

DURHAM CITY-COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC HEARING
Tuesday, June 15, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m.
Virtual Zoom Meeting

County Attendees: Brenda Howerton, Chair; Wendy Jacobs, Vice Chair; Commissioners Nida Allam, Nimasheena Burns and Heidi Carter; Claudia Hager, Interim County Manager and Monica Toomer, Clerk to the Board.

City Attendees: Mayor Steve Schewel, Mayor Pro Tempore Jillian Johnson, Council Members DeDreana Freeman, Pierce Freelon, Mark-Anthony Middleton and Charlie Reece; City Manager Wanda Page, City Attorney Kimberly Rehberg and City Clerk Diana Schreiber.

Planning Attendees: Deputy City Manager Keith Chadwell, City-County Planning Director Sara Young, Assistant Director of Planning Grace Smith, Planning Supervisor Scott Whiteman, Business Systems Analyst Chris Peterson, Senior Planners Kayla Seibel, Lisa Miller and Carol Kolosna and Planner Brooke Ganser.

OPENING

Durham County Commissioner Chair Brenda Howerton welcomed everyone to the June 15th Joint City-County Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing.

Kayla Seibel and Lisa Miller shared a presentation titled “*Durham Comprehensive Plan Community Goals and Objectives*” which highlighted the following: Overview, Project Engagement and Background, Revised Community Goals and Objectives, How to use the Community Goals and Objectives and the Adoption Process and Schedule.

Chair Howerton thanked the Planning Staff for the presentation and opened the floor for questions from the City Council and Board of County Commissioners. Hearing none, Chair Howerton opened the public hearing and recognized the following citizens to speak.

SUBJECT: PUBLIC COMMENT

Tonia McRae

Inquired about the last time the tax benefit was reviewed. Stated she was a 100 percent disabled veteran who once received the benefit due to her disability.

Lynn Richardson

I’m here representing the local Audubon chapter as a board member and cochair of its Bird-friendly Durham Committee.

First I want to thank Planning for all the hard work they’ve done to put this goals and objectives document together and also thank all the council and commission for your

unanimous approval of the Bird-friendly Durham resolutions passed in honor of Earth Day.

The importance of preserving biodiversity—the variety of plants and animals on earth and the ecosystems that support them, was the key theme of that resolution. Loss of biodiversity is right up there with climate change as a threat to the planet and the people who inhabit it. We have to have native plants and pollinator insects and other components of a biodiverse environment for nature to function properly and sustain life.

Many members of Audubon and other local environmental organizations have attended meetings and sent emails commenting on the importance of various aspects of biodiversity to the comprehensive plan. Although many of these ideas were implicit in the plan, the actual concept of biodiversity and its crucial importance weren't explicitly mentioned. Audubon felt that a concept as central to the health and well-being of the community as biodiversity must be mentioned by name. I've been talking with Lisa Miller about my concerns, and I believe the several additions Lisa and her team have made to the existing goals and objectives, which will be presented to y'all tonight, address Audubon's concerns. I ask you to approve those changes to make an already great plan even better.

Nancy

A true comprehensive plan should include housing, jobs, education and community safety – which should be linked to education. Experts should be brought in from all fields to offer advice in those areas. Stressed the importance of having education work with families, communities and job providers.

Stephen Knill

This program missed its mark. For the future of Durham, it appeared the study seemed to be a one size fits all – gentrification was is taking over the decisions of the City and the County elected officials.

Nancy Cox

There is nothing about Charter Schools and felt they should be included.

Nancy Wills

Durham has always had a reputation for high crime. Now the new comprehensive plan has been created for greenways and safe schools – felt that nothing could be done until the crime has been handled. This plan should go back to planning and law enforcement should be apart of the discussion.

Patricia Carstensen

Appreciate the level of community involvement and hope this same level of involvement is done in other areas.

Herman Sperling

This study is bias and does not look at all of Durham – only certain areas.

James Shakelford

There is an underlying issue in today's youth in the community. There should be more focus on the foundations for the children's and also underlying issues such as guns and social media influence, which all cause a direct flow to violence.

Matt Kopac

Thanked and compliments the Durham City-County Planning staff. To comment on the environmental goals area, I suggest the language is more fluid and the intention be placed on health and well-being first. I will email the language to staff.

Lisa Brach

Thanked the Planning team for listening to what the citizens had to say.

Joanie Brown

Would like to voice concerns on those living in rental properties. The land value has increase and there are concerns that rent will increase as well – causing many to be displaced. I hope there is a plan for those renters who fear eviction due to price increases.

Ashley Robbins

Appreciated the process and allowing the feedback from the community.

