

902 S. BRIGGS AVE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY MEETINGS REPORT

PARTNERSHIP FOR SOUTHERN EQUITY

This report is an overview of the activities, discussions, and outcomes of community meetings held on the following dates:

Thursday, June 2, 2022, 12:00pm – 2:00pm & 6:00 – 8:00pm

Tuesday, July 19, 2022, 12:00pm – 2:00pm & 6:00 – 8:00pm

Tuesday, August 30, 2022, 12:00pm – 2:00pm & 6:00 – 8:00pm

Report created by:

Partnership for Southern Equity

www.psequity.org

Special gratitude to members of the 902 S. Briggs Avenue Steering Committee for their vision, leadership, and guidance in this development process

- Bertha Mena (Durham Tech student)
- Camryn Smith (Communities in Partnership, Durham Tech Properties LLC Board)
- Danequa Wiggins (Durham Tech student)
- Danielle Johnson (Durham's Partnership for Children)
- Eddith Akinyi Ogola (Durham Tech student)
- Germany McNeal (Real estate agent & community leader)
- Jade Valladares (Durham Tech student)
- Joselyn Farrior (Community leader)
- Shima Earls (Durham Tech student)
- **Banc of America CDC/ Mosaic designees:**
 - Kathy Stilwell
 - Jimmy Royster
 - Eileen Pope
 - Darian Agnew
 - Mary Margaret Licisyn
- **Durham Tech designees:**
 - Candace Rashada
 - Maggie West
 - Vega Swepson
 - Connie Gomez-Joiner

INTRODUCTION

As the Durham community takes action to address the affordable housing crisis and Durham Tech students continue to struggle to find and maintain housing, Durham Tech sees the development of stable and affordable housing for current and future students as a unique opportunity to address both the community's call-to-action and the ever-present imperative to meet students' basic needs. The need is real for Durham Tech students.

Durham Tech is committed to being a part of our community's solution to address housing insecurity and homelessness. To that end, Durham Tech plans to develop a 124-unit affordable housing community at 902 South Briggs Avenue to serve both eligible students at Durham Tech and members of the broader Durham community.

To accomplish this goal, the College is partnering with experienced affordable housing developers to deliver the project. Through a competitive RFQ process, Durham Tech selected Mosaic Development Group and Banc of America Community Development Company as development partners:

- ***Mosaic Development Group***, a statewide, private, non-profit organization established to increase the quality and availability of affordable housing in North Carolina, will be assisting in this affordable housing initiative. Mosaic has created over 4,500 affordable family and single-family homes across NC.
- ***Banc of America Community Development Company***, is subsidiary to Bank of America. Banc of America Community Development Company is dedicated to revitalization of urban communities and focuses on projects that increase affordable and mixed-income housing.

The development team convened a Steering Committee to guide this process, which is made up of students, community leaders, and development partners (See page 2 for membership). The members of this committee have been instrumental in shaping the community engagement process for 902 S. Briggs Avenue, and will continue to be key leaders as plans for this development move forward.

Additionally, Durham Tech invited the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) to facilitate an equitable community engagement process, helping to ensure meaningful community participation, leadership, and ownership in this effort. Specifically, this engagement centers the leadership of individuals directly impacted by the issues this development seeks to address and ensuring the development has equitable outcomes beyond affordable housing.

A 2019 survey of more than 700 Durham Tech students conducted by the Hope Center for College Community and Justice at Temple University found that more than 50% of students had experienced some form of housing insecurity the year prior and nearly 20% reported being homeless for at least some portion of that timeframe.

