

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA



A Sprint Assessment for May–June 2026

How It Worked and What We Learned



City of Durham | Durham County | May–June 2026

Prepared by the Durham Community Safety Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One Sprint at a Time

Durham has set an ambitious goal: achieve functional zero homelessness by 2031.

Rather than managing homelessness indefinitely, Durham's strategy focuses on making homelessness rare and brief for each person who experiences it — moving people into permanent housing as quickly as possible and ensuring they remain housed.

This spring, Durham tested a new approach to accelerate progress.

Sprint Goal

15 neighbors. 3 encampments. 4 weeks.

The objective was simple: rapidly connect unsheltered residents to permanent housing through an intensive, cross-agency housing sprint.

RESULTS

What the Sprint Achieved

12

NEIGHBORS MOVED INTO
PERMANENT HOUSING

15 neighbors participated in the sprint. 15 neighbors secured identification documents. 13 neighbors completed housing program intakes. 10 neighbors actively engaged with care navigation.

On the Horizon

For the 3 neighbors not yet housed at the sprint's conclusion:

- ◆ 1 neighbor is engaging with HNH to ramp up into permanent housing.
- ◆ 2 neighbors are in interim housing while barrier-busting steps continue.

CONTEXT

From Marathon to Sprint

Making homelessness rare and brief is a marathon.

Durham's Strategic Framework to Make Homelessness Rare and Brief establishes annual targets that build toward functional zero by 2031, including a 30% reduction in unsheltered homelessness by July 2027.

But marathons are completed one sprint at a time.

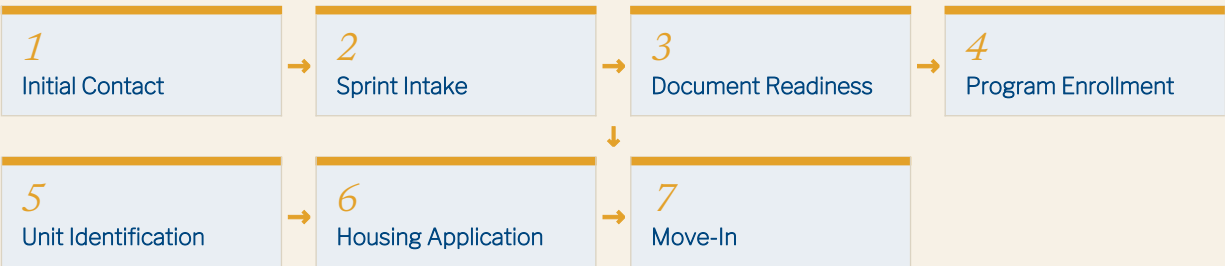
Housing sprints are short-term, highly coordinated efforts that bring together outreach workers, housing providers, care navigators, landlords, and funders to rapidly overcome barriers that often delay housing placements for months.

Following a successful family housing sprint earlier this year, Durham launched its first sprint focused specifically on unsheltered residents.

PROCESS

How the Sprint Worked

The sprint officially launched on May 13 and tracked each participant through seven milestones:



Progress was reviewed daily through coordinated case conferencing involving staff from multiple organizations working toward a shared outcome. Altogether, 19 staff representing Housing for New Hope, DCSD's Street Outreach, Care Navigation, and HOPE Teams joined together to work in unison under this model.

WHAT MADE IT WORK

Seven Reasons the Sprint Succeeded

Cross-Agency Collaboration

Multiple teams worked toward one shared outcome with clearly defined responsibilities and daily communication.

Daily Case Conferencing

Brief morning stand-ups enabled real-time problem solving and rapid removal of barriers.

Creative Problem Solving

Teams adapted quickly as challenges emerged, preventing delays from slowing progress.

Strong Street Outreach

Persistent engagement and document collection efforts ensured participants remained connected throughout the sprint.

Operational Flexibility

Staff could approve and process application fees, deposits, and other expenses in real time.

Early Care Navigation

Support services were engaged before move-in, creating smoother transitions into housing.

Shared Accountability

A dynamic tracking system provided visibility into progress, barriers, and next steps for every participant.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons for Future Sprints

Every sprint reveals opportunities to improve. Key lessons included:

- ◆ Finalize forms and agreements before launch.
- ◆ Prepare consistent answers to common participant questions.
- ◆ Clarify landlord documentation requirements early.
- ◆ Account for pet ownership when identifying housing options.
- ◆ Build additional time for inspections and accessibility-related housing searches.
- ◆ Strengthen coordination around deposits, application fees, and furniture delivery.
- ◆ Manage expectations around move-in timelines and unit readiness.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Our Path to Functional Zero

This sprint demonstrated that unsheltered homelessness can be reduced quickly when systems coordinate around a shared goal.

The lesson is not that housing people is easy.

The lesson is that **barriers that normally take months to overcome can be addressed in weeks** when agencies, providers, and community partners move together with urgency.

Durham's path to functional zero will not be achieved through a single initiative.

It will be achieved through repeated, data-driven housing sprints that transform individual success stories into community-wide progress.

The next sprint starts now.



15 neighbors. 12 housed. **One sprint**
closer to functional zero.

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