Chair Howerton thanked the public for their comments and closed the public hearing. She asked Mayor Schewel to proceed with co-hosting the remaining of the meeting.

- Verbatim comments can be found on the City of Durham YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSai4Z8w6mU>

Respectfully Submitted,

Monica W. Toomer
Durham County Clerk to the Board

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City Clerks' portion of the Joint City-County Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing minutes follow.

SUBJECT: COMMISSIONER AND COUNCIL REMARKS

Vice Chair of the County Commissioners Wendy Jacobs thanked staff, residents that attended the public hearing along with the engaged groups of caring residents. She asked about further plans regarding bio diversity.

Ms. Miller agreed with the Audubon group to protect biodiversity in Durham; added it to current objectives; and summarized changes/recommendations to the Plan on the following slides:

Slide: Harmonious and respectful development. Majority of changes were made to the objectives.

Slide: Complete neighborhoods: resources for thriving lives.

Slide: Healthy dignified and welcoming neighborhoods

Slide: Environment goal- added language

Slide: Resilient, Carbon-Neutral Biodiverse, generationally oriented community

Slide: Equitable safe and well-maintained public spaces

Slide: Innovative and accessible community oriented schools

Slide: Glossary of Terms - defined biodiversity

Vice Chair Jacobs stated that Piedmont consisted of a very biodiverse ecosystem.

Commissioner Burns thanked staff for their work.

Commissioner Carter thanked staff and their outreach efforts and indicated that their work could be a model going forward. She also appreciated the public speakers' comments and asked if the public safety remarks were woven into the goals/objectives.

In response, Ms. Miller noted that there was feedback about public safety, but there was not a clear consensus of community goals. She stated that larger conversations were happening on how to address public safety and finding solutions for those matters.

Commissioner Burns was glad that communities that had not been heard were targeted for input and that ambassadors were included in the outreach. She also asked what steps had been taken to make sure seniors were included in the conversations, what options were available currently regarding participation and how could residents become ambassadors.

Ms. Miller responded that some of the engagement ambassadors consisted of older community members and that they conducted phone surveys to ensure their needs were being met across various demographics. She provided her email address at lisa.miller@durhamnc.gov for those that were interested in participating moving forward or looking for additional information in general.

County Commissioner Chair Brenda Howerton said that she was honored to moderate with Mayor Schewel at the meeting; thanked residents for their participation and thanked staff for their work. She was encouraged by the presentation and wanted residents to have ways to see that things were taking place.

County Commissioner Allam thanked staff, engagement coordinators, and residents of Durham.

Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson thanked residents for their participation. She also thanked staff and acknowledged that redoing the Comprehensive Plan was a massive undertaking. She defended the goal related to equity and spoke to staff's focus on equity; recognized how historic government and land policies had disadvantaged black

residents in Durham and noted that it was important to repair those previous disadvantages.

Council Member Freeman echoed the comments made by Mayor Pro Tempore Johnson and stressed the need for more open access and equity in the community. She stated that biodiversity extended beyond race and class and spoke to how to make a community sustainable.

Council Member Reece thanked the County Commissioners for participating in the Joint Meeting and suggested that there be additional joint meetings moving forward. He thanked staff and engagement ambassadors and noted that the data had been collected from residents in an equitable and intentional way. He also referenced the following from the presentation: shifting resources to neglected parts of the community, exploring the needs of black and low wealth communities, shifting the influence and power to the community and expressed a need for new legislation.

Council Member Middleton was excited to have the Joint Meeting with the County Commissioners; looked forward to what the document would become in the future and likened it to the *Declaration of Independence* as an aspirational statement of core values. He also spoke to how wealth and rights had been parsed out, land being sacred and the upward mobility process. He also spoke to how voting was tied to land, historic redlining and how those factors contributed to issues of inequity and injustice.

Council Member Freelon associated himself with the comments made by Council Member Middleton and thanked staff, colleagues, and speakers for their participation.

Mayor Schewel asked how recommendations made by the speakers would be handled.

Ms. Miller responded that they would be focusing on the voices that were highlighted about how biodiversity works and clarifying the language. However, she noted that priorities from the greater community might be different.

Mayor Schewel clarified that he wanted to know how would changes be communicated to staff and elected officials.

Ms. Miller stated that an attachment could be added with the item.

Mayor Schewel asked if his colleagues were all supportive of the recommendations regarding biodiversity and asked for a vote.

The vote passed.

Council Member Freeman noted that last minute contributions should not totally outweigh an entire process.

Mayor Schewel thanked city and county staff.

County Commissioner Chair Howerton presided over the remainder of the meeting.

The Joint City-County Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Diana Schreiber, City Clerk

Ashley Wyatt, Deputy City Clerk