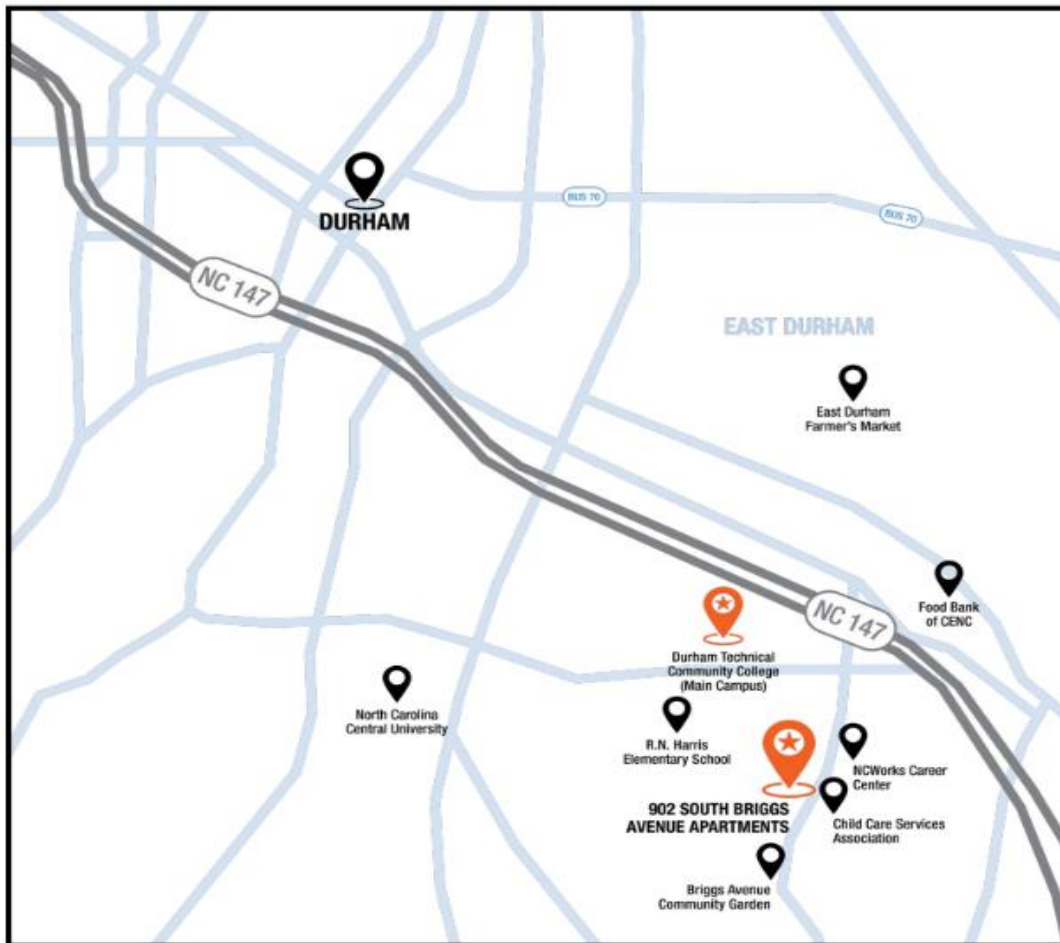
In the initial stages of this effort, the Steering Committee collectively decided on a set of beliefs to guide this development process, which included the following:

- We believe that this process can't be driven by the developer alone - the community must be actively engaged
- We believe that everyone's voice and experience is valued, offered, and accepted.
- We believe we need to have a clear understanding of what affordable housing is
- We believe that everyone deserves to live in a nice, safe place that they can afford
- We believe we need to believe that we're all connected and pulling in the same direction
- We believe in valuing the needs of community and being willing to change to be more supportive
- We believe in order to achieve this goal we need to display a belief in this unique community by taking time to listen, understand the needs, and center the voices and desires of the community in the outcomes
- We believe everyone has something they can contribute to success

With these principles outlining our commitment to equitable outcomes, the Steering Committee worked with the Partnership for Southern Equity to develop and host six community engagement sessions during 2022 to gather input on housing design, amenities, and other priorities to ensure the development meets the needs and aspirations of prospective residents and the surrounding community. This report serves to:

