



Durham County Government 2018 State of the County Address

Delivered by

Chair Wendy Jacobs

March 26, 2018

Welcome everyone to the 2018 Durham State of the County Address. I want to thank all joining us here tonight in our chambers and viewers at home for your interest and engagement in our community.

It is my honor to welcome you as chair of the Durham County Board of Commissioners. I am honored and privileged to serve in this leadership role. I want to acknowledge our Vice Chair James Hill and Commissioners Heidi Carter, Brenda Howerton and Ellen Reckhow. I appreciate the unique perspective and strong voice of each member of our board as we work together to set policy and make decisions on behalf of the people of Durham who we are elected to represent and serve.

We could not do this work without the support of so many others. Our county manager, Wendell Davis, county attorney, Lowell Siler, our General Managers, Gayle Harris, Jay Gibson, Claudia Hager, Jodi Miller, Deborah Craig Ray, and our chief of staff, Drew Cummings, thank you for the expertise you provide. I also want to recognize the awesome clerk to our board, Michelle Parker Evans and her wonderful staff, Macio Carlton, Tania De Los Santos and Monica Toomer. We are sad to report that Michelle will be leaving us on May 1 after more than 30 years in local government. We are grateful for her service to Durham County, her tireless efforts to serve our board and wish her well in her retirement.

I also want to recognize our incredible department heads and staff who are too numerous for me to name -27 different departments - and the more than 2,000 county employees who operate more than 100 programs that deliver direct services to people in our community each day.

The State of the County address is an opportunity to look back on the past year and highlight accomplishments and progress. It is also time to recognize challenges and areas for improvement as we look to the year ahead and the long term future of Durham County.

Everything we do must be focused on investing in the people of our community, our human capital. Our greatest resource is the potential talent of each person and when this talent is supported and flourishes, we all prosper.

Durham County's Strategic Plan is our blueprint for our investments in the people of Durham.

In **Goal Area 1, Community Empowerment and Enrichment**, we see progress and the potential of our existing resources. Durham County's unemployment rate dropped to 3.8% in 2016. According to a 2017 Duke University study, jobs in Durham County grew by 27.9% from 2002-2014 compared with a statewide average of 10.2%. A recent RTI study reports that 37,000 new jobs will be created in our region over the next 3 years. Many of these will be good paying jobs that require a four year degree or technical education. Durham County also ranks number one in average weekly wages in the state. In fact, we are creating great jobs for our entire region as more and more people commute into Durham each day from neighboring counties.

In national trends, we see growth in high paying, high skills jobs and low paying, low skills jobs. To strategically address the “missing middle” of good paying jobs that often require less advanced degrees, our board recently approved a \$2.7 million dollar incentive for the \$189 million expansion of the Corning Plant in Treyburn Industrial Park. Corning plans to create 317 new jobs, in addition to its existing 300 jobs, including 269 manufacturing jobs that only require high school or certification degrees. Corning and Durham Tech have committed to work together to create training programs so that Durham residents can have the necessary skills for these good jobs. We see the potential for even more manufacturing jobs in Treyburn. In the coming year, we will look to partner with the City to invest in needed infrastructure improvements to support future expansions.

The Duke study indicates another important reason for these strategic investments: They help us confront issues like racial disparities in hiring, our disconnected youth and people being left behind from Durham’s job opportunities. Manufacturing jobs in Durham have the most diverse workforce, with 45% held by African American workers, and 69% of these jobs requiring less

than an associates degree. Yet only about 3,500 of the more than 27,000 manufacturing jobs in Durham are currently held by Durham residents. With Durham County's poverty rate at 17.40% in 2016 our board considers it a priority that Durham County residents have the skills and education they need for the many good jobs in Durham.

At our recent budget retreat, our board committed to Durham County Government taking the lead in the creation of an integrated, coordinated **Cradle to Career System**. Our vision is that every child born in Durham will have an equitable opportunity for a bright future.

This system will also ensure that our employers have the talent pool they need right here in Durham County. One of the national models we will consider in the coming year, is **Strive Together, Every Child, Cradle to Career**. This will involve bringing together our non-profits, private sector, educational institutions, workforce development agencies and government partners to address this critical need.

