

2021 Policy Platform



The City of Atlanta is no stranger to resurgence. As we look ahead to a post-COVID future, we poignantly connect with our roots and allow it to propel us forward. Georgia's symbolic and physical center of commerce, tourism, transportation, and governance, Atlanta is the engine that powers our economic growth, and now, our recovery. To do so, we must not shy away from what is hindering our progress. The pandemic has accelerated chasms that were already present - staggering income inequality, disparate health outcomes, housing instability, and racial and social injustices. **It is therefore imperative that future leaders possess a bias for action and a commitment to urgency that this moment demands to stem the tide and enable the City to better function.**

2021 Priorities:



Improving Public Safety Outcomes



Equitable, Economic Growth to Aid Recovery



Housing Affordability for All



Pragmatic Leadership Tethered to Collective Vision



Accessible, Connected, and Sustainable City

The following issue areas have been identified based on their importance to our City's future recovery, economic growth, vibrancy, and sustainability. They are not simply standalone issues but rather inextricably linked in delivering the quality of life that Atlantans need to usher in a new future. If elected leaders delay or under-deliver on these issues, it will hamper Atlanta's and Georgia's competitiveness, and substantially weaken our standing as a top-tier city. It will only be through visionary leadership and courageous collaboration that we, as a City, can chart the course towards a prosperous, and more equitable future.

The Committee for a Better Atlanta (CBA) is a business coalition whose mission is to foster a healthy business environment by advocating a common business and civic agenda to policy makers as well as citizens. CBA is comprised of representatives from businesses and business organizations that are concerned about the future of Atlanta. The CBA seeks to articulate a common civic and business agenda in an effort to assist the policymakers for the City of Atlanta. In addition, CBA provides voters with tools to assist in making informed choices by providing information on political candidates, including general qualifications and an assessment of each candidate's understanding of and commitment to key issues facing the City of Atlanta. You can learn more at cbatl.org

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Improving Public Safety Outcomes



- Establish a unified voice on criminal justice and policing reform. Path forward must include actionable and clear prioritization, cross-sector buy-in, and commitment to work alongside interagency judicial partners.
- Thoughtful evaluation of public safety real estate holdings such as the Atlanta City Detention Center
- Establish a clear and fair process for pre-trial detention
- Recommit to a police staffing target to more effectively support daily public safety operations
- Explore public-private partnerships, such as the Institute for Social Justice and Public Safety Training Center, that would strengthen recruitment, leadership development, officer training, and police-community relations within the City of Atlanta

Equitable, Economic Growth to Aid Recovery



- Strengthen economic development tools that catalyze private market investment, attract new jobs, and protect local funding for community development
- Support “hardest hit” industries in a post-COVID environment through innovative relief tools, stimulus funding, and improved communication
- Foster Black and Minority-owned business growth through capital investment and technical resources
- Creation of a cross-sector education taskforce to improve public education outcomes, align curriculums with workforce needs, and diversify Atlanta’s talent pipeline
- Explore innovative partnerships with the Atlanta Technical College and the Center for Workforce innovation to promote economic mobility and remove barriers to education and employment

Housing Affordability for All



- New, dedicated funding source for housing
- Prioritize publicly-owned assets for affordable housing and community development
- Support and protect legacy residents through anti-displacement initiatives
- Creation of a Cabinet-level housing position
- Dedicated resources to preventing and ending homelessness

Pragmatic Leadership Tethered to a Collective Vision



- Create a strategic vision for the City that has cross-sector buy-in and a bias for action and which governs all policy decisions
- Focused and intentional collaboration with state and county governmental partners
- Strengthen the City’s customer service function to be reachable, responsive, accountable to its various constituents - particularly around quality of life fundamentals
- Improve Atlanta’s business climate through ethics, transparency, and efficiency
- A focus on Cabinet-level leadership recruitment and retention

Accessible, Connected, and Sustainable City



- Transportation funding as economic stimulus
- Expedite transportation project delivery through leadership, funding, and procurement improvements
- Improved transparency, leadership, and prioritization of More MARTA program
- Protection of Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- Commitment to sustainable development



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Improving Public Safety Outcomes

Policing and Criminal Justice Reform

The City of Atlanta is experiencing a watershed moment in the wake of a year full of complex social challenges. Many citizens and businesses are hurting, our healthcare system is stressed, waves of social and civil unrest, and violent crime is at record levels. In response to these challenges, many voices have come forth with proposed solutions to reform our current public safety system, restore community trust, and lessen violent crime. This has unfortunately caused confusion from the public as to which strategies will be acted upon and when. Future City of Atlanta leaders must work to establish a unified voice on these key issues, in cross-sector collaboration, and move forward with a sense of urgency that is required.