1. Provide a brief review of the proposed development
2. Summarize the key findings from each of these community conversations
3. Identify next steps for continued community engagement

BRIEF PROJECT REVIEW



COMMUNITY AMENITIES:

Briggs Avenue Community Garden
 Child Care Services Association
 Durham
 Durham Technical Community College (Main Campus)
 East Durham
 East Durham Farmer's Market
 Food Bank of CENC
 Ncworks Career Center
 North Carolina Central University
 R.N. Harris Elementary School

- **Site:** Durham Tech has committed to building affordable housing at 902 S. Briggs Avenue, located just .25 miles from Main Campus. The site is owned by Durham Tech, and will be ground leased for long-term affordability.
- **Units:** Surveys, analysis, and concept site plans indicate that the site could accommodate approximately 124 units, with a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom units (Majority 2- and 3-bedroom units)
- **Serving students and community:** The development is intended to serve both eligible students at Durham Tech and members of the broader Durham community. Durham Tech students will receive a preference in the Tenant Selection Plan.
- **Affordability:** All 124 units will serve households with incomes less than 60% of Area Median Income (AMI) upon move-in, with at least 20% serving households with incomes less than 30% of AMI upon move-in. Residents whose income increases during their tenancy can remain residents, if they choose, until their household income exceeds 140% of the income limitation for that unit.
- **Development team:** Durham Tech, Mosaic and Banc of America CDC will work in partnership to develop the site as high-quality affordable housing. After the property is built and fully leased, Mosaic and Durham Tech will continue to oversee the ongoing operations of the property long-term.

- **Financing:** Developers will be applying for financing through Low Income Housing Tax Credits (4% bond financing) and other affordable housing funding/ subsidy sources.
- **Timeline:** Depending on timing of gap financing opportunities, developers plan to apply for tax credits in 2023, with timeline for construction dependent upon financing.
- **Community services and amenities:** Partners sought student and community input through this process to identify community aspirations for services and amenities to be offered on-site to best support future residents.

KEY FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The Steering Committee hosted six community engagement sessions in 2022. The findings from all six sessions are included in subsequent sections. The series of meetings built upon one another, gathering community feedback along the way and sharing back with participants the impact of feedback provided in prior sessions while inviting further engagement. Facilitators invited participants to “Help us do it right – stay with us throughout all the sessions,” and many participants were able to join more than one session. The series included the following sessions:

June 2nd (2 sessions): *Setting the Table* - Project information and listening to and gathering community ideas

July 19th (2 sessions): *Designing for Outcomes* - Exploring project possibilities and how development can respond to community aspirations

August 30th (2 sessions): *Putting the Pieces Together* – Reporting back on design possibilities for further feedback, prioritizing supportive services, and planning for workforce development

SECTION 1: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY ASSETS

(i.e. faith-based institutions, quality, affordable housing, quality public spaces, daily-needs commercial businesses, jobs, community services, organizations, transit access, etc.)

KEY RESPONSES

“The Durham Food Pantry is amazing—they can help you with food and diapers and other stuff like that.”

“The new library is a fantastic space [that has] a lot of resources that are important to the community.”

“The proximity of the lot for the new housing is super convenient for Durham Tech students and residents.”

“On the asset side, a lot of kind of local unique restaurants that folks really love and are important to them as some other cultural and arts activities that [the community] enjoys like the Heritage Center and dance classes.”

“We spent some time talking about resources that Durham Tech actually provides, their career counseling services. You know they have a lot of strong links to a lot of job sectors: IT, nursing, culinary arts. They help host a lot of hiring events so there are absolutely some resources for the students.”

“Lots of cultural opportunities and activities for folks that are low-cost or free...also there’s free or low-cost pre-K for all four-year-olds, which is a wonderful asset.”

“The food pantry which everyone here has talked about is something that everyone appreciates [and] job training programs, the community garden.”

“Different places for folks to worship, not just from one specific faith and a lot of those faith-based organizations do offer resources to families that they can access things that they need like food.”

