

Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

**Diana Watley**  
Atlanta City Council  
District 12

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 what you believe their support important.

I am a lifelong resident of Atlanta. I am a proud graduate of Frederick Douglas High School and Albany State University. I've spent a combined 12 years serving families as a Family Advocate, Life Coach and Empowerment Speaker.

I am also a certified Mediator/Conflict Resolution Specialist and I've spent several years serving in a highly intense law firm as a Paralegal. As a resident of this district most of my life I see daily the struggles we have in terms of crime and development. I can also see the promises of hope in projects like the Fort McPherson and the Beltline.

However, I believe we need leadership that will work to revive the strength of my friends and neighbors in this district. I believe that we must restore the hope for all of the parents and children that want to look out their windows and see the Atlanta that everyone else can see. Finally, we must renew our commitment to meet the needs of all our citizens outside of the walls of city hall. This means for our seniors, our young people and those struggling to meet their basic needs everyday.

I believe I am qualified to do all of these things and expand the reach of our government beyond the walls of city hall for the betterment of all the communities and my district and in the city of Atlanta. My background as a Family advocate has given me unique experiences inside people's home and a personal view of the struggles that families are experiencing every day. We need someone that motivate and innovate to move this district forward. I believe I am the best person for that job and that is why I am running to be the next councilwoman for District 12.

#### Actively Supporting Campaign

Tyrone Coleman  
Dr. Joseph Fowler  
Curtis Lovejoy  
Dr. Albenney Price

The individuals above have known me and my work in the community for years. They have high moral and ethical character and will expect nothing less from me as the councilwoman for District 12. I have been fortunate enough to earn the support of many friends and neighbors throughout the district that are looking forward to partnering and working together to meet the needs of this community.

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

My vision for the City of Atlanta is to have and represent a city of integrity, transparency and trustworthiness for the betterment of the citizens we serve. Being from Atlanta and a part of a family that has a legacy for servitude and activism I'm excited to work on the front lines to revive, restore and renew the principles that made Atlanta great. That greatness can happen by building stronger families, developing productive children and growing stronger communities.

I would implement direct voter contact with the district. Throughout the campaign we have hosted Dialogue with Diana and Dinner with Diana events to talk to the residents that do not always come to the neighborhood and NPU meetings. These are hosted in neighbors homes and coffee shops to meet people where they are and not always expecting them to come to us.

This helps to increase transparency and trustworthiness in our elected officials. When elected, I would want to partner with the other elected and appointed officials that represent the city and my district to provide greater information and resources to our citizens. I understand that most people want to help themselves but they just do not know where to start---I will be the starting point for the people of the district and make sure they know that the City of Atlanta is working for them.

3. Please identify the three greatest issues or problems facing the City of Atlanta and specifically how would you want to work to solve them.

### **Education**

Statistics show that if a child is not reading on grade level by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade he/she is more likely to dropout of school or go to jail. Therefore we must make education a priority for our city. As a Family Advocate, I've seen firsthand that when a child thrives in education, they are more empowered to go out and inspire others and give back to their community.

With this in mind, its critical that I work to build a collaborative partnership between the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Board of Education. I would work with my fellow APS Board members, principals, faith and community leaders to develop of Network for Success for District 12. This would give all of us the opportunity to support the families and the children of the district. If we see that a child is without food or clothing—the Network for Success can work with our community partners to meet the needs of that child and their family.

Sometimes it's the parents that are need of additional support—be it afterschool care or transportation. In our Network for Success we would work together to address these issues and identify if there is a government solution, a private solution or just bringing community partners into the district to meet the needs of our kids and our parents. Until the family is whole, it will be difficult to expect the

best out of our children. By working together through the Network for Success we can achieve these goals one household at a time.

### **Employment**

A mother or a father should never have to make life choices about whether or not to pay her rent or feed her children. Yet, we have many families in the city that make this life choice every single day, week and month.

According to the census, in one Atlanta zip code alone there are 25% of children/families living impoverished. It's incumbent that we ensure that our families can maintain their basic needs and thrive.

Our Network for Success will identify the resources to ensure that families are also able to qualify for the very jobs that are being brought to the City of Atlanta. I am advocating for the families of District 12 to be able to have and maintain jobs and being able to pass down to their children that same work ethic to move the district and the city forward.

### **Public Safety**

Growing up in Atlanta I have watched crime become a huge issue. Everyone has become a potential victim and the ages of the suspects have become younger and younger.