Primarily, City of Atlanta leaders must work to steward lasting, healthy relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. The nuanced relationship - perhaps never more on display than through the racial justice protests of 2020 - cannot be understated; however, its complexity cannot yield inaction. Public officials must move swiftly in the refinement of policies and procedures to ensure the elimination of implicit bias and disparate impacts in our city policing and criminal justice system, which disproportionately impacts Black communities in the City of Atlanta. Further support of diversion and policing alternative programs are central to ensuring mental health and social justice issues are not conflated for criminal justice ones.

City leaders must also be willing to collaborate with Fulton County, the County Court system (attorneys, sheriffs, and judicial leaders), regional stakeholders, as well as State policymakers in ensuring solutions are achievable, equitable, and impactful. The future of the Atlanta City Detention Center must be evaluated pragmatically, mapping existing assets with future, right-sized policing needs. Explore intergovernmental partnerships that could be mutually beneficial in bringing about better treatment for our City's incarcerated population, and yield cost savings to invest in restorative justice initiatives in the City of Atlanta.

Furthermore, work must continue to ensure the continued safety of all residents, visitors and workers. Key issues include: smart policing through investments in cutting-edge technology, impactful solutions to deter youth crime, effective and responsive addressing of repeat offenders, strengthening enforcement mechanisms to alcohol license violations generally, including temporary closure of a business that is a habitual violator, identifying solutions that can curb dangerous street racing, and conducting a review of the City of Atlanta Signature Bond process and make modifications to address any unintended consequences that impact the safety, health and welfare of both citizens and arrestees. Additionally, collaboration and support of the Atlanta Police Foundation and its programs must remain a top priority for Atlanta Leaders.

Leadership Development, Training, and Recruitment

Central to our ability to achieve these goals, is our ability to retain and recruit talent within the Atlanta Police Department. City leaders should commit to establishing a police officer staffing target to more effectively support daily public safety operations. Our elected leaders must explore innovative solutions that improve leadership development and recruitment of APD officers, and strengthen and expand officer training. Recruiting top talent will require competitive salaries, first-rate equipment, and opportunities for advancement. Support for the Center for Social Justice and Public Safety Training, a public-private partnership proposal, is a key component in moving the needle on the synergistic goals of leadership development, future recruitment, and improved training to all officers to ultimately deliver improved, and more equitable public safety outcomes for all Atlantans.



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Equitable, Economic Development to Aid Recovery

Inclusive Economic Development

Atlanta consistently ranks worst in the Country for income inequality and economic mobility. In order to change the trajectory, Atlanta must expand its economic pathways for residents by increasing high-quality employment opportunities. To do so, City leaders must protect and align economic development tools that enable Atlanta to compete nationally for business expansion and relocation opportunities that bring equitable access to job opportunities, capital investment, and a strengthened tax base to the City of Atlanta and its residents.



Community-Focused Investments

In partnership with our state and local partners, renew commitments to existing economic development tools that have catalyzed private market investment and new jobs such as the State Opportunity Zone job tax credit, Tax Allocation Districts (TADs), PACE financing, New Market Tax Credits, lease purchase bonds, and urban enterprise zones. As the City competes regionally and nationally for investment, we must ensure our communities have the local funding they will need to thrive and be more competitive for federal dollars.

Commit to growing the Main Street program to support neighborhood level revitalization and support small business and entrepreneurship. Explore additional funding to provide needed access to capital for underserved communities as well as legacy and minority-owned businesses.

Support for healthy, inclusive communities that reinforce walking, parks and recreation and transit access. The city's policies, incentives and infrastructure investments must be aligned to support and achieve this vision.

City leaders also must improve the processes by which residents, developers and businesses obtain permits, licenses and inspections. Reducing complexity, delay, and red tape must be a priority for the City to sustain quality growth, particularly as the City navigates through economic recovery.

Investing in Atlanta's Workforce and Education

The most important factor in job relocation and expansion decisions is a developed workforce. Economic development prospects won't come here or expand unless they believe they can fill their needed positions from the available talent pool.

K-12 education must continue to be a top priority for Atlanta. Providing our children with a quality education and needed soft skills is critical for their success and our city's success. We must also embrace diversity and remain a welcoming place to live and work, so we can continue to attract world-class talent and satisfy employer demands.

