

Durham Mayoral Candidates Debate Housing at NCCU

DURHAM, N.C. — The two candidates for Durham mayor faced off Tuesday night at North Carolina Central University in a debate focused on the city’s housing challenges for students and low-income residents.

The debate, held in the Miller-Morgan Auditorium and sponsored by *The Campus Echo*, drew students, faculty, and community members.

Current Mayor Leo Williams said increasing housing near NCCU and across the city is one of his top priorities. “Creating housing for students and the unhoused in Durham is my top priority,” Williams said. He highlighted plans to work with developers and the City Council to add more apartments and invest in affordable housing in the Hayti neighborhood.

Challenger Anjanée Bell, daughter of former Durham Mayor Bill Bell, said the city needs housing solutions that help everyone, not just students. “Durham needs housing solutions that serve all residents,” Bell said. She proposed offering incentives to developers who include affordable units in their projects and supporting community-led housing programs.

During the first part of the debate, candidates discussed short-term ways to ease the city’s housing shortage. Williams said the city is looking at temporary housing near campus and speeding up approvals for student housing projects. Bell agreed short-term solutions are important but added that the city must focus on long-term plans to prevent the displacement of low-income residents.

Later, the discussion turned to zoning and neighborhood impacts. Both candidates said new development should respect existing communities. Williams said he is working with neighborhood groups to make sure new projects fit local needs. Bell called for more transparency and community input in development decisions.

Students asked about affordability and access to housing, pointing out how hard it can be to find affordable places to live near campus. Both candidates promised to work on policies that meet the needs of students and residents alike.

The debate showed clear differences between the two candidates. Williams focused on his record and current city programs, while Bell pushed for new policies and long-term planning. Both agreed that solving Durham's housing challenges is key to the city's growth and quality of life.

With the Nov. 4 election ending, housing remains one of the biggest issues for voters in Durham and at NCCU. The debate gave the community a closer look at how each candidate hopes to address the city's growing need for affordable housing.