The Network for Success can provide leadership that is willing to go out and build partnerships that employ children and individuals in the district so that crime is not the only option. By working together, the Network for Success can work with law enforcement while simultaneously having relationships with the families in the community. Our leadership will be willing to stand on the front line and not accept crime in the district or the City of Atlanta but staying constantly involved in programs and outreach that gets the community involved

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

I understand that the needs of District 12 will be unique at times. We have a lot of underdeveloped areas and houses that are beyond repair. I will work with my colleagues daily on the issues that we agree with and work to find partners that understand that the issues that affect one district has the propensity to affect the other.

It is important that each Council Member understand that nothing positive can happen for the City of Atlanta without a commitment to the people in our city. To be One City, no one councilmember can have a single issue agenda or a single district focus.

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?

I believe that the Mayor and council have worked hard to bring us out of the recession and to a better financial standing for the city. We are going to have to make tough choices to continue moving this city forward and to be good stewards of every dollar spent. Having a strong CFO, a council that is made fully aware of spending and the opportunity to weigh in on decisions before they are finalized and a review of equitable spending practices across the city are just some ways we can ensure good financial management going forward.

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

We all want great schools, transportation and services within the city. At times that will require us to review how, who and what are taxed to provide those things. I believe it is the responsibility of those elected to make sure that before any tax is approved or applied that we have heard from the people of the city and that the council does the job of informing our citizens why a tax may be necessary to meet the needs described above. Government should not be in the business of assessing a tax at any level without great transparency and the opportunity for review by our citizens.

6. What is your opinion of Atlanta's MOST, and what approach do you support to fund longterm water and sewer operations?

Sustaining our water and sewer operations is necessary for the growth of the city. If we cannot prevent flooding and overuse of our water, the long term problems will outweigh the weight of the MOST felt today.

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

The best way to protect from pay to play is to look at a double blind system that ensures that the best option for the City of Atlanta is always chosen with weight still given to our local businesses and entrepreneurs and minority contractors.

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

I believe this starts with my office. I would implement a full transparency model so that constituents can see how staff is paid and how money is spent within my office as a councilwoman. I think the council has taken a good step forward in

making it easier for citizens to see how they are spending their tax dollars but we need to implement more of these measures city wide so that all tax dollars have accountability to our citizens.

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

The first priority is to ensure that the citizens of the city are able to take advantage of the job opportunities coming to the district. Again, our Network for Success will work together to bring educational resources, career advancement opportunities, soft skills training, etc to ensure that we can compete at the level that the direction of our city is growing.

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

By advocating for mixed income communities so that everyone in our city gets an opportunity to live the American dream and not pushed out because they are not able to sustain. Having an adequate supply of affordable housing is directly correlated to ensuring that our constituents are making a living wage to live in the city. And as the cost of living goes up in Atlanta the goal is to ensure that so does the living wage and our housing reflects the incomes of the people that live in this city.

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?

To ensure that low-to-mid workers are continuously given opportunities to advance their skills set and education as the workforce grows.

I would love to work with the next administration on establishing Networks for Success across all of Atlanta. By bringing together our education, community and resource partners we can find the best ways in each neighborhood and district to make sure our workforce is 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> century ready.

We need to work with our local colleges and universities as well as our trade schools to help open students eyes to the careers of the future. We need to be able to show all children that regardless of if they attend a 4 year college or a trade school, Atlanta is ready to aid them in their success—as their success is also the success of our city.

For our citizens that are in need of jobs, I believe we need to implement more apprenticeship opportunities for our citizens and really utilize the Workforce Development office in the city to fully engage those that need new skills and opportunities to get the jobs that are in need. Through the Network for Success,

I know that we could all work together to meet the needs of our employers and the people of this city.

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.

### **Beltline Project**

Ensuring that are constituents understand how it's arrival affects them and ways that all of our citizens can take advantage of everything the Beltline can offer in terms of development, mobility and expansion of services.

### **Street Light Maintenance & Repair**

Lighting is important in deterring crime. In my district, street lights are out way too long and we do not have enough of them to fully bring lighted streets to prevent crime.

### **Capitol Transportation Projects**

The expansion of MARTA is paramount to the success of my district. Many of my residents utilize public transportation to get to and from work. More routes and more train stations will aid in the mobility and development for the success of district 12.

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?

- Re-Entry programs for those wanting to start a new life with a job for success
- More police officers living within the city and earning enough to do so.
- Collaborating with community to police their area by providing a safe haven to report real and perceived dangers.
- Provide ongoing resources and activities for the community to take part in and using it as a means to get to know each other.

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 would love for more Arts and Culture programing and education to come to District 12. As the councilwoman for the District, I would work to ensure that we could have Art in the Park, exposure for our young people to the Woodruff Arts Center and the High Museum—as I go through the district many of my constituents have never had the opportunity to see a play, or a traveling art

exhibit etc.... I would be honored to work with those in the Art community to increase exposure, opportunity and funding.