

## **PA PAC Questionnaire for Mayor and City Council Candidates – 2019**

*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. Please do not use colors. Please try to confine your responses within the word limits set for each question. Do not feel obliged to exhaust the limit for each question. If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.*

**Please return the completed form along with your resume describing education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by August 5, at the latest.**

**You may e-mail your responses to Tom Miller at [tom-miller1@nc.rr.com](mailto:tom-miller1@nc.rr.com) or you may send a printed copy of your responses to Durham PA PAC c/o Tom Miller 1110 Virginia Avenue, Durham, NC 27705-3262**

**Please note that following the August 5 deadline, the People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.**

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.**

Candidate's Name: **Jillian Johnson**

Office for which you have filed for election: **City Council**

Address: **PO Box 3502, Durham, NC 27702**

E-mail Address: [info@jillianfordurham.com](mailto:info@jillianfordurham.com)

Phone: **919-259-4518**

Website: [www.jillianfordurham.com](http://www.jillianfordurham.com)

### **Government and the Public Good**

1. Of all the issues confronting city government, which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if elected? *Please limit your answer to 200 words.*

**I believe the most important issue facing Durham today is access to affordable housing. As Durham has grown and developed, especially in the downtown core, we've also seen a huge increase in rents and home prices in downtown neighborhoods. These changes have resulted in low-income people and people of color being displaced from these areas.**

**In the four years that I've been serving on City Council, we have more than doubled our annual investment in affordable housing through our dedicated housing fund. I also enthusiastically support the \$95M affordable housing bond that will be on the ballot this fall, and if re-elected, I will ensure that this funding is used to its best and highest impact to increase the amount of affordable housing in our community. Because our affordable housing crisis is in tandem with a shortage in housing overall, I also support efforts to increase housing density in the urban tier, while still preserving quality of life in urban tier neighborhoods. These efforts include allowing duplexes, ADU's and smaller homes on smaller lots through implementation of the "Expanding Housing Choices" initiative and developing a new comprehensive plan.**

**My complete housing access and affordability platform, developed jointly with Javiera Caballero & Charlie Reece, can be found online at [jillianfordurham.com/platform](http://jillianfordurham.com/platform).**

2. What can the city do to lift the wages of the lowest-paid workers in Durham and reduce growing income inequality in our community? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**As one of the largest employers in the county, the City of Durham has both a responsibility and an opportunity to provide good jobs for Durham residents and set a standard as a model employer. As a council member, I have consistently lobbied for higher wages and better benefits for city workers. We raised the wages of all full-time workers to at least \$15/hr last year, and all part-time workers will also be raised to our current living wage standard later this year. At my request, city staff are investigating ways to raise the wages of workers at city-owned facilities with contracted management, such as the DPAC, Carolina Theater, and Bulls Stadium. The city has created a transitional jobs program for people returning home from jail or prison which allows people to work for the city, receiving valuable training and work experience and making at least our living wage. When the city provides jobs creation incentives, employers are required to provide at least the city's living wage of \$15.46/hr, plus health insurance benefits. We should also require these standards when granting economic development incentives by using an equitable development scorecard and community benefits agreement.**

**As much of the income inequality in the US can be attributed to racism and racist public policy, we must also make targeted efforts to support Black-owned businesses and Black entrepreneurs. Through the SEEDS Fellowship program, our staff are being trained to help convert Black-owned legacy businesses to cooperative ownership. This both maintains the business as a community asset and democratizes the ownership, allowing a larger group of people to increase their income and their wealth as business owners. We also encourage companies that do business with the city to actively recruit and hire Black employees and to participate in our YouthWork internship program, which we hope sets our young people on the path to skilled and higher-paying jobs later in life. In addition, we support the Durham Living Wage Project's voluntary certification program.**

**Unfortunately the City of Durham does not have the regulatory authority to raise the minimum wage in our city. As a strong supporter of raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr and respecting the right of workers to organize, I introduced resolutions for this wage increase and an end to restrictions on public employee collective bargaining into our state legislative agenda. We all hope to see movement on this soon at either the state or federal level, as it is an outrage that our minimum wage has not been increased in a decade.**