“There’s the East Durham Farmer’s Market, Hillside Park. There’s a really good senior center. There’s lots of great resources at Durham Tech as I mentioned you can access, including nearby there’s the Child Care Services Association.”

COMMON THEMES

- Public health centers
- Childcare service providers
- Career and jobs centers
- Local social support services
- Community food resources
- Local programs for daily needs fulfillment
- Cultural hubs of the area like local restaurants and museums
- Access to Durham Tech campus and its resources

KEY LEARNINGS

1. Childcare service providers were identified by community members as key community assets. The Child Care Services Association, Durham’s Partnership for Children, and Kate’s Korner at Durham Tech were distinguished as helpful resources for student-parents managing academic, professional, and familial responsibilities. This population makes up a significant proportion of the community demographics and will be a primary constituency of the new affordable housing project.
2. Many local restaurants were noted as important cultural assets for the community as well as local arts centers and museums including the Museum of Life and Science and the Hayti Heritage Center. These

spaces help define the unique cultural character of the Durham Tech community and contribute to the sense of belonging and identity that residents and community members find in the area.

3. The availability of jobs and economic opportunities was identified as a community asset. The access to NCWorks, Durham Tech, and NC Central were noted as key institutions for the community in connecting educational opportunities with jobs and careers.
4. Community members spoke to how access to Durham Tech and the community library are assets to the community by connecting educational and career opportunities to students and children in the community.
5. Community members emphasized the importance of the community garden, Farmer's Market, and local food pantry as oases in the food desert that characterizes the area.

SECTION 2: IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

(i.e. lack of services or quality housing, poor environmental conditions, poor transit access, lack of daily needs commercial businesses, lack of amenities, etc.)

KEY RESPONSES

"Some people were saying that Durham is considered unsafe and there's a negative stigma associated with Durham."

"There's a food desert in this area specifically, not many grocery stores, not a lot of growing space for people to have gardens and things of that nature."

"There is a lack of sidewalks and pedestrian access which that's all over the place except for downtown."

"We talked about the transit issues, the poor scheduling, the fact that bus scheduling has gone down to by the hour and it's hard to get to the north campus site."

"Just in general, limited retail options so I think someone mentioned a Family Dollar store that's nearby but [it is] often out of stock on items."

"Others have experienced kind of unstable housing situations because of the cost of living in the area, so really difficult to find housing that's just affordable and sustainable."

"One of the things that I'm struggling with especially right now is that there's nowhere affordable to live in Durham because the rent has gone up and we're getting outpriced from everything, not just rent but other expenses too."

COMMON THEMES

The key challenges identified for the Durham Tech community include the following:

- Lack of food and retail access
- Rising cost of living
- Absence of quality, affordable housing
- Poor credit score support
- Limited walkability of the community
- Inadequate access to jobs and economic opportunities
- Negative perceptions of community reputation and safety
- Clean energy concerns
- Lack of general wealth-building support
- Lack of green and open recreation space
- Inadequate public transit system

KEY LEARNINGS

1. The lack of affordable quality housing and the rising cost of living in the area were also identified as key challenges in the area. Despite the accessibility of jobs, the average income in the area fails to meet the combined cost of utilities, food, transportation, childcare, etc.
2. Durham Tech residents and community members identified the area as a food desert and emphasized the lack of food access as a major challenge facing the community. Specifically, the lack of grocery stores, food shops, gas stations and other retail options were identified as key absences in the community.
3. The inadequacy of the public transit system was noted as a principal challenge, citing the insufficiency and inconvenience of bus scheduling and the poor maintenance of the transit system as key issues. In addition, residents noted the limited accessibility of the local infrastructure for pedestrian commuting. The lack of sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure was identified as an issue particularly in terms of accessibility for the disabled and other vulnerable populations, like the elderly.
4. Community members identified the lack of public green spaces and open recreation/exercise spaces as another challenge. The lack of tree canopy cover was noted as an additional challenge related to the lack of green space. These issues adversely impact the landscape of public health in the community currently and improvements in these areas would benefit public health.
5. In addition to limited retail options, the lack of amenities like open green and recreation space was identified as a pertinent challenge within the community. These deficiencies were connected by community members to the mental and physical health outcomes that define the area. Creating opportunities in these areas would create significant improvements for public health.

