



Reconnecting Residents and Neighborhoods

Newsletter

August 2024

Meet the Durham Choice People Team

Residents are the heart and soul of Durham Choice, and resident services are a core part of the Durham Choice program. The Durham Housing Authority (DHA) has partnered with **Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI)**, a national nonprofit organization, and the **Duke University Division of Community Health** to offer comprehensive support for public housing residents who are part of Durham Choice.

The Durham Choice People Team is led by **Suzette Spence**, who brings over 20 years of experience helping people experiencing homelessness, veterans and public housing residents connect to services, housing, education and employment. Team member **Brenda Mallory** is the Community Health Worker dedicated to helping residents access health services and improve their health outcomes. In their role as Family Support Specialists, **Elaine Bryant-Donigan** and **Janasia Arrington** help residents define their personal growth goals and then secure the resources they need to achieve those goals. Two additional team members are expected to join in the coming weeks.



Suzette Spence



Brenda Mallory



Elaine Bryant-Donigan



Janasia Arrington

In the words of Ms. Spence, “We are here for the residents. Our job is to help them achieve their dreams, which means we succeed when they succeed.” On a day-to-day basis, the team also helps residents troubleshoot problems, from replacing a lost Medicaid card and arranging transportation to appointments to enrolling children in after-school activities.

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.

Durham Choice Resident News

Summer Camp 2024

For the second year in a row, Durham Choice will host an art-focused summer camp for Durham Choice residents aged 9 to 15. Camp will run on weekdays August 12-23. The camp will culminate in an art show at the Hayti Heritage Center on August 23rd, followed by a Back-to-School celebration for all DHA residents. For questions, contact Suzette Spence at (984) 489-2451 or suzette.spence@usi-inc.org.



★ ★ ★ Join DHA at Our Upcoming Celebrations! ★ ★ ★

COMMERCE STREET GROUNDBREAKING

August 14, 2024, 10:00 - 11:00 am
115 Commerce Street, Durham

Join us as we celebrate the beginning of construction of Commerce Street Apartments, the second phase of redevelopment at 519 E. Main/Liberty Street and the first to utilize funding from the Choice Neighborhoods grant.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLOCK PARTY

August 23, 2024, 1:00 – 3:00 pm
401 E. Lakewood Ave., Durham

Join us for an afternoon of food and fun before the school year officially begins! We will have music by DJ Mayor, bounce houses, activities for all ages, and info and prizes from community partners – PLUS a school supply giveaway for all DHA students (K - 12).

Special thanks to our partners:

City of Durham, Downtown Durham Inc., DHA, Durham Public Schools Foundation, Durham Hope for Kids, Durham County Library, DJ Mayor, Duke Health, Durham Partnership for Health, Heather Garrett Designs, NPHC, Step Up Durham, Sterling Bay, Thorpe Barber Shop, USI, Wegmans, WE Church and more!

DHA COMMUNITY DAY @ THE

DURHAM BULLS GAME

August 28, 2024, 6:45 pm
Durham Bulls Stadium

The Durham Housing Authority marks 75 years of delivering affordable housing and unwavering commitment to its residents and the Durham community. Celebrate with us at The Durham Bulls for an exceptional day of family fun, as we honor our residents, staff, and community partners who have contributed to our success. For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, please contact Aalayah Sanders at (919) 407-0460 or asanders@dha-nc.org.

DHA Resident Services Resource Fairs

DHA's Resident Services Department is hosting multiple resource fairs in the month of August. During these events, DHA residents will have a chance to learn about resources available to them in Durham community. Resource fairs will be held on the following dates and are open to all DHA community members:

- August 9th, 1-3 pm, at Hoover Road, 1126 Hoover Road.
- August 16th, 1-3 pm, at JJ Henderson, 807 S. Duke Street
- August 28th, 1-3 pm at McDougald Terrace, 1101 Lawson Street

Resident Spotlight: Sheritha Dash



A former resident of DHA's 519 E. Main Street development, Ms. Dash relocated to another DHA property, Forest Hill Heights, when redevelopment began. She has quickly become a leader in her new community. Ms. Dash serves as Resident Council Secretary for Forest Hills Heights and is a member of DHA's Resident Council, adding tremendous value in both roles. She is known for her no-nonsense way of managing meetings and for her commitment to ensuring that residents are well informed about property safety, supportive services, food distribution and other topics important to them.