City leaders should initiate a joint task force with the City of Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools, Fulton County Schools, DeKalb County School District and community leaders, to create community goals to improve public education and overall city economic development.

City leaders should continue to support and measure progress made to reform the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency, now WorkSource Atlanta, in order to become a better regional partner and implement an efficient, effective system for deploying workforce funds into the community. Similarly, City leaders should work to bolster partnerships with the Atlanta Technical College and the Center for Workforce innovation.



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Equitable, Economic Development to Aid Recovery

Supporting our "Hardest Hit" Industries

These key sectors drive a major part of our city and state economy. Our ability to recruit and retain global brands, host national and international sporting events, build new and exciting tourist attractions, and strengthen Atlanta's role in the arts and creative economy is directly tied to the health of these industries.

Hospitality and Tourism

Strengthen funding tools to grow tourism demand to the City of Atlanta, including funding to attract/retain large scale events, promotional initiatives in partnership with Discover Atlanta to showcase the City's vibrant cultural assets and promoting a safe return for all visitors.

Restaurants + Food Service

Find ways to promote and support restaurants offering outdoor dining, including permit fee waivers and creative partnerships to ease the financial burden of outdoor space conversions. Make permanent the allowance of restaurants with on premise consumption licenses to sell mixed drinks, beer and wine for off premise consumption.

Arts & Culture

City leaders should support policies and funding streams that cultivate an ever-improving environment for the arts, culture, and entertainment industry. Pre-pandemic, arts-based spending in the Atlanta area topped over \$470 million annually, generating not only cultural relevancy for our communities but also significant economic return for our City and our State.

Should the State of Georgia legalize casino gaming in Georgia, Atlanta's elected leaders will need to work together, with public participation, to ensure a transparent decision making process for future opportunities and community impacts related to this industry. This would include the identification of specific evaluation criteria and metrics to determine if a casino gaming development would be beneficial to the City of Atlanta. Of utmost importance is the protection of a level playing field with any future casino operator to ensure our vibrant arts, culture, and theater community is preserved.





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Housing Affordability for All

48%

Rental cost increase since
2010 in City of Atlanta
Atlanta Regional Commission

1500

Units lost annually in Atlanta
Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta



Dedicated Funding for Housing

Ensuring that Atlanta citizens have access to attainable housing across our City is paramount to quality of life, along with the City's economic competitiveness and future growth. Rental costs have increased by 48% since 2010 and outpaced wage growth in the region - all the while, Atlanta loses approximately 1,500 units of affordable housing annually.

City leaders must consider the full-range of strategies including preservation of existing units, anti-displacement measures aimed at long-term affordability, neighborhood stabilization and redevelopment, and increasing the supply of affordable housing inventory, especially near transit and jobs. In addition to the City's regular general obligation bond issuances, City leaders must work to find a dedicated and recurring local funding source at a scale that will meet the need - which latest estimates put at over 80,000 affordable units needed, citywide. Without a dedicated and recurring funding source, Atlanta will not be able to keep pace.

Use of Publicly-Owned Assets

We urge future City leaders to move with haste on a policy that prioritizes underutilized and surplus publicly owned assets (land and buildings) for housing and community development. The City has an opportunity to lead this effort in a way that compels other local and regional public entities to do the same.

Housing Interagency Leadership

Continued coordination is needed among the City's various housing agencies - Atlanta Housing, Invest Atlanta, Office of Housing, Atlanta Land Bank Authority, and the Atlanta Beltline, Inc. to bring their full resources to bear in addressing Atlanta's housing shortage. A Cabinet-level housing position is central to achieving this goal. Furthermore, we implore future city leaders to remain committed to executing upon the continuum of strategies contained within the One Atlanta Housing Affordability Action Plan.

Committed Partner in Preventing and Ending Homelessness

Atlanta must take a leadership role in partnership with Fulton County, the State of Georgia, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to reduce homelessness, street-level mental illness, and substance abuse within City limits. Continued support is required for the implementation of the \$50 million HomeFirst initiative, which aims to create 550 new, permanently supportive housing units. Leaders should commit to the construction of supportive housing and other homeless facilities to be built in each of the City's 12 Council Districts, to distribute these units equitably throughout the City of Atlanta.

In addition, key resources should be set aside to effectively address the mounting eviction crisis that imminently awaits. Swift and intentional action must be taken to ensure Atlantans, particularly legacy residents, are able to stay in their homes, through emergency rental assistance programs and housing-related legal services.