SECTION 3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND THE COMMUNITY

What issue(s) would affordable housing address in this community? How would affordable housing affect your experience as a member of this community?

KEY RESPONSES

“This would help obviously with the financial challenges that community members experience, particularly related to the cost of living in general.”

“Some stability, peace of mind for families who might be experiencing some kind of housing instability in some areas. Couch-surfing, homelessness, those who are living in unsafe housing conditions would potentially have a safe and affordable place to live.”

“It would help revitalize the area by bringing in more community offerings and resources and it’s the first step in the restoration of a decades long under-resourcing of this community in Durham dating back to the Black Wall Street and 147 construction.”

“People’s outlook can change when they feel like they have a voice in new project like this. Also, this can help break negative opinions about affordable housing and make them more receptive to good quality projects like this.”

“Based on just rent prices and things like that I don’t even feel like I belong in Durham with how high rent is so I know someone who may make more or less than me would have that sense of belonging as well and that’s a big piece, makes you feel seen and heard in your own community.”

“People could be closer to their job, which is true. The area, the highway and everything is really growing, and some people work at Amazon and some people work in the little factories right up in there.”

“Kids can grow up near friends and not just seeing them once every now and then to be able to be part of a community that they may come back to.”

“It’s important to have a stable address. Someone brought about up people getting checks mailed to their house and that’s true because I’ve had that happen to me...you don’t forward your address to somewhere because you move so much so it’s best to just don’t worry about it or don’t even think about it, because some people don’t have a stable address.”

COMMON THEMES

Some of the key issues and experiences that affordable housing might affect were mental and physical health outcomes, housing stability, community support and cohesion, discretionary income, available resources for non-housing related responsibilities, and generational wealth-building.

KEY LEARNINGS

1. Quality, affordable, secure housing was recurrently identified as a solution to the widely experienced mental health stressors and negative health outcomes in the community. The implementation of an accessible, affordable housing project would improve mental and physical health outcomes for children and adults in the community that are associated with constant exposure to health aggressors like stress.
2. Affordable housing would decrease the incidence of relocation and homelessness allowing community members to stay in the areas they live, work, and play. The community would become healthier and more stable from the increased permanence of residence thereby creating a more cohesive, supportive community.
3. Affordable housing would increase the amount of discretionary income available for low-income families and individuals to spend on other life necessities like medical care and education.
4. Affordable housing would be a step towards building family and generational wealth within the community.
5. Development transparency and community engagement can change people’s outlooks towards affordable housing by breaking down negative opinions and stereotypes about affordable housing making communities more receptive to quality projects such as this one at Durham Tech.

SECTION 4: PROJECT DESIGN

In a series of discussions and voting exercises, community members shared their site layout and building design preferences. Outlined below are the site layout and building design options and preferences.

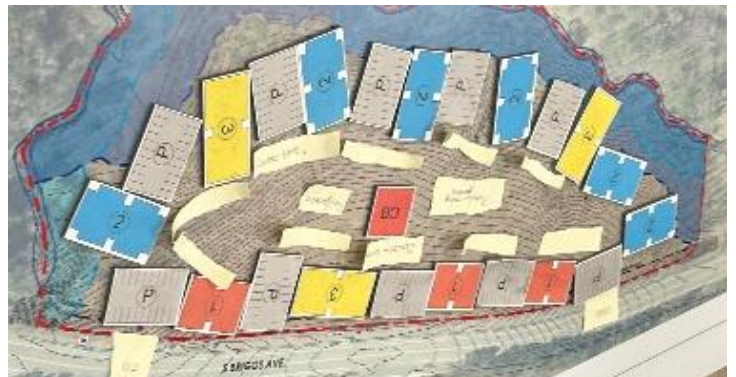
Part 1. Site Design & Layout

Led by design professionals, community members discussed where they would like to see the unit buildings in proximity to the parking lots and amenities like picnic shelters, playgrounds, and bike racks. Below are examples of the site layouts that community members generated. Each tile represents a 1-unit building, 2-unit building, a 3-unit building, or a parking lot.

