



CITY OF DURHAM

Office of the Mayor

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## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual State of the City Address

Monday, February 3, 2014

Good evening! It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to my 12<sup>th</sup> Annual State of the City Address.

To my fellow council members, fellow elected officials, City staff, business and community leaders, and others who are present tonight – welcome and thank you for being here. Each year, I am honored by your presence and continued support.

Also, I'd like to welcome my fellow residents who are viewing us on DTV8 as well as those who are watching tonight's live stream from the City of Durham's website.

At this time each year, my job as mayor is to provide an honest assessment of the past year and look ahead to the coming year.

As we exit a long period of economic uncertainty and challenges, our great city accomplished a lot on many different fronts; from downtown and neighborhood development to maintaining our strong financial standing, there's no doubt that a lot remains to be done.

Continuing to fight crime and its underlying social causes remain high on the City's agenda. Hand-in-hand with that goal is something that Durham, as perhaps one of the most diverse cities in this state, has to intentionally strengthen — which is **relationship building** — thereby strengthening trust between government and different communities within our city.

But before I go on, I'd like to get us started by continuing our tradition of looking back at the year before – by looking at our accomplishments, our accolades, at how we all worked together to achieve our mission to make Durham a great place to live, work and play.

In fact, some may have thought that with shrinking resources and efforts to do more with less, our goal might have seemed a **mission impossible**.

As you view this short video, you'll see that our 2013 charge to take our great city to the next level proved to be a **"Mission Possible."**

### ***"Durham – Mission Possible – 2013 YEAR IN REVIEW"***

I'd like to take just a quick moment to thank the Office of Public Affairs for giving us look back at many of the highlights of last year.

So much of what we accomplished was the result of a successful partnership and relationship between City Council, City staff, led by City Manager Tom Bonfield, and our remarkable community.

Two years ago the City Council, working with City staff, established five strategic goals to guide us as we serve the residents of Durham. They are:

- Strong & Diverse Economy
- **Safe & Secure Community**
- **Thriving, Livable Neighborhoods**
- Well-Managed City
- Stewardship of City's Physical Assets

While all of the goals are important to ensure that Durham is a city that we all are proud of, one of the issues that has a very high priority for me is embodied in the strategic goal **“Safe & Secure Community.”**

This involves working to continue the reduction of crime, particularly violent crime (e.g. aggravated assault, rape, robbery, and homicides).

We, as a community, and law enforcement have made progress in reducing crime in our city, and while violent crime is down by 5.6 percent compared to 2012 – property crime, which includes, burglary, larceny, and theft, is up nearly 6 percent.

Both categories combine to drive our overall crime up by 4.3 percent since 2012.

I continue to call on the community to work together with the police department to not only reduce crimes in the coming year, but to also solve them.

I am of the opinion that, for us to be a truly great city we have to do more to reduce crime and enhance our feelings of safety in our communities.

Another issue that is a very high priority for me is reflected in the strategic goal **“Thriving and Livable Neighborhoods.”**

Increasing the amount of affordable housing and continued neighborhood revitalization efforts, particularly in those neighborhoods that have been depressed for long periods of time, is a very important issue for Durham.

I continue to believe that **“Strong Neighborhoods Make a Strong City”** and contribute greatly to the quality of life in Durham.

In a way, those two Strategic Goals – a **Safe and Secure Community** and **Thriving, Livable Neighborhoods** are interconnected. The one issue that connects the two strategic goals, but also differentiates them is: **the level of poverty or the absence of poverty** within a neighborhood.

The presence of poverty is not a justification for crime, but its presence and the accompanying deficits – in education, job training, jobs, poor healthcare, and lack of access to services – are all contributing factors to the level of crime.

Poverty and its contributing attributes, also help determine whether or not we have a **“Safe and Secure Community”** and **“Thriving, Livable Neighborhoods.”**

Our city is great, and as you have seen from our earlier video, **“Great things are indeed happening in Durham.”**

The **“State of our City”** is good, but **it can be better.** By working together, focusing and addressing some of our key challenges, we can make it a much better city for those who live here, for those who visit, and for those newcomers who may choose to make Durham their home.