3. Describe your interest in and commitment to public amenities such as playing fields, open space, street trees, traffic calming, and walking and biking facilities. Are you willing to raise property taxes to provide for and maintain these amenities? Are public amenities allocated to neighborhoods equitably? Please explain and cite examples. *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**Enhancing our quality of life in Durham, especially as the city grows, is a high priority for me, and public amenities are critical to this effort. The city is one of very few institutions that provide recreational spaces that all community members can access. I'm very supportive of the half penny for parks fund currently in the tax rate, and would support increasing this to a full penny as requested by**

the Parks & Recreation Department. I'm looking forward to the development of the Hoover Road Athletic Park in East Durham, which is an area that is historically underserved by public amenities.

As we know, we have just over a decade to avert disastrous impacts from climate change. Focusing on sustainable transportation infrastructure for biking and walking is more important now than ever. The city is continuing to invest additional funds each year into sidewalks, planting more street trees, developing nicer open spaces, and starting to build protected bike lanes. So far this work has been done with existing resources, but I would support a tax increase to fund it if necessary. I feel a lot of contradictions around raising taxes, and I understand that given the restrictions of our current tax system, our property tax is not as progressive as we would like. However, I believe making a difference on sustainability and climate, which are crucial to the continued existence of our community, warrant spending what is needed to make sure we are as resilient as possible in the long run.

Public amenities have not been allocated to neighborhoods equitably, and this is an area of focus for the city moving forward. For example, in my first year on council, we were approached by community members who were concerned about dying street trees in Durham's neighborhoods and wanted the city to prioritize replacing them. We soon learned, however, that these trees were primarily in affluent neighborhoods, and that less affluent areas, particularly in East Durham, were lacking street trees almost entirely. In response, about 80% of the city's street tree planting efforts have been targeted to neighborhoods where this infrastructure has been neglected in an effort to redress this past harm. This example shows that cities can have a real impact when they use a race equity lens to target amenities and resources to communities that have been neglected.

4. What is your position on providing public incentives to private firms to promote economic development in Durham? How can city government use development incentives to promote more widely shared prosperity, including better jobs and higher wages for Durham residents? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I support providing public incentives to private firms only if sufficient community benefits are provided to justify the use of public money. No company is owed or deserves public money just to make their project more profitable for owners or beneficial to investors. I believe that public investment is only justified when it will create living wage jobs, provide needed community services and resources, or create a valuable community asset. I support establishing a high standard for community benefits when evaluating these proposals and making sure that community input is provided as well.

Formal equitable development scorecards and community benefits agreements are a great way to make sure that residents benefit from public investments. We've been working with several community organizations including North Carolina League of Conservation Voters, PowerUp NC, Durham for All, Durham CAN, and the North Carolina Justice Center over the last two years to develop and implement this type of scorecard in Durham. I'm looking forward to continuing this work and using the scorecard in the near future.

Because these types of tools can be cumbersome for small firms and make it harder for those who are most in need to access public support, I propose requiring community benefits agreements for incentive agreements over a certain size and providing a more streamlined version for smaller incentives.

5. What are the biggest barriers to increasing business ownership by local people of color, and what is the city's role in reducing those barriers? How could the city's supplier diversity or other practices foster more business growth opportunities? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**The biggest barrier to increasing business ownership by people of color is a lack of access to capital. Historically, government policies have been designed to help only white people build wealth, intentionally and explicitly excluding people of color. People of color also face additional barriers when trying to access loans and grants to start businesses due to institutional discrimination in the banking industry.**

**The city can play a role in reducing these barriers by considering race equity when providing business development grants and creating a capital fund to help support small businesses. We funded a new plan through our Office of Economic & Workforce Development this year to build a non-profit organization with a debt and equity fund to meet capital needs and staff to provide technical support and other guidance for local small businesses.**