Ms. Dash serves as an example of resilience and strength as she navigates both personal and physical challenges, never allowing those obstacles to deter her commitment to personal growth and development. In fact, she is continuing her educational journey by becoming a student in Durham County's Chronic Disease & Self-awareness Series. This six-week course and workshop, held at Forest Hills Heights Community Center, engages residents with useful tools on living a balanced life while navigating chronic disease.

We congratulate Ms. Dash on her achievements and look forward to her continued success!

Got questions? We can help!

The Durham Choice People Team is available Monday through Friday to help Durham Choice residents troubleshoot problems and connect to opportunities. Contact Suzette Spence at (984) 489-2451 or suzette.spence@usi-inc.org.

Construction Update

Phase 1 and Phase 2 Move Forward!

The first phase of replacement housing at the Durham Choice site is expected to be completed in February 2025. Currently referred to as Elizabeth Street Apartments, Phase 1 includes 72 one, two and three-bedroom apartments in two separate buildings. Twenty-one of the apartments are set aside for former residents of 519 E. Main and Liberty who wish to return to the redeveloped site.

Construction began in July on the second phase of housing, currently known as Commerce Street Apartments. Phase 2 consists of 172 one, two, three and four-bedroom apartments in two buildings – an 88-unit senior building and an 84-unit family building. Commerce includes a total of 71 apartments prioritized for former residents of 519 E. Main and Liberty. Construction is expected to be completed in the spring of 2026.



Construction of Elizabeth Street Apartments

Exciting New Community Projects Coming Soon!

Durham Choice is excited to announce four upcoming neighborhood projects that will transform our community and improve life for everyone. These projects, which will be completed by September 2028, will create vibrant, connected, and engaging public spaces.

<p>1. Recreation and Placemaking</p> <p>The redevelopment of the 519 E. Main and Liberty Street site will include a dynamic, one-acre park that will serve as a "community living room." Guided by the input of the community, we will install key amenities at the park such as a splash pad, a playground, a small stage for community gatherings, or other amenities that residents identify.</p> <p>We will also enhance the beauty <i>and</i> safety around the site by adding artistic crosswalks at major intersections.</p>	<p>2. Business Retention and Recruitment Fund</p> <p>With support from The Institute for Minority Economic Development, we will launch a fund to support diverse businesses in downtown Durham and Hayti's commercial corridor. The fund will provide grants and loans to empower existing and up-and-coming small and minority-owned businesses, with at least 50% of the funds supporting businesses in Hayti.</p> <p>Do you, or someone you know, own a small business and would like more information about the Fund? Visit www.durhamchoice.org for updates and more.</p>
<p>3. Hayti Heritage Center Improvements</p> <p>When the St. Joseph's AME Church congregation moved to its new home, the original structure became the catalyst for the formation of the St. Joseph's Historic Foundation. Today, the Hayti Heritage Center is the last remaining original structure that was part of the once thriving Black Wall Street and Hayti epicenter.</p> <p>We are honoring this history through this project by supporting exterior repairs and upgrades. Our goal is to ensure the Center continues its mission to preserve and advance the heritage of the historic Hayti neighborhood.</p>	<p>4. Reconnecting Historic Hayti to Downtown</p> <p>This project will celebrate Hayti's 130+ years of resilience by creating a one-mile trail from the Hayti Heritage Center to Black Wall Street Garden in downtown Durham.</p> <p>The trail will offer an immersive experience, educating travelers about Durham's and Hayti's rich past while connecting them to key amenities and retail. Features will include environmentally friendly landscaping, public art, historical markers, and QR codes for deeper learning. The route is designed for safety, with enhanced visibility, lighting and separation from vehicular traffic, especially when crossing over Highway 147.</p>

Stay Informed and Engaged

Durham Choice residents will have opportunities to participate in shaping these projects. Keep an eye on our Durham Choice website and future newsletters for updates and opportunities to get involved. Your participation is essential to the success of these initiatives. Let's work together to create a vibrant, safe, and interconnected community! For more information, contact Heather Wilson, Durham Choice Neighborhood Coordinator at (919) 682-2800 x1008, or heather@downtowndurham.com.

Join us for our next resident listening session!

Our next resident listening session will take place on August 27th at 11:30 am, at the JJ Henderson Community Center, located at 807 S. Duke Street. Join us to hear about opportunities for residents and the latest on the redevelopment process!