



ZELOS

strategically effecting change

Durham County
Organizational Analysis Summary Report
September 26, 2011

P.O. Box 1300 Midlothian, VA 23113
o: 804.873.3657 f: 804.897.0093 w: zelosinc.com

Organizational Analysis Report

Zelos is completing phase one of the strategic planning process. This phase includes a review of where we have been and where we are now. In order to gain perspective, interviews, surveys and focus groups were conducted during July and August and early September. Residents, community and business leaders and individuals from the nonprofit, education, government, health care, economic development, environmental, arts and criminal justice sectors participated in either an interview, focus group or a survey.

Zelos conducted interviews with 28 individuals and facilitated 6 external focus groups and two internal focus groups. An external survey of residents and an internal survey of employees were also completed during this phase. A total of 1,686 residents and 964 employees participated in the survey process. Approximately 70 individuals participated in the focus group sessions.

The key findings and themes identified in the organizational analysis were gleaned from the interviews, surveys and focus groups. The organizational analysis is divided into two sections: Leadership/Vision and Strategic Focus. Leadership and Vision represent the longer term and more intangible issues that were raised by participants in the process. Strategic Focus represents more specific and immediate concerns discussed by the participants with the expectation that these would be addressed in the plan.

Key Findings

Overall, people believe Durham County is a great place to live and work. It has a rich culture, diversity, and many quality of life amenities found in big cities. It has good educational institutions, strong industries and a lifestyle that attracts people to the County.

People are seeking a clear brand for Durham County – an identity that truly reflects all of the positives they see in their community. They believe the problems are solvable with shared vision, strong leadership, and active civic engagement focusing on clear priorities. As an activist community, it is understood that everyone will have an opinion, public debate is healthy and civic discourse is valued in any process. That said, people are still looking to government to set some long term and some near term goals and priorities that will focus everyone toward achieving an even better Durham County.

Leadership and Vision

A consistent theme from participants was the need for leadership and vision to address the problems and issues facing the County¹. Many respondents say the County has been too reactive in the past without enough planning and clear goals for the future. Others argued that political agendas among elected officials have kept the County from moving toward a shared set of goals and priorities. There is a feeling that elected officials do not role model the kind of collaborative and cooperative leadership to move the County forward. This need for leadership came up in every interview and every focus group. It was also reflected in the survey comments as important to the future, the quality of life in the County and ability of the County to address the issues it faces.

Key supporting themes include:

- **Public engagement to solve problems** – volunteers, residents and leaders in various sectors are seeking leadership and civic engagement to solve the problems and issues facing Durham County. People believe the problems are solvable in the County and want to be engaged with overarching goals to set priorities.
- **Government efficiencies and effectiveness** – people want to see that all levels of government have worked hard to consolidate, jointly plan and coordinate to do whatever it takes to be efficient and effective in today’s world. For some, this means greater consolidation between the City and the County and for others this means improved, strengthened collaboration. Government insiders understand the difficulties with consolidation of city and county services. But all want what one participant called the “relentless pursuit” of ways to improve efficiency in whatever form that takes.
- **Sticking to the goals and priorities** – there is a shared perception that the County has difficulty sticking to goals and priorities and sometimes falls short on implementation. The perception is that too many initiatives have started and then been dropped or disbanded before results were realized. People are looking for a plan and the leadership to provide the political will to stick with the goals and to focus on key priorities.
- **Using our intellectual capital** – the County has extensive intellectual capital through the educational institutions, non-profits and research organizations within its boundaries. People see these institutions as “assets” to be tapped into for help, advice, volunteers, and partners. It is often believed by others and by those in the institutions that they are not used enough or sufficiently engaged in addressing key issues in the County.

¹ Note: the interviews and focus groups were conducted during the federal deficit debate and the national call for leadership from all sectors of government.