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



Based on the site layout preferences community members identified, design professionals generated 2 site layout options. In the 3rd set of community meetings, community members were asked the following:

What do you like about site design option #1 and what would you like to change about site design option #1? What do you like about site design option #2 and what would you like to change about site design option #2?

Site Design #1



Site Design #2



COMMON THEMES

- Play areas for children should be easily visible and away from the street and parking areas
- The community center should be at the center of the property
- Greenspace and trees are important to community members
- Parking should be easily accessible to all residents
- The location of the dumpsters and the dumpster type is important to community members

KEY LEARNINGS

Site design option #1 is the most desirable design due to the sense of community that can be built with the community center, greenspaces, and play area being located together in the center of the site. However, some changes should be considered to provide easy access to mailboxes for all residents and a dumpster location that is further away from the entrance.

Part 2. Building Design

Led by design professionals, community members discussed their unit and building design preferences, including building styles, finishes, and the types of amenities that are most important to them. Outlined below are the preferences that community members identified.

BUILDING FINISH PREFERENCES	# OF VOTES
Individual Unit Porches	46
Craftsman	31
Siding & Stone	29
Groups of 3 together	22
BUILDING STYLE PREFERENCES	# OF VOTES
Contemporary Craftsman	28
Transitional	28
AMENITIES	# OF VOTES
Workout Equipment	36
Computer Lounge	37
Security	35
Outdoor Seating	34



Based on the design preferences community members identified, the development team generated 3 elevation options. In the 3rd set of community meetings, community members were asked the following:

Which building design option do you like best?

Elevation Option #1



Elevation Option #2



Elevation Option #3



KEY RESPONSES

“Honestly, I really just prefer whichever one is cheapest to build to leave more money for amenities.”

“Option 1 looks more timeless and homey. I feel like the other designs are modern but will look dated within 10 years.”

“Could perhaps the community building or playground incorporate Durham Tech color accents?”

KEY LEARNINGS

1. Each elevation option has elements that community members like, but overall elevation options 1 and 3 are the preferred designs.
2. The amenities that are most important to community members are computer lounges, workout equipment, security, and outdoor seating. Other amenities that community members desire include a dog park, walking trails, a community center, and bike racks.
3. Playgrounds, community rooms, and outdoor spaces where residents can gather to build relationships, engage in recreational activities, and access resources are important to community members.
4. Community members shared that individual porches, storage space, and natural light are among the most important features inside of the unit.

SECTION 5: PROJECT PROGRAMMING & OUTCOMES

Part 1. Desired Project Outcomes

What programs and services can Durham Tech, partners, and future residents offer to enhance resident quality-of-life, increase economic opportunities, and meet community needs?

COMMON THEMES

- Employment support
- Partnership with NC Works
- Financial Counseling/Credit Building/Budgeting
- Nearby grocery store

- Community garden
- Computer lab/business center
- Nutritional services
- Mental Health counseling
- Transportation to campus
- Affordable all-day daycare services nearby
- Activities for kids

Of the resources and services listed, tell us which ones you need, which ones would be nice to have, and which ones don't interest you.