**As a large institution, the city can also play a leading role in providing opportunity for POC-owned businesses. In response to a disparity study completed several years ago, we've set goals for the percentage of service, construction, and goods contracts that should go to POC-owned and women-owned firms. We strive to meet these goals, but unfortunately we are limited by state law from requiring any more than a "good faith effort" on behalf of contractors to meet these goals. Starting this year, our Department of Equity and Inclusion will be retooled to think more broadly about ways the city can advance race equity and bring more residents into the conversation about how to achieve these goals. We also strongly encourage all the companies who do business with the city to actively recruit and hire Black employees.**

### **Housing, City Planning, and Neighborhoods**

6. Do you think Expanding Housing Choices (EHC) will increase or decrease gentrification and displacement of lower-income residents? How can the city ensure equity in the use of EHC by people of color and other homeowners who have not had equal access to financing? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**I expect that if the council implements the Expanding Housing Choices proposal, it would slightly slow the rate of displacement from the urban tier by providing approximately 45 additional units of market-rate housing to the tier each year. As rents and home prices continue to rise throughout the city, it is unfortunately quite likely that displacement from urban neighborhoods will continue, or even accelerate. I don't think 45 additional units of housing will be enough to meet our full market demand for housing in the urban tier. I also doubt that it will be possible to quantify the impact of EHC because it will be difficult, if not impossible, to separate any changes in these neighborhoods related to the EHC from the impact of market forces more generally.**

**The primary way that homeowners will be able to use EHC provisions is by building larger accessory dwelling units (ADU's) on their property. Unfortunately it's very hard to finance ADU's, so homeowners who already have access to wealth are more likely to be able to add an ADU to their property. The bond proposal includes funding for ADU financing, and the city should work with other**

local financial institutions to provide capital funds to homeowners who would like to build ADU's as well. We should also loosen restrictions on manufactured housing to allow prefab ADU's, which are less expensive but currently not allowed in Durham due to a broad ban on "manufactured housing."

7. What should the city seek to accomplish through its power to stimulate and regulate growth? What principles and considerations will guide your decisions in zoning cases and other development issues? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**The city should seek to grow as sustainably as possible, prioritize mixed-use transit-oriented development and density over sprawl, protect our critical environmental assets, and provide enough diverse housing options to accommodate new residents. We should encourage infill development, maintain strong watershed protections, and continue to develop a regional transit strategy that can support more dense housing and commercial development at transit hubs.**

**My strongest considerations when evaluating zoning items are the extent to which the proposed development provides housing that's affordable to a broad range of residents, the environmental consequences of the development, and the impact of the development on city infrastructure. As we rewrite our comprehensive plan, we will have ample opportunity to engage with residents and learn more about their goals with regard to our city's development.**

8. Do you support the \$95 Million Housing Bond and the city's Five-Year Affordable Housing Plan? Why or why not? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**Yes, I enthusiastically support the \$95M housing bond to fund the city's five-year affordable housing plan, and will be encouraging all Durham residents to vote for the bond this fall. This bond proposal is a bold and necessary step toward providing affordable homes for thousands of Durhamites in the context of rapidly increasing rents and home prices. We lack the regulatory tools that many other cities have used (i.e., inclusionary zoning, rent stabilization, progressive property taxation, etc.) to generate funds for affordable homes, so the bond is our best option to have an impact on our housing crisis. It will help fund several strategies to ensure that everyone has access to a safe and affordable home: the creation of new multi-family rental housing, preservation of existing multi-family rental housing, eviction & homelessness diversion programs, repairs and weatherization programs, and home ownership programs. We will also continue to invest the public money from the dedicated housing fund into these initiatives.**

**Unfortunately, Durham is not alone in facing a housing crisis. Most large US cities, and many cities in other countries as well, are struggling with the same challenges. Ultimately, the only way to ensure that every person's human right to housing is respected is for the federal government to dramatically change housing policy and fund a national housing strategy. We also need the state of NC to allow municipalities to use regulatory tools to raise additional funds for affordable housing. I'll continue to advocate for these critical policy changes with our state and federal representatives.**

