



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Andre Dickens
Atlanta City Council
Post 3 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.

I was elected citywide to the Atlanta City Council Post 3 at Large in November 2013. I currently serve as the chairman of the Public Safety & Legal Administration Committee and is a member of the Community Development & Human Services Committee and Transportation Committees. I previously served as the chairman of the Community Development & Human Services Committee as well as on the boards of the Atlanta Beltline, Invest Atlanta, and the Center for Civil and Human Rights.

I am a proud product of the Atlanta Public School System. I earned a Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1998. In 2013, I earned my Master's of Public Administration in Economic Development at Georgia State University's Andrew Young School of Policy Studies.

In my short tenure as Post 3 At-Large Councilmember I have become a vocal and legislative activist in promoting quality educational opportunities for Atlanta Public School students, ensuring that affordable housing is a significant component of Atlanta's future economic growth, improving transportation across the city, improving permitting processes, and enabling seniors to live comfortable lives in the city.

I am endorsed by Police Union, Fire Union, AFSCME, and numerous churches and communities.

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

I want a city that has a great quality of life for all of its residences. This city should have: diverse housing stock for various income levels, safe homes and streets by community based police, transportation planning and implementation that gets people to opportunities daily, quality

educational opportunities for all ages and abilities, and our government should reflect the people and the people's trust by being ethical and transparent.

I will implement them the way that I have for the past 3.5 years – by engaging in rich dialogue with citizens and subject matter experts then taking bold action towards the solution. I will continue to advocate for and draft legislation for more affordable workforce (I've passed 5 policies thus far), quality policing (better pay, affordable city living, and community policing training/activities), robust transportation planning/implementation policies (I've passed 3 policies thus far), and improving up the relationship with APS and our institutions of higher learning (I've passed 5 policies thus far). I'll continue on this path with even more vigor and capacity.

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

Housing Affordability, Access to transit and congestion, and our workforce readiness.

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A 4th would be ethics and transparency. We need to provide citizens an open view into the city's general ledger because it's the people's pocketbook.

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

I have the pleasure of being an at-Large member which means that I represent the entire city of Atlanta. Every citizen, business, policy, concern, issue, repair, personnel decision, etc, all is under my purview. I have citywide interests, citywide relationships, and citywide responsibility. I work with the district representatives closely because they have a closer view of the intricate details of their areas. I keep constant communication with all 12 of them so that I know where they stand and they know where I stand. Every meeting I attend on an issue means that I am in someone's district. Its important to communicate with them. Nonetheless, I maintain my own opinions, vision, relationships, etc so they align with the district rep in most cases but in a few cases we disagree and move forward.

I've maintained my independence on council and relied heavily on my conversation with citizens and thereby tend to get the benefit of a courtesy call about issues that might concern me because I give that courtesy to my colleagues as well.

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?

The city's financial position couldn't be stronger! We are doing very well with our cash and credit positions. The organization is about the right size for these times. I believe we are in a very good position and have done some strategic financial restructuring and bond refinances and bond issuances that will carry us for a long time. We've made some smart fiscal plays on behalf of current and future Atlantans. This is due in part to great leadership, constant communication, as well as a booming national economy under the federal government coming out of the recession. Many cities and states boomed. However, we took full advantage and did a lot more with it.

Finally, I will say that it's difficult to predict the future, but a down market may come within the next 3-7 years. We have cash reserves and good credit to help us get through that. I plan to make sure of it.

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

My philosophy is that taxes are necessary to provide a public benefit. Property tax assessments by the county should be: 1) fair, 2) annually or bi-annually, 3) complete, 4) no greater than a 5-10% increase annually.

Municipal taxation of business licenses and sales taxes have to be kept in check. We are now at 8.9% sales tax in the city. We can't get too far separated from surrounding counties like Cobb at 6%. Of course they don't have rapid transit or a sewer consent decree to fulfill. I think our business taxes are closer to the appropriate levels as well as our permitting fees when compared to our peer cities and regional jurisdictions.

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

We have to keep the MOST for the short term but eliminate it within the next 3-5 years. As we hit all of the requirements of the consent decree and complete all of our water/sewer projects, we should seek to eliminate it. Again, we are getting a ways away from our local peers.

The MOST was initially approved on 2004, and reauthorized by voters in 2008. A lot of money has come through the most. It has helped to keep our already high water rates down somewhat. But it is a part of a regressive taxing of citizens and visitors and we need to eliminate when we can.

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

Pay to play is reprehensible and betrays the public trust. Our citizens deserve and demand better. When I talk to them, they are totally against it. While I am unaware of any incidents of pay to play, I am not comfortable with it even looking as though that happens within our government. Maynard Jackson said that if you can see the line, then you are too close to it.

The changes I would put in place is to open up the books for the public to view all of our expenses going out. That way, we can see who is getting paid.

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

I have been an outspoken member of council on ethics and transparency. I plan to continue that. You can see all of my council office transactions on line. I will encourage others to do the same including the administration.