A foundation of a **Cradle to Career** pipeline, is universal access to high quality early childhood education. Research tells us that every \$1 invested in early childhood education yields a \$7 rate of return in successful life outcomes. This year we fully funded the \$1.5 million needed to operate the 8 pre-k classrooms at the newly renovated Whitted School, which serves many low-income families and Title 1 elementary schools in the surrounding neighborhoods.

We have taken action to follow up on the recommendations of the **State of Durham County's Young Child Report** and **Pre K Task Force Report**.

Subcommittees have been hard at work, a Pre-K Supply and Demand Study is underway, and we recently held an Early Childhood Community Summit attended by more than 100 community stakeholders. During this summit, we received great feedback and ideas related to the five focus areas where programs are already being implemented.

There is an urgency to the work we do. Amidst all of the resources and opportunities we have in Durham County, our child poverty rate increased from 22.2% in 2016 to 26% in 2017. We believe that the evidenced based practices laid

out in these reports will help us break the cycle of poverty and help all of our children thrive.

I would like to highlight Durham County's progress in two projects which also overlap with **Goal Area 4, Environmental Stewardship and Community**

Prosperity. As we face the challenges that revitalization and development can bring to our community, it becomes even more important that Durham County government use the assets we have for public benefits and to help mitigate negative impacts of market forces.

We have made progress on the \$143 million county capital investments currently underway and our renovated former judicial building is due to be completed by August of this year. It will include two ground floor retail spaces, an inviting public outdoor seating area, ground floor community meeting rooms and a new public art sculpture. I am proud that we will contribute to an active East Main street scape and the growing public art in Durham.

The Development Finance Institute at University of North Carolina School of Government is helping us assess opportunities for private public partnerships in the redevelopment of two other valuable county public assets- the 300 and 500 East Main Street surface parking lots. More than 230 Durham residents and county staff members have given us important feedback by participating in public engagement meetings and on line surveys. Strong public priorities have emerged including ***providing parking for county staff and clients, support for multi modal transportation, affordable and workforce housing, a vibrant streetscape and affordable local retail and service options.*** Please stay tuned for upcoming opportunities to give us your important input into these transformational projects!

In our **Strategic Plan Goal Area 2, Health and Well Being for All** I want to share some of our efforts to combat gun violence, racial bias and substance abuse.

Since January of 2017, Durham County government has funded the Bull City United Program, which is an evidence based national public health model that treats gun violence as a public health epidemic. Our Bull City United, or BCU

violence interrupters and outreach workers, have been working in the target areas of McDougal Terrace and Southside over the past year to help resolve conflicts before they escalate to the level of retaliation and gun violence. BCU staff also work to connect people to jobs, education, and substance abuse and mental health resources. In the two target areas, we have seen a 43% reduction in persons shot and a 12% reduction in total shooting incidents. We know there is much work ahead but I want to recognize our BCU staff, who are all Durham County employees, and commend them for their work in our community.

Durham County is bringing together partners to collaborate on a systematic approach to the epidemic of substance abuse and medication misuse that is increasing in our community. In 2016, Naloxone was administered to more to 232 people by Durham County EMS to reverse opioid overdoses. In 2016 we also saw a dramatic rise in overdose deaths related to cocaine, heroin, prescribed opioid medications and other synthetic narcotics. The estimated economic impact of medical costs and work loss attributed to medication and drug fatalities in Durham County in 2016 is estimated at more than \$41 million.

In response, we recently convened a **Leadership Forum on Substance Abuse and Medication Misuse**. More than 140 people, including elected officials, law enforcement and mental and behavioral health providers, came together to understand the scope of this problem, our existing resources, how to educate our community to prevent substance abuse and medication misuse, and get people the care and treatment they need to overcome addiction. Some immediate actions taken over the past year include free distribution of Narcan or Naloxone through the Durham County Public Health Department, our Sheriff's department being the first local law enforcement agency to carry and administer Narcan, and prescription drop boxes in locations such as the Durham County Courthouse. Our next step is to convene a task force of key partners to create a County wide plan for a coordinated, integrated, systems approach using data collection and sharing, and evidenced based practices.