A key challenge that we must undertake to make our city even greater is to work to **reduce poverty in Durham.**

Today, I am proposing that we – as a City Council, City Administration, and residents of Durham – accept that challenge, and make it a key priority to **“Reduce Poverty in our City, Neighborhood-by-Neighborhood, Year-by-Year starting in 2014.”**

You might ask, “Why focus on poverty now?”

You may be aware that 50 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson declared a war on poverty, and in North Carolina, Governor Terry Sanford created the North Carolina Fund to create economic opportunity for people living in poverty.

Although some progress has been made, by many accounts, nationally and locally, it's a war on which we've lost focus, with more people living in poverty than just 10 years ago.

Secondly, here in Durham, we have focused a lot of effort on our downtown revitalization over the past 12 years with many great results.

Public-private partnerships have resulted in increased overall investment in downtown, with construction and revitalization well underway. The success of DPAC is an example that can't go unmentioned.

And, two years ago, we dedicated a penny for affordable housing, enabling the transformation of the once depressed Southside and Rolling Hills area into housing for people of various income levels and serving as a source of revenue for further efforts to provide affordable housing.

We are making progress on areas in which we have intentionally focused our combined efforts. We, as a city, have made significant progress, creating a **"can do"** attitude on the whole for our city.

Now is the time to take those same steps that we have used to move our great city forward to address those among us who have the least.

Let me share some national facts with you – some of which may even surprise you.

According to the "Center for Law and Social Policy" (CLASP) and the new Census data, almost one in five U.S. children are poor, which is almost 22 percent.

In 2012, over 16 million children in the U.S. were living in poverty.

According to the official measure, poverty is defined as living in families with income under \$19,090 for a family of three.

- Children are more likely than adults to be poor.
- Children under age three have the highest poverty rates with potentially lasting consequences for education, health, and other key outcomes.
- Racial and ethnic minority children are disproportionately poor.
- Child poverty is linked to negative child and adult outcomes.
- Many children in poverty have working parents.

Those were national statistics and facts, but did you know that poverty affects approximately 20 percent of people who live in Durham?

That's nearly one in every five people, who are either homeless, cannot afford adequate housing, or are paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing, making them choose between food for their children, transportation to get to their job, and paying for other basic necessities, like medicine.

These are choices no one should have to make in our society, especially in Durham.

Let's take a closer look: According to a 2013 study by the UNC Poverty Center, many of our poor neighbors live in areas that are just blocks from the most prosperous areas of our city.

In certain parts of east Durham, which has been an area of focus for both the City and the County, the poverty rate is even higher...just travel down Dillard and Pettigrew streets, identified by the Census as Tract 11. The poverty rate is 37.5 percent.

Travel east to Census Tract 10.01 – to the neighborhoods around Holton Career and Resource Center near East Durham Park – the overall poverty rate is 44.1 percent, with an overwhelming 63 percent of children living in poverty.

And it gets even worse, as you travel south to Census Tract 14.00 the areas around Grant Park and Durham Technical Community College, where over half of the residents live in poverty, including nearly 8-in-10 children.

Now don't get me wrong. **I'm not saying** that poverty is exclusive to Durham. Look at the ranking of leading cities in North Carolina, according to *USA.Com Durham, NC historical Poverty Level Data* and *ACS 2010 Data*:

- Durham population in Poverty: 46,167 (21.03%)
- 17.49% of NC in poverty
- 15.33% of U.S. in poverty
  
- Durham Families in Poverty: 7,831 (14.67%)
- 13.30% NC families in poverty
- 11.26% U.S. families in poverty

Durham's poverty rate ranked at 21.03%, which is 6th in State population in poverty (total population: 229,029)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Greenville (27.8%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Wilmington (26.9%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Gastonia (26.3%)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Asheville (21.4%)
- 5<sup>th</sup> High Point (21.3%)
- 6<sup>th</sup> Durham ranked (21.03%)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Greensboro (20.1%)
- 8<sup>th</sup> Winston-Salem (19.8%)
- 9<sup>th</sup> Raleigh (18.4%)
- 10<sup>th</sup> Fayetteville (17.7%)
- 11<sup>th</sup> Charlotte (17.2%)

What **I am saying** is that it is time that we as a community come together to do something about this affliction that directly or indirectly affects us all...as I described at the beginning of my presentation, whether it is manifested through crime, health disparities, high school dropouts, and unemployment.

