

October 2025

THE DURHAM CHOICE NEWSLETTER



Celebrating the Grand Opening of Vanguard Apartments

The **Durham Housing Authority (DHA)** and co-developer **Laurel Street** celebrated the grand opening of the Vanguard Apartments, the first phase of redevelopment of two aging public housing sites, 519 E. Main and Liberty Street Apartments. Over 150 public officials, project funders, community members and DHA residents turned out on September 9th to mark the opening of Vanguard and to break ground on the next phase of development, Dillard Street Apartments.



Vanguard resident Bianca Rivera cutting the ceremonial ribbon at Vanguard Apartments

Vanguard Apartments offers 72 one, two and three-bedroom apartment homes for individuals and families. The property is already fully leased, and the new residents include 11 families who previously lived at Liberty and 519 E. Main. One of these residents, Bianca Rivera, was interviewed about the impact of the move on her and her 10-year old son: "This has been a big transformation for both of us," Rivera said, "Moving here has given me a chance to grow and want to see myself bigger and better. "

When the redevelopment is completed in 2028, the site will be home to 538 apartment homes, including 348 affordable homes and 190 market-rate apartments. The development also includes a community center, a central park and multiple playgrounds and fitness centers. All of the original public housing units will be replaced and original residents have the right to return to the redeveloped site. This redevelopment is made possible by support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Choice Neighborhoods Program, the City of Durham's *Forever Home, Durham*, program, the N.C. Housing Finance Agency and multiple private lenders and investors.

Summer Camp Roundup

Durham Choice hosted its third annual summer camp in July 2025. Thirteen youth ages 10-13 participated in two-week art exploration centered around positive affirmations. Campers learned traditional African dances from members of the African American Dance Ensemble and completed visual art projects, including a challenge to 'draw their dreams'. Campers also enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour of the Durham Performing Arts Center (DPAC) and a visit to 21C Museum Hotel in downtown Durham.



Resident Spotlight: Tony Lunsford

Fifteen-year old Tony Lunsford is a young man to watch. A tenth grader in Durham Public Schools, he is consistently on the AB Honor Roll and has his eyes on attending college after graduation. In the meantime, he's staying busy. In addition to his schoolwork, he plays center on his school's basketball team and with a Durham Parks and Recreation league, is active in his church and serves as a mentor for younger kids.

Tony lives with his mother LaShauna Lunsford, who is his biggest cheerleader. "I love that my son is maturing and wanting to go further with his education," she said, "He spoke about many things that he wants to do, but I know he wants to attend UNC to become a professional basketball player. Whatever he chooses, I stand behind him 100%."

Recently, Tony found himself without access to a computer after school hours. While his school provided a laptop, policies prevented him from bringing it home, leaving him unable to do research or complete assignments at home.



Tony Lunsford with new computer

This is when Durham Choice's people team stepped in. People team lead, **Urban Strategies Inc.**, reached out to the **Kramden Institute**, an organization known for bridging the digital divide by providing refurbished technology to students and families. Through this partnership, Urban Strategies was able to secure a free desktop computer for Tony. With reliable access to technology at home, Tony can now complete his coursework and stay on track with his dreams.

Block Party 2025!

Over 150 people came out on a beautiful sunny day in August to celebrate the second annual Durham Choice Back-to-School Block Party. Visitors celebrated to music from DJ Watty Z and enjoyed a lunch provided by faith partners. Kids of all ages enjoyed the bounce houses, touring a Durham Fire Department truck and learning about services and resources available in the community. The highlight of the event was the backpack giveaway, during which kids could pick out a brand new backpack full of supplies donated by Durham Choice and community partners. Kids also had the chance to pick up free books and score a brand new pair of sneakers for school!

Durham Choice's Neighborhood Lead **Downtown Durham Inc. (DDI)** took the lead in organizing the event, and turned out in force to ensure its success. Thanks, DDI!



Thank You to Our Sponsors and Partners!

The Back-to-School Block Party would not be possible without the support of these sponsors and community partners:

Sponsors

Wegmans, Ram Realty Advisors, Acme Plumbing, Duda|Paine Architects, Longfellow Partners, Garner Stokes, LLC

Community Partners

Academkics, Celebration Ministries, City of Durham, Duke University, Durham County, Durham Partnership for Children, Durham Tech, Families & Communities Rising, His Kingdom Ministries, The Hope Church, Mindful Bodies, Oak Street Health, The Restoration Place, Word Empowerment Church

Business Retention & Recruitment Fund Is Open — Apply Now!

Durham Choice and **The National Institute for Minority Economic Development** are proud to announce the official launch of the Business Retention & Recruitment Fund. This fund aims to stabilize and strengthen locally-owned businesses in Durham Choice target neighborhood, fueling economic opportunity, preserving neighborhood character and creating prosperity for all Durham residents.

The application for the first round of funding is open, with a deadline of November 30, 2025. While applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis through September 30, 2028 (or until funds are exhausted), this first round is the best opportunity to secure early access to funding and technical assistance!

Who is eligible?

To qualify, a business must be located within the Durham Choice target neighborhood, be legally registered and in good standing and demonstrate financial viability or a credible growth plan. If leasing, business must have written landlord approval for façade or tenant build-out projects. For loans, a minimum credit score 600 required and sufficient cash flow to service debt

What support is available ?

- **Grants up to \$25,000** for façade improvements, storefront upgrades, signage or interior improvements (tenant upfits)
- **Low-interest loans up to \$500,000** for property acquisition, leasehold improvements, working capital or inventory and equipment.

Additional technical assistance is available via the Women's Business Center of North Carolina.

Funding examples

1. *Eligible for funding:* A café in Hayti (7 years in business) requests a \$15,000 grant to improve its storefront, including new signage, lighting, ADA ramp and fresh paint.
2. *Eligible for funding:* A salon opening in a vacant space applies for both a \$50,000 loan and a \$25,000 grant to install plumbing, electrical, flooring, fixtures and a finished interior.
3. *Ineligible for funding:* A store requests a \$20,000 loan solely to repay tax liens. Funds may not be used for payment of tax liens.

Need help or have questions?

Email us: ICAPTA@TheInstituteNC.org



Grand opening of Steelo Salon in downtown Durham

Apply Now – <https://theinstitutenc.org/icap/>

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.