

# Sample Discussion Questions

## General Food System and Education

*Given the aging farmer population and the opportunities and needs of the evolving food system and its environment – educating the next generation of farmers and food system workers is now more important than ever. Durham Public School agriculture programs, Career Technical Education, and relevant internships are critical to these initiatives but funding in these areas have recently been cut. Non-profits are under increasing pressure to fill these gaps with limited resources. What are your thoughts on improving the situation?*

*There are many initiatives with similar goals of improving healthy food access and building the local food system. However, greater impact would be realized through a coordinated planning and policy approach to food system development from a city or county level. Would you support funding an initiative or a position to lead food policy efforts in our area?*

*What help can academic institutions or NGOs provide to you as policy makers? What could be done or provided to enable the passing of more bills related to improving our food systems?*

## Thanks to our Co-sponsors:

*Durham NAACP, Durham Co-op Market, Eno River Association, Green, Interfaith Food Shuttle, MomsRising, NC WARN, Recyclique/a project of CommunEcos, Reinvestment Partners, The Scrap Exchange, Slow Money NC, Student Action with Farmworkers, Toxic Free NC, Raise Up, and NC Environmental Justice Network.*



**COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES**  
Strengthening Partnerships & Aligning Results



# Durham's Farm and Food Themed Candidates' Forum

## Event Schedule:

- 6-7 pm – Pre-forum Meet and Greet
- 7-8 pm - Candidate Panel Discussion
- 8-8:30 pm – Mingling and Networking
- After 8:30 pm - Cont'd Mingling at Ponysaurus Brewery

## Attending 2016 Election Candidates:

- Charles Meeker – NC Commissioner of Labor
- Floyd McKissick – NC Senate, District #20
- Barbara Howe – NC Senate, District #20
- Mike Woodard – NC Senate, District #22
- Brenda Howerton – Durham County Commissioner
- Heidi Carter – Durham County Commissioner
- Wendy Jacobs – Durham County Commissioner
- Ellen Reckhow – Durham County Commissioner
- Danielle Adams – Durham County Soil & Water Supervisor

## Attending Elected Officials:

- Jillian Johnson – Durham City Council
- Don Moffitt – Durham City Council
- Eddie Davis – Durham City Council
- Cora Cole-Mcfadden – Mayor Pro Tem
- Natalie Beyer – DPS Board of Education, District #4
- Minnie Forte-Brown – DPS Board of Education, Consolidated District A
- Matt Sears – DPS Board of Education, District #3

# Sample Discussion Questions

## Economy

*Marketing Durham as a “Green” community comes with economic benefits and growth as demonstrated in places like Asheville, Seattle, and Portland. Given Durham’s proximity to farmland and current growth rates, we are well positioned to expand the number of “Green” businesses and jobs. Do you believe we should pursue a “Green” county vision and if so, how would you support such initiatives? (Examples: economic incentives for small farming businesses and local food system infrastructure.)*

*Demand for locally produced food far exceeds the supply; nationally, direct sales by farmers to consumers were 8% higher in 2012 than in 2007 (USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012). What policies would you like to adopt to support the increase of local food production, processing, and retailing to address the growing consumer demand for local food?*

## Health and Food Security

*In 2012, 29.6 percent of North Carolina adults self-reported that they considered themselves overweight or obese. A food desert is a low-income area with limited access to affordable, healthy food options. North Carolina has at least 349 food deserts across 80 counties. Living closer to healthy food retail outlets is associated with better eating habits and decreased risk for obesity and diet-related diseases. What do you think is a workable solution to increase access to healthy food for vulnerable citizens in Durham and reduce chronic disease?*

*This past year, the NC General Assembly passed the Healthy Food Small Retailer/Corner Store Act. This act created a fund to utilize existing retail outlet infrastructure across the state to facilitate access and increased consumption of fresh, local, nutrient-dense foods. The bill called for a \$1 million appropriation for the NC Department of Commerce to implement and manage the program, however only \$250,000 was put towards the initiative. What results will you be looking for from this small investment of state dollars to consider funding the effort in the future?*

# Sample Discussion Questions

## Farming

*North Carolina’s tax code hurts small farmers. Small farmers pay more in property taxes and sales tax than larger farms. For example, NC property tax law allows certain, larger farms and forestland to be taxed at its present use rather than its market value. Small farms pay sales tax for farm equipment and supplies larger farms don’t pay. Small farms form the backbone of the local food economy, and young farmers often cannot afford to get started on a large scale; what policies do you support to encourage small and beginning farmers?*

*27,000 acres of Durham county farmland (most of which is already fallow) is at risk due to an aging farmer population and encroaching development. NC State gov’t recently reduced funding for land easements. With this in mind, what would be your priorities and suggestions for balancing farmland preservation with development?*

## Natural Resources

*Across the state we’re seeing huge threats to our environment and public health with the overuse of antibiotics on farms and nitrogen based fertilizers, which leads to nutrient runoff, and pollution of our watersheds. What do you think we need to do to protect our water?*

*Jordan Lake and Falls Lake watershed nutrient reduction regulations come into effect in 2021. It could cost each farmer between \$40-100k to be compliant, which includes creating buffer zones that will reduce farmable acreage. What are your thoughts on supporting farmers to ensure their compliance and continued economic viability?*

*The organic sector is an area of agricultural production where we can see rapid expansion and economic growth, even as prices for many commodity crops are tanking. GAP and Organic certifications are likely to be key success drivers for many small and mid-size sustainable farmers. Average annual audit and upgrade costs range from \$1 - \$10k. What ideas and suggestions do you have for encouraging and supporting farmers to obtain these certifications?*