

Resilient, Carbon-Neutral, Biodiverse, and Generationally Oriented Communities

OBJECTIVE: We need a healthy, resilient and generationally-oriented community that is carbon-neutral and prepared to weather the irreversible impacts of climate change. Durham urgently needs to stop emissions of greenhouse gases that cause climate change. We need to retrofit our built environment and also prepare our communities, by building community capacity, to be more resilient to natural disasters and unexpected disruption. Low-wealth communities and communities of color in Durham will be most impacted by climate change; therefore, Durham needs to prioritize BIPOC communities in planning for a sustainable future.

BACKGROUND: Climate change leads to harmful social, economic, public health, and environmental consequences. Our past and current patterns of development significantly contribute to climate change through sprawl, car-oriented development, low-density family housing, and separation of homes from businesses and services. These patterns lead to increased automobile emissions, high energy use, and unsustainable land development and disruption or outright destruction of native ecosystems that support all life. Due to past racist practices in the allocation of land, communities of color and low-wealth communities are more likely to live in low-lying areas with fewer green spaces and more paved surfaces. These communities are more likely to experience adverse impacts from serious weather events like flooding and extreme temperatures. Moving to a carbon-neutral Durham will require radical, transformational change in our energy production systems, job markets, transportation, industrial and business sectors, building codes, land use planning, and more. Our current model of infinite growth and production is unsustainable because resources and materials are finite.

We want to create systems where Durham residents have carbon-neutral ways of living and moving around. We want to simultaneously work to stop emissions while retrofitting and constructing both our built environment and societal conventions to prepare for unpredictable disruption. We want whatever changes, tradeoffs, and sacrifices our community must make to address climate change to be distributed equitably among the community, with a particular focus on ensuring that adaptation and mitigation measures will not disproportionately impact our low-wealth communities and communities of color.

Quotes from Durham Residents

“Development is equitable + planned with climate change in mind (knowing climate change affects the most vulnerable)”

“Resiliency is intertwined with all of the other objectives. If we are car-centric and have no enforcement of inadequate mufflers and car emissions, with sprawling development and no comprehensive public transit and inadequate green space than we are not resilient.”

“Would like Durham to be focused on environmental sustainability –came from CA reducing single use plastics, a lot of consideration about that in Durham's' future to find alternative ways of doing things so the impact on the environment isn't so great, solar power, likes green stuff, renewable energy”

“100% Greenhouse gas neutral-more easily accessible solar, energy sustainability, renewable energy, how we build our city. We're forcing people to drive to areas, use more resources. Grey Water Infrastructure 'reused water'”

“Because global warming is going to affect everyone across the planet, and everyone in Durham, I think it's critical that the city and county governments do everything possible to address it. We don't have time to wait. In this context, I'm concerned about how developers are allowed to remove so many trees, often clear cutting. We need trees to protect against climate change, flooding, pollution, and warming temperatures.”

“Make people more aware of the resources that's available about how the City can install rain gardens and cisterns and putting in potential ways to reduce/alleviate the problems.”

“There is a huge part missing regarding the health impact of climate change-- increase in asthma cases, spread of infectious disease and water borne pathogens-- that should also be considered especially in minority communities.”