**Our five-year affordable housing plan is enough to make a dent in our affordable housing crisis, but there will still be people we can't serve. We're continuing to refine the plan with input from residents about what we should fund and prioritize. I look forward to continuing conversations with residents,**

**council members, and city staff about the 5-year plan and the funding levels that should be assigned to each of our funding priorities.**

9. Would you vote to approve a rezoning that does not include commitments to meet the City's affordable housing goal? If yes, how would you ensure that the city meets its goal? *Please limit your answer to 400 words*

**Yes, I have and will continue to vote in favor of rezonings that don't include affordable housing. It's illegal for the city to deny a rezoning based on a lack of affordable housing. We strongly encourage developers to include this or to make a donation to the dedicated housing fund, but in the end, it's their choice whether or not they wish to do so.**

**Given the severe regulatory restraints that we face in NC, we can't rely on developers to contribute significantly toward meeting our affordable housing needs. We should meet our goals by passing the proposed \$95M bond and using that funding to create more opportunities for affordable housing.**

10. How should Durham's Unified Development Ordinance define a "single-family dwelling?" *Please limit your answer to 200 words*

**I believe a "single-family dwelling" should be defined as it currently is in the UDO - essentially as a freestanding detached dwelling unit. I don't think it's necessary for local government to try to define "family" or limit who can and cannot live in a home based on any particular definition of family.**

11. What non-traditional funding schemes (such as public banking, community investment trusts, community development venture capital) have you been exploring for the City of Durham to implement that can bolster our fight against economic inequality in our community? *Please limit your answer to 400 words*

**The non-traditional economic models that I'm most excited about are social housing, worker cooperatives, and public banks.**

**Social housing refers broadly to housing owned and operated by government and nonprofit organizations with the aim of providing affordable housing to a large number of residents. The best example of social housing globally is in Vienna, Austria, where 60% of residents live in publicly owned or publicly subsidized housing. The homes are well maintained and are built in communities that include schools, open space, parks, and more, and rents are determined by family income. Because the communities are so desirable, people who could afford other housing will choose to live in social housing instead. By maintaining publicly owned housing that's accessible to anyone, housing becomes a public good and community asset. I believe a massive public investment in housing is what we need to solve our affordable housing crisis on a national level. I'm encouraged by the plans of several presidential candidates to invest billions of dollars in building new housing and renovating existing housing, and I hope that at least some of it will be publicly owned.**

**Worker-owned cooperatives are businesses that are owned entirely by their workers. A number of recent studies have shown that cooperatively owned businesses are better workplaces, last longer, and are more profitable than traditional businesses. The city is already participating in a program that encourages existing businesses to convert to cooperative ownership, and I hope the city can take a role in helping people start new businesses as co-ops as well. Cooperative ownership helps democratize the economy and promotes shared wealth and shared prosperity.**

**Public banking is a way to create equitable access to financial tools and capital for a community, as well as keep money local and build a public asset. Rather than extracting profits by charging huge interest rates and fees, public banks can provide a needed resource to the underserved, direct capital toward social good, and promote sustainable and equitable economic development. Providing a public bank in Durham would have a huge impact toward achieving both our economic development and housing affordability goals.**

12. What planning policy goals and priorities do you wish to see from the upcoming review and revision of Durham's Comprehensive Plan? *Please limit your answer to 400 words*

**I hope that our new comprehensive plan will allow us to meet the following goals:**

- 1) prioritize mixed-use transit-oriented development;**
- 2) protect our critical environmental assets, including our watershed, open space, and rare habitats;**
- 3) provide enough diverse housing options to accommodate our growing population;**
- 4) encourage infill development and increased density where existing infrastructure can support it; and,**
- 5) continue to develop a regional transit strategy that can support more dense housing and commercial development at transit hubs.**

**Additionally, I hope the broad community engagement process that we will engage in leading up to the adoption of the new comp plan will allow all of Durham's residents to envision together the future of our community and the type of growth we want to see.**

