

East Durham Children's Initiative

A pipeline of services from cradle to career

East Durham is coming together to support and nurture our most valuable resource our children!

We envision a future when all of East Durham's children and youth are successful and East Durham thrives. Unfortunately, there is a steep contrast between our vision and what current reality is which includes the following challenges:

- There is not enough quality child care in the community for our youngest children so that they can be ready for school.
- Our schools need to do a better job of supporting our children so that they can learn, stay in school and graduate.
- Our families and our community have to expect more of our youngsters.
- Too many children and young adults fall through the cracks, never graduate from high school, and are not prepared to earn a livable wage.

To change this picture, community members, government and school leaders, and several child-serving agencies have come together to address these issues - one neighborhood at a time - and have formed the **East Durham Children's Initiative**.

East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI) is our chance to come together to enable all children in East Durham to be ready for college and career. EDCI will assemble resources and work to create an environment that supports families and children. This effort, modeled after the highly successful Harlem Children's Zone, will involve the development of high quality, comprehensive, coordinated, neighborhood-based programs for children, youth, young adults, and parents.

For the purposes of EDCI, the East Durham neighborhood is defined is an 893 acre area (approximately 1 square mile) east of downtown Durham bounded by Alston Avenue on the west, Holloway Street on the north, Miami on the East, and Hoover and 147 on the South. It is largely consistent with the YE Smith Elementary School attendance zone. According to the 2000 Census, the zone had a population of 7,133 with 71% African American and 18% Hispanic. The estimated population for January, 2009 was 7,888.

Most importantly, according to a recent community assessment, the residents new and old believe that despite the challenges faced by the neighborhood, there is hope the area can once again prosper. Furthermore, the past and present strengths and qualities that give the community its character will ultimately serve as the foundation upon which it can build a bright future. It is this character that we are calling on to face our challenges together, and 'do whatever it takes' for all of our children and youth.

We will do this together by:

- Starting early – making sure our children are healthy and are ready for school
- Creating a pipeline of support from birth through college and career – maintaining the continuity of best practices throughout
- Involving parents and community residents in all aspects
- Designing schools for success
- Using data to ensure that we are on the right track
- Keeping the focus on what is best for children and their families.

Since the inception of the idea, we have been busy; we cannot waste time when the lives of our children are at stake. To date we have:

- Engaged our community and child serving agencies to plan the continuum.
- Planned a community outreach evening to solicit additional feedback directly from the community about what is needed and what they can do.
- Our partners have solicited and received four grants from both state and private resources to support the provision of evidenced based parenting programs (the Incredible Years) for parents of children from infants through elementary school age and a tutoring program at YE Smith.
- The Durham Public Schools has implemented the Museum School at YE Smith – an innovative model to improve educational outcomes for children that includes more hands-on learning and a longer school day.

Our **next steps** include:

- Solicit ongoing feedback from the community, through various community events/dialogues, meeting neighbors and the Community Conversation on October 15th
- Develop a Citizen’s Advisory Committee to provide strong neighborhood based leadership
- Continue to plan and fill gaps – identify strengths (what’s working), needs, and gaps; and begin to develop priorities and strategies to meet those needs and fill the gaps
- Continue to improve coordination of existing services
- Continue to seek grant funding to help fill unmet needs

We are asking the community to join together and partner with us to develop a successful model that can be replicated in other parts of Durham. We want to ensure that our children are on a path to success starting at the cradle and ending in college and a successful career.

