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From: Williams, Sylvester
Sent: Friday, February 02, 2007 8:31 AM
To: 'council@ci.durham.nc.us'
Cc: 'sylbar@hotmail.com'
Subject: East End Connector

I am Sylvester Williams the Pastor of The Assembly at Durham Christian Center and the President of Hayestown Community. I and the community love Durham. When the number of homicides in Durham increased to historical highs we began to pray to the Heavenly Father in the name of His Son King Jesus for a halt to the senseless murders. Last year the Lord honored our prayers, but we are continuing to pray until homicides in Durham are eliminated.

We as a community are against all 4 options that include building the Highway Connector through our community and East Durham. The fifth option which is the no build option is the option that we support. The DOT told us that another alternative, widening existing roads has not even had an impact or feasibility study. We also suggest that this option be looked into more closely.

Hayestown Community has a long history that speaks to the pride and hard work of a black community that has endured Jim Crow and racism. I am a third generation living in Hayestown. My grandmother came to Durham to build a home after seeing her mother's land stolen from her on her death bed. Mr. Lee, who is 84 years old, recalls the C.R. Woods Park as being his playground while young. His family has lived in this community over 100 years.

How long will the policy of benign neglect go on toward the older established black communities. The request to put a library in East Durham was rejected, request for improvements to the park have been largely ignored. We that are old enough, remember Hayti and what it contributed to the community. However the decision made to dislocate the businesses in Hayti to run Highway 147 was also part of the same plans to run the East End Connector through the heart of another Black community.

We as a Black community believe that the decision to dislocate the businesses in Hayti was racist. All of the road plans were born out of a racist past that had no respect for the contributions made by low paid hard working African Americans. Things that we as a community are proud of. Indeed we still see vestiges of this racist past and the annihilation of long standing African American businesses. Consider Pan Pan Diner and Scarborough Funeral Home.

Eighty percent of the people in attendance at one of our community meetings are senior citizens or retired. Many of these people own their homes and/or have no mortgage. Where do they go, what type of life will they live if forced to relocate. For many of the residents, as with my grandmother, real estate is all they have to pass on to the next generation. Will you continue to insult them and take away this last bit of dignity for those that have worked so hard to leave something to their family members.

Though our community may not be the richest, it still has people that matter. It was Abraham Lincoln that intimated during the Civil war when both sides were praying to God for victory, that God through His Son King Jesus is on the side of right, not might.