

February 2025

THE DURHAM CHOICE NEWSLETTER



DHA turns 75!

The Durham Housing Authority (DHA) celebrated its 75th birthday in October 2024. Over 120 elected officials, city and county leaders and community partners joined DHA staff and residents for a celebratory breakfast held at the PNC Pinnacle Club in the Durham Bull Athletic Park. Participants had an opportunity to view a brief [history](#) of the agency and to hear from DHA residents, staff, board members and partners. Founded in 1949, DHA has grown to offer over 1,200 public and affordable rental homes and 3,000 rental assistance vouchers for low-income Durham residents.

Business Recruitment and Retention Fund Launching in 2025

Durham Choice is partnering with The National Institute for Minority Economic Development to launch a Business Recruitment and Retention Fund in the spring of 2025. This program will support local businesses with financial help and resources to grow and thrive. Products to be offered include:

- **Grants:** Up to \$25,000 for facade improvements and tenant upfits.
- **Loans:** Up to \$500,000 for property purchases, tenant upfits and business operations.

Businesses must be located in the Durham Choice target area in order to be eligible. The application will open in March 2025. Visit durhamchoice.org for updates. Together, we're building a stronger future for local businesses and Durham's community!

75th Anniversary Sponsors

We would like to our 75th Anniversary Celebration sponsors:



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Blackspace
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Downtown Durham Inc.
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First Housing Phase Nears Completion

Durham Choice is excited to announce that the first phase of housing redevelopment on the Durham Choice site will be completed in March 2025. Vanguard Apartments (formerly known as Elizabeth Street) is a mixed-income development offering 72 one, two and three-bedroom apartments in two separate buildings. Leasing will begin in February, with the first tenants expected to move in by the end of April 2025. For more information, visit vanguardapts.com.



Vanguard Apartments, January 2025.

Work continues on Phase 2 of the development, currently known as Commerce Street Apartments. The initial phase of sitework is complete and vertical construction is beginning. When completed in mid-2026, Phase 2 will offer 172 affordable and market-rate apartments in two buildings, an age-restricted senior building and an 'all ages' family building. One, two, three and four-bedroom apartments will be available.

Phase 3 is also underway! This third phase, called Dillard Street, consists of three subphases. Work on the first subphase began in November 2024 and will be completed in mid-2026. The remaining two subphases are expected to begin construction in the second half of 2025. Dillard will offer 146 affordable and market-rate apartments ranging in size from one to three bedrooms.

Hayti Heritage Center A Durham Treasure in Progress

The Hayti Heritage Center is a cornerstone of Durham's cultural and historical identity. Located in the historic St. Joseph's AME Church, built in 1891, the Center is a living reminder of the Hayti neighborhood's legacy as a thriving hub of Black business and culture once known as "Black Wall Street." Today, it remains a vibrant gathering place for the community, offering programs such as art exhibitions, performances and educational workshops.

As part of Durham Choice's commitment to strengthening the neighborhood and supporting community institutions, the Hayti Heritage Center is receiving \$600,000 for essential repairs and updates. The City of Durham is providing an additional \$250,000 for improvements. Planned upgrades include restoring exterior woodwork, brick, and doors; modernizing the foyer to meet accessibility standards; and repairing roof tiles, skylights, gutters, and entry stairs. These improvements will preserve the Center's historic charm and ensure it remains a safe, welcoming space for generations to come.

Experience the vibrant culture of the Hayti Heritage Center by attending upcoming events —visit hayti.org for the latest details. Don't miss the community tours this fall, where you can learn more about the rich history of the Hayti neighborhood.



Hayti Heritage Center

Prepare to ASCEND!

Beginning in February 2025, Durham Choice residents will have the opportunity to participate in a new program called ASCEND. ASCEND is a comprehensive, resident-focused training designed to empower residents and their families to navigate housing challenges, build financial independence, and create sustainable, thriving lives.

Through interactive workshops, role-playing and networking events, participants will learn important skills. Topics include tenants rights and responsibilities, financial management, connecting with community support, personal goal-setting and preparing for emergencies. The first ASCEND training will begin on February 27 and run for six weeks. To learn more about the program, contact Suzette Spence, Senior Program Manager, at (984) 489-2451. or visit www.durhamchoice.org.

Resident Profile: Alan Hamilton

Alan Hamilton, a participant in Durham Choice Neighborhood, is a shining example of resilience, determination and the power of community support. A native Durhamite and former resident of 519 E. Main Street, Mr. Hamilton worked as a cashier at a local business until recently. Unfortunately, he experienced a series of health challenges that kept him out of work and ultimately cost him his job and his health insurance.



Mr. Allan Hamilton at work

It was at this point that the Durham Choice people team stepped in to help. The team's community health worker helped Mr. Hamilton enroll in Medicaid so that he could continue to receive medical care. Once he recovered and was able to return to work, his Durham Choice family support specialist worked with him to prepare his resume and sharpen his interview skills. His specialist encourage him to apply for a maintenance position at DHA, which paid more than his prior position. Thanks to his hard work and preparation, Mr. Hamilton aced the interview and secured the position!

The Durham Choice team celebrates Mr. Hamilton's accomplishments and wishes him continued success on his career journey. His story is a powerful reminder that with the right support, hard work and opportunities, new beginnings are always possible.

To reach the Durham Choice People Team, contact Suzette Spence, Senior Program Manager, at (984) 489-2451.

Important Resident Meeting on February 18, 2025

On February 18th, Durham Choice will host an important meeting for residents focused on housing. Topics to be addressed include keeping your housing, keeping your voucher, moving options and important Durham Choice updates. Residents can choose between two sessions, one the morning and one in the afternoon. The material covered at each session will be the same.

February 18th Sessions

Session A - 11:00 am

Session B - 5:30 pm

If you need childcare or transportation, please contact your case manager.

Meeting Location

Durham Housing Authority Main Office

423 Morris Street

Durham, NC 27701

Want to Learn More about Choice Neighborhoods?

On March 13, Durham Choice residents will have the opportunity to learn more about the Choice Neighborhoods program. Durham is organizing a day trip for interested residents to Winston-Salem, to tour the redevelopment of a property owned by the Winston-Salem Housing Authority. The Winston-Salem Choice Neighborhoods program launched two years before Durham Choice, and their first phase of new housing has been completed and occupied. For more information about the tour, contact Suzette Spence, Senior Program Manager, at (984) 489-2451.



What is Durham Choice?

Durham Choice is a partnership of the Durham Housing Authority (DHA) and the City of Durham, supported by \$40 million Choice Neighborhoods Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The program is focused on the redevelopment of two aging public housing developments in downtown Durham, 519 E. Main and Liberty Street Apartments, into a single, vibrant, mixed-income community. For more information, visit www.durhamchoice.org.



Upcoming Events for Kids and Teens

Durham Choice has several events coming up for kids and teens:

Celebrating Black History - February 17, 2025

Join the Durham Choice Team for a celebration of black history through movies and activities. Refreshments will be served.

Spring Break 2025

Durham Choice will be hosting events for kids at Hoover Road and Laurel Street Apartments.

Summer Break 2025

Durham Choice will offer its third annual summer camp in August.

For more information, contact your case manager or visit www.durhamchoice.org.