The changes I would put in place is to open up the books for the public to view all of our expenses going out. That way, we can ALL see who is getting paid. Citizens have been asking for this to happen.

We will also have more cameras in areas where expensive equipment like copper and backhoes are stored.

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

As the Invest Atlanta Board Secretary, 21,000 new jobs and \$3.3 billion of capital invested into Atlanta. I have been involved in business attraction and retention. Its all about jobs. I've also been an employer of 20 people with my own furniture business so I know about hiring and making payroll.

I would promote balanced job growth. We need to grow in hi tech and lo tech jobs. Grow in the Central business district and south of I-20. We can lean on our CIDs and particularly Aerotropolis and Ft. Mac to help with that.

Also, work with our school system because a shining APS helps our job growth and business attraction.

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

There has been no greater champion for affordable housing on the council that I have been these past 4 years. Here are some of the things, I've helped to achieve around affordable housing:

- Authored monumental legislation that requires any development receiving public dollars to produce affordable housing units.
- My legislation has become the model law now for Fulton, Dekalb, Invest Atlanta, BeltLine, and APS.
- Created the fund and program to rehab senior homes along BeltLine Westside Trail
- Passed legislation that requires Affordable Housing Impact Statements for all land developments
- Co-sponsored legislation creating the \$40 Billion Housing Opportunity Bond
- As Community Development Chairman and Invest Atlanta Board Secretary, we incentivized over 2000 affordable units.

In addition to this list, I would pass my legislation for mandatory inclusionary housing on the Beltline Overlay District. Lastly, I would put property tax "circuit breakers" in for seniors, disabled, and veterans across the city such that their property taxes won't increase as gentrification occurs.

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?

Some of the things that I have done thus far are:

- Authored the legislation requiring Finance and HR to study how city workers earn a minimum wage of \$15/hr.
- Co-sponsored legislation requiring the city move to \$15/hr within 3 years.
- Co-sponsored “ban the box” legislation, which no longer requires applicants to reveal prior convictions on employment applications.

We also need to stop importing talent and develop our local talent pool. Indeed.com has 5000 entry level programmer jobs in Atlanta! We should be able to supply at least 50% of that from APS, our universities, Worksource Atlanta, etc. We need to train in technology. As an engineer, former Georgia Tech Assistant Director, and current Georgia Community Leader for TechBridge, Inc., I know how to do this.

Lastly, promote calculated entrepreneurship. We need more locally developed and enhanced small businesses...but in the right sectors by capable people. That takes training and mentoring through DBE/SBE programs at city hall and the private sector.

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.

Citizens are tired of being stuck in traffic and having limited mobility options. Close enough to see where you are going but so much traffic that it takes a long time to get there.

As I stated earlier, transportation and accessibility is one of our 3 most critical areas to improve. Here is what I’ve done so far:

- Authored a resolution requiring a feasibility study for creating a single-focused transportation department. Study results say we need one.
- Co-authored a resolution authorizing the City to coordinate MARTA tax and TSPLOST transportation project lists and plans.
- Authored a resolution to preserve the connectivity to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive after the Falcons Stadium Construction.
- After 2014 snowstorms, passed legislation to involve Georgia Tech in efforts to review the City’s preparedness plan for natural disasters.
- Supporter and advocate for the Renew Atlanta Bond that has led to numerous street repaving and signal light improvements.

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?

I hope to continue to serve Atlanta and improve upon my previous efforts around public safety.

-As 2017 Public Safety Chairman, Homicides down 33%, Violent crime down 12%, and Part One Crimes down 10%.

-Led the Public Safety Committee as we developed policy and improvements to Stray Dogs Enforcement

-Conducted monthly "Walk-n-Talks" with APD and community members to walk the streets preventing crime

-Early supporter and funder of the new Pre-Arrest Diversion Program.

-Just this week I brokered and facilitated a meeting with APD chief and leadership with the police union regarding "excessive force" training.

I have been endorsed by the police and fire unions already. I helped to get raises and compression issues resolved within the Corrections Department.

Lastly, we need more community policing so that we stop crime before it happens. We have to prevent the opportunity and demand for crime. and that means Neighborhood watches, nosey neighbors, conversations at church, reminders at school regarding truancy and gangs, etc. I have developed and maintained those relationships throughout my time in office and before.

-Conducted monthly "Walk-n-Talks" with APD and community members to walk the streets preventing crime

-Hosted NPU Public Safety leaders to the Video Integration Center to see how APD uses cameras.

-Voted to get funding to put lights on the BeltLine.

-Passed legislation to establish Teen "Midnight" Basketball League which started summer 2017 with 120 youth to keep them off the street.

-Supported the Police Athletic League for at Risk youth with my time and money.

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 will keep the 1%+ for the arts requirement in every new building and infrastructure project with the city, airport, Renew Atlanta, etc.