As we aspire to promote the well-being of all people in our community it is critical that we understand the historic and cultural inequities that continue to impact the policies and programs of government. Over the past year, Durham County has made **Racial Equity Training** a priority for our board of county commissioners,

leadership staff, department heads and employees so that we can learn how to bring a racial equity lens to the work we do and gain insight into implicit bias that impacts the citizens we serve. We have spent nearly \$100,000 advancing racial equity training in partnership with Durham City Government and Durham Public Schools. In the past year, more than 600 multi sector partners have participated in these trainings. Racial Equity Training will continue to be a priority for Durham County government.

In **Goal Area 3, Safe Community**, Durham County continues to implement innovative ways to ensure the well-being of our community by working effectively and efficiently in partnership with other sectors. In our new Community Paramedicine Program, “familiar faces” have been identified and our community paramedics are developing relationships with these residents, connecting them to mental health and physical health providers and addressing other needs to save costs associated with 911 calls or emergency room visits. Durham County Fire and Rescue is partnering with the City of Durham Fire Department on a plan for consolidation to take place in July 2018 which will help us use our joint resources

more efficiently, better deliver services, improve response times and reduce insurance rates for homeowners.

In the past year, we have continued to implement new initiatives to better meet the mental health needs of people in our community and keep them out of our criminal justice system and jails. Our new Mental Health Court, has enrolled 22 individuals in a therapeutic diversion model when mental illness is identified as a factor in the commission of their crimes. I am also excited to share that Durham is now one of only two providers in the state with a Behavioral Health Urgent Care Center. This walk in clinic is open to adults and children dealing with urgent mental health needs and is free to those without health insurance or with Medicaid.

We have also seen increased usage of our Durham Recovery Response Center or RCC, including a 32% increase in drop offs from first responders such as EMS and law enforcement. The RRC provides 24 hour crisis services for people with acute mental health and substance abuse needs and helps divert people from our jail and emergency waiting rooms. In the past year, the Sheriff's department has also

created a mental health pod for male detainees and is now expanding this to female detainees to better care for those with severe and persistent mental illness in the Durham County Detention Center.

Many people in Durham are concerned about the criminalization of poverty, racial disparities and inequities in our criminal justice system, and how we can help justice involved people reintegrate back into our community. Durham County Government continues to work in partnership with law enforcement, the district attorney and public defenders offices and our district court judges to address these issues. We strongly support the innovative diversion, alternative sentencing, pretrial release and re-entry programs administered through our Criminal Justice Resource Center or CJRC.

A new initiative launched in the past year is our award-winning Court Reminder Program, developed in partnership with our IT department, which provides text messages to remind people about their court date. More than 2,000 residents have taken advantage of this free service which saves money and time lost to the

rescheduling of court dates and helps reduce the number of people being fined and jailed for failure to appear in court.

We are also working hard to help the more than 700 residents returning to Durham each year from federal prison transition successfully back into our community. Public Health's Formerly Incarcerated Transition Program or FIT, assists those with chronic health conditions and CJRC's Local Reentry Council or LRC is working with community partners to provide wrap around support and connect people to housing and jobs. But Durham County Government cannot do this alone. We need employers to give returning residents a second chance at a job. We need faith communities to provide circles of support. You are welcome to attend a meeting to find out where your expertise, skills or resources can be best utilized by contacting Karen Shaw, the LRC Coordinator at 919-560-0514 or visiting the website DurhamReentrycouncil.org

In Goal Area 4, Environmental Stewardship and Community Prosperity we are making strides in the development of our regional transit system. As our population grows, we are experiencing increasing congestion and traffic gridlock

at peak commute times on major roads connecting Durham, Orange and Wake counties. As we compete in the national spotlight with cities across the country for a possible new Amazon or Apple headquarters, we hear the same deficiency from all of the pundits: our transit system. I and many others are working hard to ensure the successful implementation of the Durham Orange Light Rail Project that will connect our major universities, employers and medical centers in Durham and Orange Counties. High density mixed use development around our light rail stations will be one of the most effective tools we have to create affordable housing and connect people in an easily accessible and affordable way to education and job opportunities. Our recently adopted Interim Housing Density Bonus to incentivize affordable housing around station areas and other locations was created with input from the private sector who we need to be an active partner in creating affordable housing options in our community.

