving:

Chair, Raleigh Durham International Airport Authority; 2012-Present  
Chair, Duke Regional Hospital; 2011-Present  
Trustee, Duke University Health System; 2016-Present  
Chair, Southern Coalition for Social Justice; 2011-Present  
Immediate Past Chair, Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce; 2013-Present  
Vice Chair/Chair Elect, Triangle Community Foundation; 2015-Present  
Secretary, Triangle YMCA; 2011-Present  
Board Member, Latino Community Credit Union; 2016-Present  
Board Member, Center for Self-Help; 2011-Present  
Board Member, Uplift Project Inc.; 2011-Present  
Board Member, Research Triangle Regional Partnership; 2017-Present  
Board Member, The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People Foundation  
2017-Present

Former Board Service:

DHIC – Downtown Housing Improvement Corporation  
Preservation Durham  
North Carolina Central University School of Business  
Triangle Family Services  
Greater Triangle United Way  
Pauli Murray Steering Committee  
Parrish Street Advocacy Group (Black Wall Street)  
Generation Community Credit Union  
NC Minority Support Center  
E.K. Powe PTA  
Durham City Parks and Recreation Foundation

NC Museum of Life and Science  
National League of Cities Economic Development Steering Committee  
National Minority Supplier Development Council  
Durham YMCA  
Durham Workforce Development Board

**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.**

To date, I have received endorsements and support from the following notable organizations:

Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People  
Friends of Durham  
North Carolina Sheriff Police Alliance  
Durham Regional Association of Realtors  
Triangle Apartment Association

**1. What do you believe to be the most important job of our Mayor?**

While in many communities across the country one of the most important jobs of the mayor is making sure potholes are filled, garbage is collected and the snow is cleared—for Durham, I believe the most important job of the Mayor today is to serve as the Ambassador of Economic Transformation and Engagement. Despite the attractiveness and revitalization that the renaissance of downtown has brought, despite the new businesses and job opportunities, beyond redefining our past success as a tobacco and textile industry, beyond the accolades of our great universities and Research Triangle Park and reframing Durham as a City of Innovation—there is much more economic development and engagement of the community that must take place if we are to achieve unity and prosperity for all. The Mayor must be a collaborator with proven leadership skills to unite a Durham community. The Mayor must build a ONE DURHAM community.

The Mayor must be that vibrant voice and face for marketing the best that Durham has to offer, with the same heart and enthusiasm in addressing the inequities of race and class. This mayor will walk in neighborhoods—north, south, east and west, eat lunch in a diner on Fayetteville Street and embraces the diversity and mix that exist in all of our neighborhoods. This Mayor will serve in furthering the sustainability of the City and continue to embrace the expertise of the business community along with the residents of Durham. The Mayor must be the voice and vision of spreading good will to attract new businesses and retain existing ones, while at the same time engaging and lifting the community in efforts to build a stronger future for the next generation.

As Mayor, I will be the thread that ties a bond throughout all communities and neighborhoods, whether you are black, white, straight, gay, rich or poor, whether you are a service worker, teacher, or executive. We have experienced a renaissance in our city that has given birth and vitality in downtown, been at the cutting edge of development, transformed to a city of innovation and been the recipient of national accolades. It is time to ensure that the very citizens that made Durham possible share the wealth and prosperity of our new renaissance. As the Indy Editorial Board stated on 9/20/2017, ***“Ali would be a fine mayor, in much the way Bill Bell has been a fine mayor.....Chamber-friendly progressivism.”***

## **2. Why have you decided to run for Mayor in the City of Durham?**

I am running for Mayor because I believe in Durham. Every step I have taken since childhood and every personal, community and business experience, has been a springboard that has provided me the strong foundation to maximize opportunities to lead. I run for Mayor to continue the hard work and legacy of Mayor Bell, and to humbly lend my talent, knowledge and leadership to work to attain greater action, unity and prosperity for the people and community, which I love so much.

My proven leadership makes me the ultimate candidate to continue the economic progress while at the same time address an epidemic of poverty, housing, gentrification and racial divide. I am the candidate for Mayor who can build “One Durham”, where all communities, races and cultures are integrated to share the same prosperity. I will bring all of these traits and my best, so I can serve as your Mayor.

Since completing college, I have served the Durham community as a leader, visionary, collaborator and innovator. I come to the people of Durham humbled and ready to serve because my life’s work in public service, business, not for profit and community organizations has prepared me to bring the people of our great City together. I will listen, act to achieve results and manage for results. I was educated in the Durham public schools and I was fortunate to excel academically and in athletics. I also learned discipline, integrity and how to handle respectfully varying viewpoints.

The skills I acquired from attending business school at Campbell, UNC and Dartmouth has strengthen my foundation and contributed to my success in the business world. I have been fortunate to transform and expand opportunities for businesses for over 25 years. My work has supported over \$1billion of economic opportunity within the Durham community and statewide. I was privileged to serve as a leader, in the White House African American Leadership in Action Conference, advising White House staff. I am inspired in this quest by the overall support of the Durham community and I believe that I possess the understanding, leadership experience and heart to build a more inclusive Durham.

### **3. Please define the constituency for our Mayor.**

My constituency as Mayor is simple—it consist of every single Durham resident— young, old, rich, poor, white, black, brown, gay, straight—a constituency that is made up of many diverse parts and stakeholders that represent the whole –One Durham. A constituency that is inclusive of the business, health, financial, religious, civic, educational, social justice, and all employment sectors that represent the people of our great and diverse city.

