Healthy, Dignified, and Welcoming Housing and Neighborhoods

**OBJECTIVE:** We need healthy, dignified, and welcoming housing that promotes the mental and physical wellbeing for all residents, particularly our elders, our youth, residents of color, those in public housing, those with low-incomes, and those with different physical and mental abilities. We need homes that are safe and clean inside, with surroundings that are cared for, maintained, pleasant, beautiful and bring us joy.

**BACKGROUND:** Currently, some residents in public housing and rental properties are living in unhealthy spaces with black mold, plumbing issues, lead paint, or high carbon monoxide levels. In addition, many residents see that their neighborhoods are not as aesthetically pleasing, cared for and well maintained as other neighborhoods. Living in a physically unwelcoming environment and seeing that some places are better cared for and more welcoming than others can have a negative affect on emotional and mental wellbeing. These kinds of unhealthy housing contribute to a cycle of poverty where residents are forced to focus on immediate physical and mental health concerns, which lessens the ability to get involved and invest in community, move out of poverty, or build generational wealth. It is hard or almost impossible for hopes and dreams to seed or grow in places that aren’t healthy and dignified.

We want resources for maintaining spaces to be equitably distributed and for affordable housing, including public housing, to be visually welcoming, environmentally healthy, and enable dignified living.

Quotes from Durham residents

“It can be mentally damaging if it looks and feels like you’re in prison when you haven’t done anything wrong and that changes your mental state.”

“Every human being desires a place to live that they can feel pride in”

“Now it seems there is a growing number of homeless that even while the city and state “grows,” they are left behind.”

“They don’t respond to nothing. My apartment had black mold. The lawyer I had works with the City. My daughter has respiratory problems. They don’t do nothing.”

“People feel like the lost, forgotten, that no one cares about. Either people in control of the village will surround people to make sure they're warm or the rebels will burn it down so they can be warm. Not because they’re malicious, but just because they’re cold. We don’t understand that we make people monsters in our society and our inability to act helps perpetuate that. There’s no human alive that doesn’t want their existence acknowledged in some way.”

“We’re still feeling displaced even though you have a roof. That’s not something people acknowledge. You might have a roof but you don’t want to go back to it.”

“Put the appropriate amount of pressure on Durham Housing Authority to make the necessary changes needed so people can live in a clean and healthy home. Also, I would like to see an accountability review board set up by the residents for Durham Housing Authority for each community that is stipended for the residents to go over the processes of requests that have been made for repairs, make sure that it is followed through and if not, it is re-reported so that it is accurately handled. There’s no process currently to review how these are handled and DHA is severely unstaffed.”