It's time to stop hoping that the solution to solving or reducing poverty will occur by some wealth, which will "trickle down," or that "rising tides will raise all boats."

In fact, the UNC Poverty Center showed that just the opposite is happening. People living in many of the neighborhoods pointed out tonight, are experiencing higher poverty rates, especially children, than they were just 10 years ago.

We as a city and county are rich in many resources. We live in a great place in this state and this country; we have great universities, home to the RTP, many talented persons, a city classified as a creative city, with many entrepreneurs, innovators, and more.

We must find a way to harness those many resources to focus or target the reduction in poverty in our community.

Fortunately, some leaders in our faith community took the lead last year, to take some specific action steps to reduce poverty in our community.

One major priority that they have taken is to develop **intentional relationships across the lines of privilege and poverty at all income levels.**

A plan for “**Reducing Poverty Neighborhood-by-Neighborhood and Year-by-Year**” must incorporate specific actions. I’d like to ask the Reverend Mel Williams and Camryn Smith to stand.

Some of you may remember Mel as the former pastor of Watts Street Baptist Church, but he is also the coordinator of “**End Poverty Durham.**”

This organization is helping to lead the way by putting a laser-like focus on how we as a community can work together to reduce poverty.

Key among their approaches is to develop **intentional relationships across lines of privilege and poverty.** Working with him to do that is Camryn Smith who coordinates a project called **Relationships Equipping Allies and Leaders,** or REAL Durham.

Here’s how it works. Starting in March, REAL Durham will match individuals or families in poverty with four volunteers who offer not only friendship and understanding, but other important resources, such as access to financial planning, job training and interview skills, finding safe and affordable housing and healthcare options...the essentials needed to step out of poverty.

This program is modeled on the National Circles Campaign, which has seen measurable success in the lives of the people they’ve touched since 2008.

I and many others believe this program has real promise.

Another organization that is focusing on steering our young people in the right direction for gainful employment is a program by Manpower Development Corporation (MDC) called, “**Made in Durham.**”

This program is chaired by Dr. Victor Dzau, chancellor for Health Affairs at Duke University and president and CEO of the Duke University Health System, and consists of Durham’s top public, business, and community leaders, such as NCCU Chancellor Debra Saunders-White and our own City Manager Tom Bonfield.

Before I speak more about **Made In Durham,** let me share a few national facts provided by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP):

- The high unemployment situation of black males has been persistent and historically intractable. It has endured for decades. Work opportunities for black male teens have all but disappeared.
- The “great recession” dealt a knock-out blow to young black men.
- Black males, as well as Hispanic males, are over-represented in low-wage jobs and under-represented in professional and management jobs.
- Despite substantive education gains since 1970 in high school completion and college enrollment for young black males, they still lag substantially behind their white male counterparts in educational attainment.

The criminal justice system is delivering a crippling blow to the employment prospects for young black men. Consider this:

- Black men 18 and 19 years of age were imprisoned at more than nine times the rate of white men.
- Black men 20 to 24 years of age were imprisoned at more than seven times the rate of white men.
- When surveyed, 60 percent of employers indicated they would not hire an ex-offender.
- Studies show that increased availability and accessibility of criminal background data is associated with worse labor market outcomes for ex-offenders.

Now while all of the facts given by CLASP may not be the same for Durham, I suspect that to a certain extent it mirrors Durham.

While the CLASP study focused on the plight of Black and Hispanic males, “**Made In Durham**” is a program that is gender and ethnic neutral.

But because Durham mirrors many of the statistics cited by CLASP, that is why it is important that the program **“Made In Durham”** be a success. It is known that only about half of Durham’s youth will complete high school, go to college, and get a job by the time they are 25 years old.

Moreover, many will struggle in the process, and some will not make it at all. There are now between 4,500 and 6,000 disconnected youth — enough to fill four Durham high schools — who are either at significant risk of dropping out of high school, or who are not pursuing any education, training, or employment.

All of them have talent and the aspiration for a better life. Together, they represent a source of workforce skills, civic participation, and taxpayer revenue that Durham can ill afford to waste.