13. Why do you believe that the recent light rail project failed in Durham? Where do we go from here? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**The light rail project failed due to a number of factors: impossible demands and long delays in finalizing agreements from the NC Railroad, failed negotiations with new leadership at Duke after the previous admin had spent years working with GoTriangle on the alignment, and state funding cuts that required the dedication of more local funds than the project had initially been designed with. It's disappointing to say the least to lose the \$1B+ in federal funding that could have gone toward providing this critical infrastructure, creating good jobs, and improving the overall sustainability of the region.**

**That said, it's time to move forward. We still need a regional transit plan, and I'm looking forward to hearing from GoTriangle and our regional planning group about their proposed alternative to light rail. We're also now in a position to invest more of the transit tax funding that was allocated to light**

**rail to expanding our local bus system. We can expand routes, add routes, and provide more frequent service in Durham in addition to increasing regional options. We still have the plan to build a commuter rail system connecting us to Raleigh, which will alleviate traffic in the I-40 corridor as well.**

14. What if anything, should the city do to distribute the property tax burden with greater equity and fairness? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**NC law prevents the city from creating a more progressive property system by, for example, charging higher rates for more expensive properties or setting a rate based on the income of the homeowner. The only legal way for us to redistribute the tax burden is by providing a grant back to homeowners who meet certain criteria.**

**We currently have a program that does this, targeting homeowners in certain areas whose property values have been affected by city investments. Unfortunately, this program has not been very successful so far and has had high administrative costs. In spite of this, I believe this program should continue because it is the only way we currently have to alleviate tax burdens on low-income residents while continuing to meet our city's funding needs. I support redesigning this program by cooperating with the county to make both city and county taxes subject to the refund grant and expanding access to low-income homeowners across the city.**

## **Policing**

15. Is there a trust problem between the people of Durham and the police department? Are you satisfied with the department's leadership and responses to issues of use of force, racial profiling, deployment of personnel, searches, and communication with the public? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**Tensions between communities and police are not fundamentally caused by a lack of trust; rather a lack of trust is itself caused by the racial inequities, violence, and lack of accountability for officers in our criminal legal system. While I wish that we didn't rely so heavily on punitive and carceral approaches to creating safety, we also don't yet have sufficient alternatives to prevent or manage crime, especially violent crime. I believe that the way forward is to focus police resources on violent crime and work to make the system less harmful while we simultaneously pursue other approaches to building a safer community together.**

**We are lucky to have leaders in our city who take these issues seriously and are ready and willing to implement reforms. Under the leadership of Chief Davis, the Durham Police Department has expanded time limits for U-Visa certification, expanded misdemeanor diversion, deprioritized low-level drug offenses, continued to implement written consent for searches, reduced traffic checkpoints, and increased race equity and CIT training for officers. All of these reforms can help reduce the harm caused by policing without impacting community safety. However in spite of these reforms, we continue to see significant racial disparities in arrests and traffic stops.**

16. To what degree, if any, should the city cooperate with U.S. Department of Homeland Security: Immigration & Customs Enforcement and Homeland Security Investigations? What should the relationship be between local government and federal agencies such as ICE, DEA, and the US Marshals? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**In recent years, the Trump administration has decided to use ICE as the paramilitary arm of their radically anti-immigrant political agenda, stepping up raids and snatching people off the street, creating fear and heartbreak in immigrant communities throughout the country. This immigration policy is cruel and entirely unreasonable. It's not based on any public safety rationale, and I believe we all have a moral duty to resist it. The city should not cooperate in any way with the Department of Homeland Security or ICE.**

**Cooperation with the DEA, federal marshals, or other law enforcement agencies should be limited to situations when a clear threat to public safety exists.**

17. Should the city allocate more, less, or about the same money to policing? Please explain your answer. If your answer is less, would you allocate more money to other services to improve public safety? Again, please explain. *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