2021 Policy Platform

Pragmatic Leadership Tethered to Collective Vision

Bold and Bought-In Vision for the Future

The Atlanta Region is expected to add almost 3 million residents over the next 30 years. In preparation for even a portion of that growth, the City will need to strategically consider bold, new funding solutions and policy proposals to deliver the infrastructure needed to effectively and equitably absorb it, while practicing sound fiscal management as the City recovers. Future opportunities must be evaluated in a coordinated and connected way; tethered to a collective vision that has cross-sector and community buy-in, rather than evaluation in a siloed, reactive approach.

Quality of Life Fundamentals

Approximately 60% of the City's General Fund backs four departments - Police, Fire, Parks, and Transportation. It is imperative that the City improve delivery of these fundamental functions that drive quality of life for all who call Atlanta home. Without tending to the basics, the City's attractiveness wanes as it competes for talent, industry, and new residents. Furthermore, City leaders must be proactive in dispelling the perception - and reality - of poor service delivery in many of these key areas, to restore public trust and improve Atlanta's image as it competes for resources at a regional and national level.

Improve Atlanta's Business Climate through Ethics, Transparency, and Efficiency

Ethics and transparency were focal points in the 2017 municipal elections. Since then, significant progress has been made to restore public trust and integrity through the creation of the Office of Inspector General and hiring of the City's first Inspector General in 2020. City leaders must remain committed to ensuring the City's procurement processes and handling of other sensitive financial matters remain transparent and above bar, including regular ethics and procedure training for City employees and full cooperation with the recommendations and continued independence of the Office of the Inspector General. City leaders must be careful to ensure, however, these renewed procedures do not unduly harm the ability for business to occur at and with the City of Atlanta.

Leadership Recruitment and Retention

Continuing Atlanta's economic success requires that City leaders vigorously pursue and retain talented staff, including commissioner-level and senior management positions across all operating departments. Ability and competency - rather than loyalty - must be primary drivers in future leadership recruitment.





2021 Policy Platform

Building an Accessible, Connected and Sustainable City

All thriving global cities require a diverse portfolio of transportation options to move people and goods. Future City of Atlanta leaders must continue our commitment to expanding MARTA transit services, bicycle infrastructure, multi-use trails, a dense walkable street and sidewalk network, regional express bus connections, protection of our airport, and other creative ways to leverage our interstates.



Transportation Funding, Oversight, and Delivery

Atlanta stands poised to benefit from once in a generation investment in our transit system, through the \$2.5 billion More MARTA program. Given the unprecedented amount of resources, it is imperative that the City take necessary steps to strengthen their oversight role, and improve collaboration and communication between MARTA, the City, and the public to ensure its effective and transparent expenditure. Thoughtful review must be given to project prioritization and what may need recalibration in light of a post-pandemic future. The creation of Atlanta Department of Transportation (ATLDOT), a step that the Committee for Better Atlanta advocated strongly for in the 2017 Election, has yielded dedicated resources for a safer and more efficient transportation network in the City of Atlanta. To that end, city leaders must work diligently to identify additional funding streams to execute upon the One Atlanta: Strategic Transportation Plan, such as the renewal of the Transportation Special Local Option Sales Tax (T-SPLOST), future bond issuances, and other innovative funding streams to address our long and growing infrastructure back-log. State of good repair, congestion mitigation and place-making are top priorities. Special events traffic plans, technological solutions, and promoting the use of alternative travel modes will produce tangible benefits to all city stakeholders. Lastly, project delivery must be expedited within the City. We cannot afford to miss out on federal and state funding due to lack of political will and inefficient processes, which hinder our progress and contribute to the infrastructure backlog.

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (HJAIA) is the economic engine, not only for our region and state, but for the entire Southeastern U.S. City leaders must commit to continuing the policies that have made HJAIA the busiest airport in the world, including opposing any attempts to takeover Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

Smart, Sustainable Development

City leaders must strategically invest in programs, policies and infrastructure that maintain and advance Atlanta's standing as one of the world's leading cities for environmental sustainability. Though billions of dollars have been wisely invested in recent years, we must continue to improve water supply capacity and quality, and stormwater infrastructure. City leaders must continue to promote policies that reduce consumption and increase efficiency. The Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge and the Atlanta Commercial Energy Efficiency Ordinance have proven to be effective strategies. We must continue our sustainable growth through "green infrastructure" wherever possible in public and private development, through innovative financing tools such as Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program.