**Made in Durham** seeks to mobilize Durham's top public, business, and community leaders to help lead an education-to-career system through the creation of a formal partnership.

The **Made In Durham** program is important. If our young people are not able to acquire the necessary training for the jobs in our community, they may very well become a part of the jobless or unemployed, which may result in a life of poverty, acquiring all of the other attributes that come with living in poverty.

Located in one of the distressed Census Tracts mentioned earlier, the East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI) is an example a public-private partnership working to prepare children to succeed in school and in life.

Under the leadership of David Reese and Barker French, this organization identifies barriers, from birth through high school, which can prevent people in poverty from succeeding.

I’d like to recognize David Reese, President and CEO of EDCI, and Barker French, who serves as Chairman of the Board.

With them tonight are Miss Bass and her grandson. She is raising her grandson, who attends Y.E. Smith Elementary School, and although they are a family of low wealth, she is taking the necessary steps to help her grandson see that there is another path – out of poverty – for him. Miss Bass is engaged in his school, in the community, and with EDCI. I’d like to thank them – as well as other members of the EDCI Board (Ted Fiske and Bill Shore) for being with us tonight.

As Mayor, I want to use the “Office of the Mayor” to raise the visibility of **poverty in Durham**.

For some people, poverty is hidden in plain sight; others see poverty and do not acknowledge that it exists or that it affects them; some feel poverty and live in poverty every day, and some are just not aware of the extent of poverty in Durham.

If, in fact, we are going to work to reduce poverty it is important that we develop specific benchmarks for the reduction of poverty within targeted neighborhoods.

The State, through its Healthy North Carolina 2020 project, has set a goal of reducing the poverty rate in the state to 12.5 percent by 2020.

And the County’s Public Health Department and Partnership for a Healthy Durham are working together to help reach that goal in Durham. **Durham County Public Health Director Gayle Harris is with us here tonight.** I’d like to thank her for all that she does to improve the lives of Durham residents.

Just as the City and County have been working together on specific areas of their respective strategic plan goals, I want to encourage the City, County and partner organizations to work together to achieve **this goal of reducing poverty.**

As a city, we must work in partnership with existing efforts by the non-profits, private sector and County government. Those sectors worked together when we were revitalizing downtown, and we should be able to work together to reduce poverty in our community.

We must utilize and better prioritize existing financial resources – this is not a call at this time for more financial resources, but a call for better collaboration and coordination of existing resources.

Strengthening partnership efforts building on what has already been started by our faith community.

In closing, I am reminded of the recent Sunday sermon on January 19, 2014 delivered by Johnathan Wilson-Hartgrove during Watts Street Baptist Church's Martin Luther King, Jr. service.

Jonathan spoke about the actions of Rev. King in his civil rights efforts and his call for collective action during the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

The Mayor, the City Council, the City Administration have no monopoly on solutions to reduce poverty in Durham. It will take **collective action** by all in Durham, who have a concern about the level of poverty in Durham.

Tonight, I am calling on all of us to begin to take that collective action toward **“Reducing Poverty in Durham Neighborhood-by-Neighborhood, Year-by-Year.”**

This road to reducing poverty will not be an easy road. It will be a road of endurance and time. The achievements will not be readily seen or felt by many. It will not be analogous to the revitalization of a neighborhood or revitalization of downtown Durham where we can see the physical transformations take place with the ongoing construction that eventually gets completed and results in a finished product.

Our focus is people who live in poverty and for many, through no fault of their own, who have been in poverty for many years.

The road out of poverty for many does not happen overnight, and many roadblocks have to be overcome. It is not a road to be travelled alone. People in poverty will have to be willing to travel that road in partnership, acting collectively with those who are willing to assist in that journey.

But, I remain convinced that if we as a community have the will and determination, **and**, if it can be done anywhere, **reducing poverty** can be accomplished in Durham, where great things **can and do** happen.

In the coming months I will be calling together community leaders, people in poverty, and organizations to help develop an overall plan and roadmap with benchmarks to meet the challenge.

Thanks for your time and patience.

**DURHAM**, let us **move forward together** to achieve the goal of **“Reducing Poverty in Durham, Neighborhood-by-Neighborhood, Year-by-Year starting in 2014.”**

**Thank you and God Bless Durham and God Bless America.**