SERVICES	NEED TO HAVE	NICE TO HAVE	NOT INTERESTED
Affordable Child Care Nearby	74%	23%	3%
Discounted Wi-Fi	84%	16%	0
Free/Low-Cost Access to Healthy Food (on and off-site)	71%	29%	0
On-site Services for Durham Tech Students	58%	42%	0
Financial Counseling/Coaching	57%	43%	0
On-site Tutoring for Kids (Kindergarten through 12th grade)	45%	55%	0
Computer Skills Training	45%	48%	6%
On-Site Health Care Services (Including Mental Health Services)	45%	45%	10%
Job Search/Career Counseling Services	42%	58%	0
Walking Trail to Cooper Street/Durham Tech Campus	42%	55%	3%
Solar Panel Installation	35%	61%	3%
Community Garden*	19%	77%	3%

*Proximity to Briggs Avenue Community Garden cited as beneficial to future residents, also pointing to less need to have additional community garden space specifically on development site.

Are there any resources and programs that have not been discussed that are important to you?

COMMON THEMES

- Walking trails to campus and to Briggs Avenue Community Garden
- Resources to help residents transition to homeownership
- Consider the needs of residents with disabilities or special needs
- Good management of residence to ensure property continues to be a great place to live
- Camera system in place, great lighting, and good relationship with local police
- Welcome Baby (extension program) can help with diapers, parenting classes, and car seats as well as connections with other community resources for parents

"Durham Tech Extension can provide nutrition and cooking classes at the community center, especially if there is a kitchen onsite."

KEY LEARNINGS

1. Affordable nearby childcare, discounted Wi-Fi, and access to free and low-cost healthy food are the most critical services residents need to maintain and enhance their quality-of-life.
2. Community members recognize Durham Tech as a key resource in providing access to resources, services, and opportunities on the campus and through their local community and business partners.

3. It is important to offer resources and services that can help residents prepare for homeownership to build generational wealth, and support residents in transitioning out of this development into sustainable housing opportunities that open these limited units to new future residents.

Part 2. Workforce Development

Community members discussed a desire to access jobs related to this development. The following details were provided in the final community meeting on August 30th:

- 902 Briggs Ave will optimize the use of local, underutilized business opportunities (UBE) owned by minorities and women.
- The team will collaborate with The City of Durham, Office of Economic and Workforce Development, NCWorks Career Centers, and Right Build International (RBI) to increase opportunities for UBE.
- Activities will be guided by our Equal Business Opportunity Plan, and we will track and report our results to be transparent with the community.
- Our objective is to exceed the minimum goal of 11% Minority owned business participation and 7% women owned business participation.
- Job fairs will be announced at future dates for individuals interested in learning about hiring opportunities.
- Team will explore potential opportunities with outside partners like NC Works and YouthBuild for additional training and hiring collaborations.
- Additional information regarding hiring and training opportunities will be posted on the project's page on the Durham Tech website as well as advertised in the community

Part 3. Accountability

What would accountability in this development process look like to you?

KEY RESPONSES

"Direct conversations when expectations are not met, resetting standards w/ clear expectations + outcomes; celebration of success and consequences for broken commitments."

"Set expectations for realistic timelines."

"Do what you say you are going to do and when you don't, hold yourself accountable."

"I would like to see goals stated and email list to update folks on how they are coming and have transparency on what questions they are getting and how they are responding."

"Outreach and community engagement to ensure most who want to participate can participate."

"Being open about what is to come, what the plans are, what the timeline might be and if what has been said is "really" happening."

“Develop a method of anonymous reporting on the status of the development and the community environment even after construction.”

“Make sure to follow building-care laws and regulations.”

“Please let conversation be two way!”

“Be consistent and reliable.”

“Comply with public funding criteria.”

“I would love email and newsletters for communication and openness.”

COMMON THEMES

Transparency at every step of the project is important to maintain the current level of inclusivity the community members feel. There is a desire by community members to continue to be engaged in the project, receive consistent and honest communications about decisions and progress.

NEXT STEPS

This initiative is anticipated to be a multi-year effort and we encourage you to stay engaged. Click [HERE](#) or use the QR Code below to subscribe to receive updates about Durham Tech's affordable housing initiative.