In the past year, we have completed half of the design and engineering for the Durham Orange Light Rail project. This is the culmination of more than a decade of work and millions of dollars in local funding. We are now eligible for \$1.25 billion worth of federal transportation funding and hope to receive our final

approval for financing and construction from the Federal Transportation Administration in 2019, one year ahead of schedule.

We have also begun work on the important Durham-Wake Commuter Rail Project by jointly funding a study with our partners in Wake County. This rail line will help relieve traffic in the I-40 corridor and connect Durham to RTP, Raleigh, NCSU and beyond. Bus rapid transit, local and regional bus systems, as well as bike and pedestrian trails will connect to the commuter and light rail spine to create a seamless system linking our region.

I fully believe that the future vitality, continued economic and job growth, and potential for good quality of life for Durham, Orange and Wake counties rests on the creation of this regional transit system. This vision will rely on the ongoing partnership and collaboration of the governments of Durham, Orange and Wake counties, as well as our institutional and private sector stakeholders who will benefit from reduced traffic and transit options for their employees and customers.

I would also like to highlight some exciting ways Durham County is working to support sustainable economic development and local, small businesses in our community. Over the past year our Soil and Water Department has piloted a grant program to help Durham farmers implement infrastructure improvements on their farms and achieve federal food safety certification to grow their businesses and expand into commercial markets. Here with us tonight are several of our farmers who have been recipients of these grants and are contributing to Durham's local food economy. In addition, we are collaborating and partnering with Farmer Foodshare, the Office of the Sheriff and the Detention Center food contractor to launch a local food program. Durham certified farmers are now able to supply fresh produce to the more than 500 detainees and employees in the Durham County Detention Center. In the coming year, we look forward to expanding this program to Durham Public Schools and other county facilities.

In **Goal Area 5, Accountable, Efficient and Visionary Government** Durham County continues to stand on stable financial footing. We have maintained our AAA bond rating as one of only 79 counties in the United States with this designation. Our

tax department achieved a 99.78% collection rate, an all time high for Durham County. We are making strides in implementing our Managing for Results Model that uses data and performance measures for decision making. With the help of our new Clear Point and Power BI systems, County departments have compiled more than 2400 performance measures! In the coming months we aim to have baseline performance measures in our Strategic Plan available on the Durham County website. We are using technology to help us better deliver services and be user friendly for our residents. Some examples include our ALERT Durham System, our Durham One Call App, our DSS Application App and or Durham E-Bid System.

In what I hope will become a growing collaboration, we recently partnered with the City of Durham and Durham Public Schools, to host several well attended community conversations to get public input about budget priorities in areas such as public safety, affordable housing, jobs and education. It will be important that we use this feedback as well as information from our third annual Resident Satisfaction Survey, to help guide our budget process and areas for improvement so that Durham County can be as responsive, accessible, accountable and transparent of a government as possible.

The overall economic outlook for Durham County continues to be bright. Our landscape dotted with cranes is showing results. We are projected to see 3.54% growth in our tax base due to significant growth in new property valuation. This is comparable to last year's growth rate of 1.56%. But I must temper this with the news that we are also seeing a slowing in sales tax revenues which may be due to recent sales tax redistribution at the state level, changing retail behavior and our current inability to recover sales tax from many internet transactions.

Durham County Government continues to show our strong commitment to public education. More than one third of Durham County's General Fund is spent on education related expenditures. Over the past 10 years federal and state funding for education has declined while the share of local funding has increased. In the past year we provided an additional \$6.06 million in local funding to Durham Public Schools, including a 1 cent property tax increase to support this, for a total allocation of more than \$134 million for Durham Public Schools. We also funded more than \$4.3 million to support dental and health nurses, health education and school resource officers for our schools and \$1.5 million for pre-K classes.

