



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Bret Williams
Atlanta City Council
Post 2 At Large

2017 Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

1. Describe briefly your qualifications for this office. In addition, please identify up to 5 organizations or individuals who are actively supporting your candidacy and why you believe their support is important.

As a resident of Atlanta, an actively involved parent of two children attending the Atlanta Public Schools system, including serving on the PTO Board, and a former federal prosecutor, I love Atlanta, want to see it prosper further, and am highly qualified to help advance the city. My background (both personal and professional) and my training qualify me because the concerns of the city mirror the concerns that I and most other citizens have – no crime, excellent schools, efficient transportation, and good jobs.

Stephanie Williams – wife and campaign manager – Stephanie’s support is vital because she is a reminder of why I have chosen to get more involved and helps make sure that that we remain civic servants, active members of our community, and good neighbors.

Tom Holcomb – treasurer and fellow church member – Tom’s support is vital because he assures that we can fund a successful campaign.

Bruce Gunter – neighbor – I believe Atlanta is a city on the verge of further greatness, not slow decline. Bruce’s support is important because he embodies the idea that the future of Atlanta has a place for all of us.

2. What is your vision for the City of Atlanta and how would you implement it? Please be specific.

I envision Atlanta as a major international city which has low, mainly non-violent crime; excellent elementary, middle and high schools; nationally-ranked colleges; neighborhoods with families and children; and a vibrant, thriving economy.

How to implement this vision:

- Expand efforts to divert early offenders from conviction and vigorously rehabilitate them. Alternatively, incarcerate repeat offenders for extended periods. Intervention for newbies; long-term jail for veterans.
- A city without good schools cannot sustain families, lacks livability, and fails the future. Atlanta recently experienced the greatest cheating scandal in the history of modern education and needs renewal. To this end, Atlanta needs a new, state-of-the-art, campus-style high school on a portion of the old Civic Center site, with students from Jackson, Washington, and Grady High Schools.

- Nurture movie, technology, and hospitality industries, making every effort to transform Atlanta from the “Hollywood” and “Silicon Valley” of the South to the “New Hollywood” and “New Silicon Valley.” Continue to support our vibrant hospitality industry.
 - Accelerate Beltline development, along with a path for motorized transit.
 - Vigorously oppose any increase in residential property taxes and increase the homestead exemption to offset any such increase. Further, propose an inclusionary zoning ordinance to ensure the economic diversity and health of Atlanta.
3. Please identify the three greatest issues or problems facing the City of Atlanta and specifically how you would work to solve them.

Crime: Atlanta is a major distribution point for illegal drugs along the entire eastern seaboard. This drug problem has been further exacerbated by the opioid crisis that has beset Georgia and the rest of the country. Moreover, sex-trafficking and property crimes are a central problem. I would work to create a criminal justice system that aims to divert non-violent, early offenders and incarcerate serious veteran offenders. As part of this strategy, marijuana should be decriminalized and the resources from that effort directed at “hard” illegal drugs and opioid abuse.

Schools: Atlanta needs a new, state-of-the-art, campus-style high school on a portion of the old Civic Center site, with students from Jackson, Washington, and Grady High Schools. Such an effort will restore faith in a system that has lost the trust of parents and the broader community. Lack of quality schools assures that a city cannot retain talented families (and a strong residential tax-base) within its borders.

Transportation: When it comes to transportation, “all of the above” is what we need. Specifically, the BeltLine should be completed as quickly as possible, with a path for motorized vehicles. Neighborhoods throughout the city feel the impact of congestion daily, as heavy traffic often flows through residential streets not intended for such use.

4. As a City Council member, how would you manage collaborating with your colleagues on difficult citywide issues versus representing your own constituents?

As an At Large councilmember, I will have the mandate to represent all of Atlanta, including those who voted in my favor or for another unsuccessful candidate. I am running for office to advance the interests of Atlanta, not a subset or clique. The very nature of both my professional and personal experience requires that I collaborate broadly around difficult issues.

5. How do you view the City of Atlanta's financial position? Should the City of Atlanta have additional tools in place to ensure financial management going forward?