**I believe that our city's investment in policing is adequate and should remain about the same. We should be increasing our investments in violence prevention, violence intervention, re-entry services, and quality of life initiatives to reduce the circumstances that lead to violence. We should develop on-call crisis support services outside of the police department staffed by professionals who are trained to handle situations where the use of force is unlikely to be necessary. As these programs begin to make a difference, we will be able to decrease the investment that we make in policing without reducing the police department's ability to effectively fight violent crime.**

**It's important to note that the budget for our police department increases every year, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future due to increased operational costs and a standard 5% annual raise for officers.**

**I do not believe that a transition to a more holistic system of creating community safety will be easy or quick, but I do believe that it is necessary. The 25 years that we have spent increasing our reliance on policing and incarceration to keep us safe has created a strong belief, even in the communities most harmed by mass incarceration, that policing is the only way to create safety. Yet study after study shows that prevention and increasing access to community resources are far more effective public safety measures. I look forward to working with community members to develop and implement community safety strategies outside of policing and working to reduce our reliance on police to create community safety over time.**

## **Civil Rights**

18. Name one issue in Durham that directly impacts, or is directly impacted by, race inequity, and explain how the city can incorporate a race equity framework in addressing this issue? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

Policing of drug crime in Durham is an issue that is directly impacted by racial inequity. Though it's well known that Black and white people use drugs at about the same rates, Black people are much more likely to be arrested or incarcerated for drug use. Drug laws have in the past been used to directly target Black people with harsher sentences; an example of this is the well-researched disparity in sentences between crack cocaine and powder cocaine that sent many Black people to jail for mandatory minimum sentences of 10 years or more. There are more subtle forms of discrimination in drug policing as well. Because police officers often focus their efforts in low-income communities of color, Black people are more likely to be in the presence of a police officer, which leads to higher arrest rates. Black people also face disparity at every stage in the justice system beyond an arrest, compounding the injustice.

Knowing that our system of policing creates these inequities, the best way to employ an equity model with regard to drug crime is to simply refrain from arresting people for the possession or use of small amounts of drugs. We have started down this path by making marijuana a lowest-level priority, and drug arrests overall have decreased significantly over the last few years. I hope this trend will continue.

19. If the city could adopt an ordinance concerning the civil rights of members of the LGBTQ community, what provisions should that ordinance contain? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I would support adopting a comprehensive non-discrimination ordinance that protects people of any sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression from various forms of discrimination, including in housing, employment and public accommodations. This ordinance would protect people from being denied housing based on their actual or perceived identity as LGBTQ, protect people from being fired or denied employment based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in public accommodations like restaurants, hotels, event venues, etc. This ordinance should also make it clear that people are welcome to use restrooms and changing rooms that match their gender identity. Sadly, all of these forms of discrimination are currently perfectly legal in Durham and throughout North Carolina.

20. What can the city do to enhance its capacity to facilitate the reintegration of justice-involved individuals into our community, including removing barriers and providing economic opportunities for justice-involved individuals? *Please limit your answer to 400 words.*

I'm very proud of and encouraged by the city's work over the last few years with the Innovation Team (I-Team) that has focused on this question, and I supported continuing to fund the I-Team with local funding when their initial grant funding ran out. Programs that have been developed as a result of their work include a transitional jobs program that connects justice-involved residents to living-wage jobs with the City; the "Welcome Home" program that provides a box of supplies and peer counseling support to residents coming home from jail or prison; and the DEAR program, which is helping residents get charges expunged and drivers licenses restored to make it easier for residents to find work. I support continuing all of these programs and expanding the transitional jobs program to help provide economic opportunity for as many people as possible.

The private sector is a key partner in this work, and we should also encourage private employers to hire justice-involved people. We do this by ensuring that businesses that receive jobs incentives are

**willing to do so and by providing a positive model through partnerships with businesses that hire and train returning residents.**

**Personal**

21. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense? If your answer to this question is yes, please describe the charge or charges, the circumstances, and the outcome. *Please limit your answer to 200 words.*

**I have been arrested or detained four times for civil disobedience. In each case, I was released without charges, charges were dropped, or I received a deferred prosecution in exchange for performing community service.**

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please do not forget to send us your resume or a brief biographical statement.