We now know that 80% of brain development takes place before kindergarten. Currently, only 38% of the children who enroll in kindergarten in Durham Public Schools are ready to learn. By prioritizing funding for high quality early childhood education, we hope to support the work of our teachers. While we have a temporary reprieve from the state required class size changes this year, this unfunded mandate will have significant future capital and operational costs for Durham County with the need for more classrooms and teachers.

Here in Durham we continue to experience the difficult realities impacting people in our world and nation. Our vulnerable refugee and immigrant communities suffer not only from divided families, but a fear that impacts their ability to visit their children's schools, seek medical attention or report being a victim of a crime. Many of our children go to school each day worried about their parents and their future. The Office of the Sheriff has appointed a bilingual officer, Captain Raheem Aleem, who is doing outreach in the community. In the past year, I have convened a working group to bring together community stakeholders and service providers so that we can better understand the challenges facing refugees and

immigrants as well as share information about the human resources we have available in Durham County to help them.

This year we have also seen our country's struggle to confront our history and the legacy of white supremacy play out here in our community. These are complex and difficult issues, but I believe that in Durham, where we have engaged, thoughtful, passionate and caring citizens, we can face up to these challenges. I believe we can bring people together to move forward in a positive and productive way that helps us face our past and create a better future. That is why I have partnered with our Mayor Steve Schewel, with the support of the city council and board of county commissioners, to lead the formation of a City-County Committee on Public Confederate Monuments. Our talented and experienced co-chairs, Duke Professor Robin Kirk and North Carolina Central University Professor Charmaine McKissick Melton will lead our community through a process of facilitated conversations, research and resulting recommendations regarding the disposition of the county's Confederate memorial and other remaining symbols.

As we look to the coming year and beyond, I believe that it will become even more imperative that we look at collaborative and integrated approaches to solving our problems in Durham so that all of our citizens can thrive, prosper and have a sense of well-being. With less and less available state and federal resources, it is incumbent upon us to use our local resources in strategic ways to have the most collective impact. With the availability of data, the ease of technology and all of the resources we have in Durham there is nothing that should be stopping us from working together in this way.

I look forward to continued collaboration between Durham City and County governments to address housing, homelessness, food insecurity and the needs of our growing senior population. Many stakeholders have been partnering on a Livability Assessment for Older Adults. I hope it will become the foundation of our Aging Plan and the pathway for Durham to become an Age-Friendly Community.

We are at a pivotal point in Durham's history. This is a time where perhaps we have the greatest opportunities and resources we have ever had available to us while at the same time we face some of our greatest challenges. With

Collaboration, Partnership, Collective Impact and the creation of a Shared Vision, I believe we can be a place where all people in our community have an equitable chance for a good quality of life.

Let us not forget that Durham's Tobacco Empire, Duke and North Carolina Central Universities and other foundational community institutions grew out of a vision, partnership, and collaboration which had a collective impact. The revitalization and redevelopment that has brought vitality and opportunity back to our vacant downtown streets and storefronts and decaying factory buildings not long ago, was also born out of the vision, partnership, collaboration and collective impact of so many people in Durham.

So let's come together to create a shared vision of the community that we love; a community that we value for being welcoming, tolerant and inclusive. A community that celebrates diversity, difference, and creativity. Let's also include in our vision, a thriving community for all. To create a shared vision for change will require all sectors of our community to take responsibility for our problems and commit to working together make a Shared Vision of Prosperity for All a reality.

Durham County Government's expression of this vision is emblazoned on our Human Services Complex for all to see:

Durham's Vitality is Built Upon the Health of Our Residents and the Capacity of Our Community to Foster and Enhance the Well Being of Every Citizen

I recently learned of another expression of this vision:

Durham is a community that THRIVES, where each citizen's basic needs are met so we can all pursue our dreams. How will YOU create shared prosperity and contribute to a thriving Durham this year?

I love this vision and I love this personal challenge. Durham County Government will continue to help lead the way. We invite You to Join in. We can do this Together.