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

I firmly believe that corporations and businesses should have a significant role within the City. Corporations and businesses are key stakeholders in economic development and providers of jobs/employment opportunities. We have witnessed a number of successful partnerships with the business community, such as advocacy for educating and communicating with the community about sales tax referendum on transit. Additionally the business community leaders spark the adaptive reuse of the Tobacco buildings, restructuring the work place and spurring entrepreneurship through “the Underground”

The business community must work hand in hand with the city to engage the Durham residents to solve our economic issues around job training and responsible community economic development. I also believe that the business community leaders can strengthen relationships with our community leaders to address social issues and priorities such as poverty and education.

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

Absolutely, an expanded collaboration through public-private-non-profit partnership is key if we are to realize the greatest job creation and successful community economic development. With limited public revenues and major social concerns around poverty, jobs training, affordable housing and public education, we must create public-private-non-profit partnerships to achieve meaningful results.

For example, an expanded partnership helps attract high-density projects, job opportunities, and supports and expands small businesses. As the city leaders consider investing in an economic development housing projects, it is important that respect the culture of the community by engaging the community, expand the tax base, provide affordable housing and the supportive services of grocery stores, pharmacy, and transportation. We must continue the growth of the city and encourage businesses development, leverage the valued culture of good corporate citizenship to support community development and human development through workforce development.

**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 firmly support public transportation. We must take the experience of our phenomenal growth and embrace the role of transit and the many assets it affords all Durham and triangle residents. With the growth of Durham, it is important to plan for our “transit future” just as the City, County and the citizens of Durham have done in passing the sales tax referendum that benefits public transportation improvements along with light rail. While we have had some changes with the state legislative action with the placement of a cap on the funding, the project should continue. I am hopefully optimistic that the federal government will provide the support needed to complete the project.

Public transportation provides connectivity and mobility and is key to bridging barriers to jobs, educational and opportunities for low wealth communities, relieving congestion and also serves as an economic engine. Data indicates that the work trip is the most utilized trip for public transit—so providing access to communities to have an improved transportation network that will take them to work, medical appointments, leisure activities and allow citizens to partake in events and activities throughout the community will be a great asset to the community

With light rail, there are a number of opportunities to make investments in communities along the proposed corridor as well as opportunities for entrepreneurs and existing businesses. The Light Rail project brings opportunities for Transit Oriented development. I support the benefits that transportation investment will bring to neighborhoods along the transit line that have been neglected. Greater employment and entrepreneurial opportunities open up new doors, as development around the stations and throughout the corridor will include plans for affordable housing and mixed use.

This investment will not only propel stability in our neighborhood infrastructure-- for streets, sidewalks and landscape to support the new areas of revitalization. It will be an investment in the citizens that have called these communities their home. The Impact of the sales tax investment and the projected benefit of the 17.7 mile – 18-station light rail project are significant to the growth of Durham and every citizen. We live in a City that has world-class Technology Park; I believe it is time to advance policies to strengthen the success of our total public transportation network, including light rail and also commuter rail. I stand ready to work with the citizens of Durham as well as with the local governing bodies; state legislature, federal government, civic and business communities in support of this needed transportation network.

**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.**

I believe due to the tremendous growth, we must seek out of the box solutions that leverage resources to support our growth and forego any burdens on the citizens. I believe cost of fees imposed on the private sector should be reflective of the true cost to the city for the provision of the service- and this is hard to answer without greater detail. I believe we can gain additional revenue from expanded economic development projects, which provides jobs with wages that allows for residents to purchase homes for collection of additional taxes.

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

The top three infrastructure challenges confronting the City of Durham include Street & Transportation Improvements, Maintenance of Park and Recreation facilities and revitalizing communities inclusive of business and Affordable Housing structures.

The City has currently progressed on all three of these areas. Street improvements and parks and recreation plans are in place and resources stretched to maximize the benefit to the community. Out of all the challenges, I would elevate work with the housing authority and with developers to renovate and build quality affordable housing.

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

The lack of public housing –quality stock, age and condition are compromised by the limited funds for redevelopment. While it is the responsibility of the Durham Housing Authority to inspect the housing and ensure that all of the units meet the minimum housing quality standards as established by HUD—as Mayor I see no compromise to this requirement and failure to meet the standards will be detrimental to both the housing authority, residents and community.

I would work collectively with the Housing Authority to develop and support policies that enable the development of sustainable, affordable housing options, support and strengthen federal housing programs, provide housing protections for low-income families, and coordinate access to services and support asset building to improve affordable housing options for families

- Develop a housing strategy inclusive of the Housing Authority, County and City approved by the citizens.
- Revise current strategic plans of the City to meet the immediate affordable housing shortage plans of Durham's low-income citizens within 2 years and hold the City accountable for reaching the development goals.
- Continue the penny tax initiative – consider strategies like a trust fund to leverage/generate additional revenues.
- Implement policy for public land use along transit lines to incorporate affordable housing and mixed use developments.

**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.**

I believe the most important business issues confronting the City in the next two years include supporting and facilitating more entrepreneurial and innovate business opportunities, particularly socially innovate businesses that build community. We must have a commitment to create jobs and address poverty through job creation and build neighborhoods, through responsible community economic development to lift and elevate all Durham residents to greater economic stability.

Signature: *Farad Ali*

Date: September 22, 2017