

General Questions

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1) Would you like your candidacy to be endorsed by the Sierra Club?

Yes! I believe that a healthy city and a healthy community are dependent on a thriving natural environment. As a councilmember, I will support initiatives that protect Durham's natural resources, promote environmentally sustainable jobs, preserve open space, and ensure that all of Durham's residents have access to our public resources.

2) With what environmental issues or organizations have you been involved? Did you achieve any success?

From 2006-2008 I was the co-director of a non-profit student organization that worked on environmental issues. We participated in the Campus Climate Challenge, a national campaign to get colleges and universities to reduce carbon emissions. I have not been involved with the campaign for a number of years, but it has continued and has 61 campuses signed on as of today.

3) What do you anticipate will be the most important environmental issues you will face if elected? What actions do you plan to take to address these issues?

Durham is growing rapidly, and managing the effects of that growth on our residents and our environment is a key priority for the city over the next few decades. I believe that focusing on dense development in our urban center and near future light rail transit stops, rather than contributing to sprawl, is good for both our people and our planet. I also believe we need more parks and open space to serve our growing population and support increasing resources for parks and recreation services. Durham also needs to focus on maintaining our tree canopy, as many of our trees are nearing the end of their natural lives. I would support hiring professional staff to address this problem rather than relying on volunteers.

Questions on Specific Issues

4) Many Durham citizens are interested in making the city more walkable and safe for cyclists. DOST has plans for 5-10 new trails over the next five years. Would you support

a bond issue in 2016 to advance this effort? What other things might be done to improve the urban environment for all of Durham, rich and poor?

I would support broad investment in efforts to make Durham more accessible and equitable for all. I understand that a bond is in the early stages of development. I would want more information before committing to support this bond or not, but I do see the need to update the City's Comprehensive Bicycle Plan, which is nearly 10 years old, and our Pedestrian Plan, which hasn't been updated in 5 years. With dedicated funding, each of these plans could be an opportunity to more holistically assess the state of Durham's bike and pedestrian infrastructure with an economic and racial equity lens; for example, we should take a look at the lack of sidewalks and covered bus shelters in NECD and other low-income neighborhoods. More trails and greenway projects could be of great advantage to our community, but we should be careful to make sure they aren't also drivers of gentrification and displacement. If done well, such projects could help improve the overall quality of life for residents across Durham as well as provide opportunities for broad community education on environmental issues and spur the creation of good local jobs.

5) Durham City Council recently voted 7-0 to reconfigure part of Business 15-501 to include bike lanes. Do you support this decision and are there other areas where you would like to see such reconfigurations?

Yes. The "Road Diet" is an example of smart planning in a period of intense growth for this region of North Carolina. An updated Comprehensive Bicycle Plan would be the most effective means for identifying and prioritizing additional areas for reconfiguration, but some roads that stand out and have been identified by cycling advocates as in need of increased safety include Erwin, Mangum, Roxboro, Hillsborough, and Holloway.

6) Durham has many parks, but when one looks at the "Park Finder" map, it is clear that some areas have more parks than others. What areas do you think are underserved, and what could the city do about it?

Most of the parks in Durham are concentrated toward the center city and more outlying areas have fewer resources. There are far fewer parks in the easternmost parts of the city and county (east of the railroad tracks), north of the Eno, and in southwest Durham, directly west of RTP. We are already unable to keep up with the demand for park resources, and that situation is only going to worsen as our population grows over the next few decades. The city should be investing more resources in parks and open space for our residents, and we should target those resources to areas experiencing rapid population growth and areas where those resources are currently lacking.

7) Do you consider urban sprawl to be an issue in Durham, and if so, what would you do to minimize it and its effects (storm water, etc.)?

Durham is part of one of the fastest growing regions in the country, and that will necessitate denser and more urban development in certain parts of the city. The proposed rail stations along the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Corridor seem like a smart place to start increasing density, since a strong linkage between density and transit could help minimize traffic congestion, improve public health by increasing opportunities to walk, decrease transportation expenses, connect people who do not have access to cars with jobs, and reduce suburban sprawl and environmental damage.

8) What do you think will be the hardest part of implementing the Durham-Orange Light Rail System? What opportunities do you see in connection to the rail line? Are there alternatives if it does not get built?

I believe our biggest challenge in this plan's implementation is making decisions that minimize harmful environmental and neighborhood impacts, as well as ensuring that those impacts do not disproportionately affect communities that are historically subject to the majority of negative environmental impacts (poor communities, communities of color). In addition, we will need to make sure that we are doing all we can to get federal funding, as the project isn't possible without those federal dollars.

There will be opportunities to create good jobs as we build the light rail line, and we should start training local people for these jobs now. A partnership between the city, GoTriangle, and local educational institutions is needed to provide residents with the skills training they will need for these future jobs.

If the light rail doesn't get built, an expanded rapid bus transit program is the only alternative. A regional plan to expand the fleet of hybrid buses and bus-only lanes, expand routes within Durham and to other areas of the Triangle, and keep fares low would be needed.

9) Durham has made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gases, has funded a sustainability office and has installed LED lighting and solar hot water in some facilities. Other cities have creative initiatives; for example, Atlanta has an ordinance mandating benchmarking and disclosure of energy efficiency for buildings. Do you think Durham is making adequate progress on combating climate change? What other measures would you champion if elected?

Durham has done and is doing a lot as a community to lead the fight against climate change. The city has included solar energy and LED lighting in a number of new buildings, installed charging stations for electric vehicles and added electric vehicles to the city fleet, and built many new buildings to high environmental standards. It's difficult to say that anyone, anywhere is

doing enough to fight climate change, since the potential impacts are absolutely devastating, but I believe the city is doing what they can to move toward a greener energy future.

The sustainability office has also coordinated the weatherization of nearly 1,000 homes, but this is a drop in the bucket compared to the need, and funding at the federal level has all but dried up. Targeted investment of public resources into neighborhood-level weatherization programs, for example as part of the Mayor's Anti-Poverty Initiative in NECD, could lower utility bills, improve housing conditions, and create quality jobs for residents that feed the local economy. While it's been difficult to implement such programs effectively through federal incentives, other cities across the country have successfully carried out city-scale retrofit programs. The city should also explore a move towards a goal of Zero Waste, including expanded recycling services and a municipal composting program.

Though Durham Public Schools are managed by the County rather than the City, their recent resolution to support a transition to 100% renewable energy as part of the "Repower Our Schools Campaign" is an excellent example of the type of commitments our City officials should be making.

Efforts to fight climate change need to happen at the city level. As a strong, progressive city in this context, Durham should continue to model and put out even bolder vision of how cities can lead in both the fight to transition to more sustainable economic system and to prepare to mitigate and adapt to the effects of the already changing climate by building more resilient cities.