Strategic Focus

The topic for this portion of the organizational analysis is titled “Strategic Focus” and is defined as the issues that must be addressed in this plan and in future planning of the County. The respondents see government, including the County, as having a role in addressing partnerships and collaborative opportunities leading toward improving and strengthening Durham County. Some of these issues will take 10 to 20 years of planning to address while others can be addressed in a three to five year time horizon.

10 to 20 Year Time Horizon

- **Transit** – getting people to and from work, getting people around the region and all forms of transportation needing a long term plan. People understand there are few lane miles available and options for more highways are very limited. They want to see planning and work toward longer term solutions that range from in town bike paths to light rail between hubs in the Triangle.
- **SMART Growth** – quality of life is very important to Durham County residents and businesses. They want to see the land use planning that protects open space, water, housing within communities, and future development. They want the County to be an active player in making sure the quality of life, standards and land use development are preserved and protected for now and the future.
- **Poverty** – the growing gap between the “haves” and the “have-nots” in the County is a concern that was expressed throughout the process. The perception is that the gap is widening. The County has a significant role to play in helping address all of the issues related to poverty and this growing gap especially with the County’s responsibility in providing human services, criminal justice, health, education and economic development.

3 to 5 Year Time Horizon

- **Education** – the perception is that the County and the School Board are working more effectively together compared to the recent past. The quality of the schools, their performance and their funding are all issues that people want addressed as a priority in the plan. Participants talked about early childhood education, children being ready to learn, child care, school performance, graduation rates, mentoring for children, and initiatives to improve educational performance. While there is the perception that things are improving and moving in the right direction, they want to see education as a priority for the County.
- **Human Services** – the County is viewed as lacking strategies for the provision of social services. It is perceived as being too reactive without a consistent set of strategies to address the growing problems in the County. Funding is not enough

in these times and future federal and state budget cuts are expected for the next several years. There is appreciation for the fact that the County has stepped up to fill some of the funding gaps but the perception is that it could be more effective with an articulated strategy and clear focus.

- **Economic Development** – the creation of jobs in the County was stated as a future priority. Given the national debate and need for jobs, it is not surprising that this would rise to the forefront. People perceive that the County has a role to play in economic development ranging from industrial and business development to business friendly services that are efficiently provided. There was some concern that the County and government in general have paid too much attention to only high skill, high wage jobs in technology and related industries. Many people identified a need for the County to ensure development of lower skill and lower wage jobs needed by the existing residents in the County.
- **Public Safety and Criminal Justice System** – the County is viewed as providing a significant amount of coordination and planning among units or functions of the criminal justice system. Improved coordination, consolidation of the police and sheriff responsibilities and funding for the courts, jail, probation and other county funded services should be a priority for the plan. The criminal justice system is being impacted by the cuts in substance abuse treatment and mental health services. There is talk of a mental health court much like family court as well as how criminal justice, human services and poverty all intersect with each other and should influence the way in which services are provided.

A number of targeted issues were raised that are of concern to the community:

- **Disconnected Youth** – ages 14 through 25 who do not have jobs or an education. This targeted group was brought up in many different contexts ranging from the lack of attention and services to coordination of efforts that are currently underway.
- **Growing Hispanic population** – the need for services, integration into the community, quality education, health disparities, access to health care services, and jobs were all mentioned.
- **Seniors** – the need for health care, housing and development that meets the growing number of seniors in the County.
- **Gateways to the City** – not all Gateways into the City present a positive image. People thought some gateways have improved but others do not present the best image of Durham to visitors, tourists and others entering the city.
- **Pay Scales and Benefits for County Employees** – the perception is that the pay scales, raises and benefits have not kept pace with other government organizations

or industries. Good people are perceived as leaving to seek higher paying jobs from other government entities.

Community and Staff Engagement

Interviews: 28 face-to-face and phone interviews with community leaders

Focus Groups: 6 external focus groups with 47 participants; 2 internal focus groups with 22 county staff

Internal Survey: 964 respondents, 53.9% of full and part-time staff

External Survey: 1,686 total respondents