

Intentional and Supported Youth Opportunities

OBJECTIVE: We need to invest in, empower, value, and support young people in Durham, from early childhood to adolescence, to ensure they play an integral role in shaping Durham’s future. We need to prioritize equitable access to leadership, social, and work opportunities among youth, ensuring that Black and Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQIA+, low-wealth, and unhoused young people can participate. We need young people to have the power to design and determine the use of resources that are intended to benefit them. We need to implement innovative ideas that support youth in participating in local decision-making, including voting and political leadership opportunities.

BACKGROUND: Currently, many young people feel their voices do not matter and that they are not given opportunities to be heard. Young people want to have a voice in Durham, in our government, in their schools, and in the broader community. These spaces often lack the creativity and innovation that young people can bring to the table. In addition, young people often do not have the kind of support they need, such as financial compensation, Internet access, language services, transportation, food, and childcare, to participate in leadership opportunities. Many work opportunities are not accessible to young people because of their age, level of experience, family responsibilities, or education. Young people do not often see social and recreational opportunities, like clubs and activities, that are accessible for them where other people who look like them are participating.

We want young people in Durham to be able to imagine themselves in their fullest power, bringing their experiences, creativity, and future-oriented perspectives into engagement and decision-making. We want to intentionally create youth-specific or youth-designed opportunities for young people to work and play, while gaining life and professional experience.

Quotes from Durham Residents

“These young people are the leaders that will be making decisions for us in the future. We MUST invest in them now, or they will not be able to invest in us later.”

“If we direct resources toward our youth, we would reap the benefit by making them feel a sense of worth in the community. This can only help in our effort to teach and train Durham's future leaders. That leadership needs to be represented by those in underserved communities.”

“We need to center values of youth-leadership as we put resources toward this work, and listen to what youth want and need when budget priorities are being set, initiatives launched. Programming for young people should not be created without young people at the table as valued thought partner and decision makers.”

“Durham has not historically provided Black/Brown youth the same opportunities as Euro-American youth. It is past time for that to change.”

“More jobs for youth, more education and training programs for youth”

“Youth should have an opportunity to engage with this process and the development of Durham”

“Access to things for young people to do that is constructive and safe”

“If we invest in our children, we will have a safer, better Durham going forward. If we do not, all of us will realize our failure. It will come back to haunt us.”