Atlanta's financial position is strong, compared to its recent past. But, as the current federal investigation lays bare, more transparency is needed.

6. Please describe your philosophy regarding property tax assessments and municipal taxation.

I believe that residential property tax assessments should be avoided. Such increases force sales, homogenize neighborhoods, and make the city less diverse. Generally, a level of taxation is needed to pay for community goods and to provide for the general welfare, but legislators should be wary and circumspect when proposing or implementing a tax of any kind.

7. What is your opinion of Atlanta's MOST, and what approach do you support to fund long-term water and sewer operations?

MOST (Municipal Option Sales Tax) was and is needed. All who use Atlanta's water and sewer infrastructure should help pay for its maintenance, internalizing cost to all users. For the future, I would support a continued combination of residential and the MOST as the way to internalize costs to all users.

8. Would you change the current procurement process to protect against "pay to play"? If so, what changes would you support?

I am not familiar with the details of the current procurement process. But multiple bids and transparency are potent antidotes to this type of theft.

9. If elected, describe your role in ensuring ethical and transparent management of City resources by City employees?

First, I must show by example. By being ethical and transparent in my dealings, I model the behavior that I believe is acceptable. Second, I would ensure that city employees receive proper training and are clear about their ethical obligations. Third, any employee found to have engaged in unethical and illegal behavior will be fired and I would advocate for such a result. Finally, I would seek to foster a culture of ethical behavior through word and deed.

10. What economic development strategies would you prioritize to ensure the City of Atlanta captures its fair share of future job growth?

I would make every effort to nurture the growing movie, technology, and hospitality industries, to transform Atlanta from the “Hollywood” and “Silicon Valley” of the South to the “New Hollywood” and “New Silicon Valley.” Moreover, I would continue to support our vibrant hospitality industry. And, as discussed earlier, improvements in transportation, excellence in schools and a reduction in crime will help to spur economic growth.

11. What strategies would you implement to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing?

Atlanta needs a city-wide mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinance. Such an ordinance would benefit neighborhoods, keep the city livable as it grows, maintain diversity, and ensure that Atlanta maintains its character as a vibrant and desirable place to live.

12. What workforce development strategies should the next administration prioritize? How will these strategies address and improve economic mobility among low-to-mid skill workers?

Three of the best workforce development strategies would be a reduction in crime, quality education, and improvement in transportation. Job growth is affected by the health of the community. Low crime; an educated workforce; and abundant, efficient, and low-cost transportation are catalysts for job growth.

13. What are the three most important transportation/infrastructure projects that should occur in the City of Atlanta? Please rank them by importance and urgency and explain your reasoning.

1. Completion of the BeltLine Trail and a path for motorized vehicles. The BeltLine will knit the city together more closely, spur private development because of the infrastructure investment, and revitalize parts of the city suffering from lack of investment.
2. Use of T-SPLOST for automobile-based transportation projects will improve the ability of workers and others to travel around the metropolitan area.
3. Expansion of MARTA – The building of new infill rail stations within the city (connected to BeltLine transportation options) along with new buses will aid in supplying an “all of the above” option for Atlanta residents to travel.

14. What strategies would you pursue to improve the safety – both real and perceived – of all residents, visitors, and workers in Atlanta? What partnerships are needed to realize these strategies?

Atlanta does not have too few cops; we have too many criminals. Police wait for crime to occur and then arrest. But the citizen has already been victimized and hurt. As an overall strategy, we must divert early offenders and vigorously rehabilitate them. Alternatively, we must incarcerate repeat offenders for extended periods. Intervention for newbies; long-term jail for veterans. We need coordination between the District Attorney’s Office and the Courts (primarily judges) to implement this strategy. Also, as stated, marijuana should be decriminalized and those resources redirected.

15. Georgia ranks 49th among states for per-capita arts funding. What actions would you take to ensure our arts and culture organizations have the funding they need to thrive and enrich our city?

I believe that public or community art deserves community support and funding, but the funding of “arts and culture” organizations generally is open for discussion and creative thinking.