



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Mark Hammad
Atlanta Mayor



2021 Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Please type your response to questions in the field provided. Please limit answers to 300 words or less.

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

My biggest qualification for Mayor is my passion to implement change and see the city begin to thrive again. I have channeled my frustration and sadness at the ongoing inaction and indifference to the violent crime into this campaign.

Aside from my passion, I have all leadership skills needed to lead the city: intellect, compassion, and ethics and accountability. I will bring these attributes to city hall.

I have the intellect to lead and have demonstrated this in all the roles I have held over the years. My background is in engineering and I have worked as a consultant for my entire career. No matter the organization or the company I have been with, I have always advanced rapidly and have sought and held leadership roles. In addition, I am a go-to resource at work, known for my work ethic and ability to get things done, no matter the obstacle.

I have the compassion to serve and it's a large part of why I am running. Too many in this city feel disenfranchised, disconnected and ignored by city hall. I believe that it is vital to bring these citizens and communities to the table through listening and action. We need to SHOW these citizens and communities that we are listening, and not simply pay lip service to their concerns.

Lastly, I have a deep sense of ethics and accountability. Anyone who knows me can attest that I will not compromise my ethics for any reason. The city must rebuild trust with the community with respect to ethics and accountability. I will not be satisfied with simply removing conflicts of interest within City Hall, we must remove even the appearance of any conflicts of interest or any impropriety. This starts with my personal decision to not take any campaign contributions.

I am not being financially supported by any organizations or individuals and I am not actively seeking any endorsements. I have chosen not to accept any campaign contributions. This is for a variety of reasons related to my personal beliefs. Primarily, I personally believe that money and politics comes with questions of ethics and undue influence. I am well aware that this decision puts me at a severe disadvantage compared to my fellow candidates, however I am not willing to compromise my personal beliefs, ethics, and morals in pursuit of the Mayor's office.

I do have the emotional and spiritual support of my friends and family and I am very thankful for this. I would like to specifically mention my wife, who has been very supportive. This campaign and (if successful) my time in the Mayor's office comes at a great personal sacrifice to my family. Both my wife and I understand and accept this sacrifice for the greater good of the city.

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

I wish I could state the 3 greatest issues we're facing are beyond basic needs. However, I consider the city to be in triage mode right now – it's the basic necessities that need to be addressed.

These are crime, basic city services, and homelessness.

On crime, we need to direct our action appropriately. THE POLICE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCREASE IN CRIME! The APD has been doing their job. The kneejerk reaction has been to focus solutions on the police – but this will have little to no impact on crime.

The violent crime is out of control as a result of failures with the previous DA's office and inconsistent judicial outcomes. I will work with the APD, DA's office, and the courts to bring greater consistency and more accountability to the criminals. The focus would be on the most serious crimes and criminals – repeat and violent offenders. We will work to make sure that criminals are accountable and face jail time, bringing justice and dignity to the victims. We will open the city jail again to ensure that lack of capacity is not an excuse to release dangerous and violent criminals into our community.

Our basic city services are crumbling or non-existent in nearly every neighborhood across the city. The most stark examples are trash pickup and the state of our infrastructure – with some roads and bridges in desperate need of attention. This will be a priority with the most urgent needs being addressed first. I plan to work with the DPW to identify and prioritize the backlog of work.

Lastly, we need to address homelessness. Right now, the city does not have a vision, template or overall strategy to approach this and as this problem potentially scales up, we will be unable to adequately respond. My approach is to develop a strategic plan for centralizing the resources to assist the homeless. Second, we need to prioritize the most vulnerable of this population and focus on a housing-first policy.

3. Describe your leadership style and an example of a strategy you have used to motivate others and deliver results. [For Mayoral Only] As Mayor, what will your process be in vetting and selecting your staff and Cabinet leadership?

Being Mayor gives me the opportunity to do great things for this city and transform the city and its neighborhoods – I truly believe this. I expect my staff to have the same mindset. If they don't come to work with the mindset that we are vital to transforming the city, they don't need to be here. This isn't a regular job and successes and failures are magnified at this level.

My means of leading and motivating is to lead by example. As Mayor, I feel that everything that happens in the city is on my shoulders – both good and bad. I am accountable for EVERYTHING that occurs in City Hall and ignorance is not an excuse. It is my job to know and understand, in detail, what is going on within each department and that they are functioning to the highest extent possible. While I am publicly accountable for everything in the city, I expect my staff to do the same and be accountable and honest with me and their staff.

Lastly, as Mayor, my name is on the door. No one will work harder than me to ensure that the vision for the city is executed. I am well aware that this is not a 9-5 job, its 24/7. This comes with personal sacrifices for both me and my family that we are prepared to accept. I believe that demonstrating this work ethic is a key leadership trait and is a motivating factor for the leadership and other city employees.

My process for vetting and selecting my staff is to focus not just on their prior experience, but also key characteristics. First and foremost, ethics and accountability is #1. Any candidate needs to have a past free of ethical transgressions, and free from any conflicts of interest. Other key traits I look for are technical competency, ability to deliver, and ability to effectively communicate.

4. Trust in the City's service delivery and responsiveness is waning. What improvements would you make to these core service functions to restore public trust and improve quality of life for citizens and businesses in Atlanta?

I have identified basic services as a top 3 priority of mine. There are two primary ways to restore trust related to the basic city services. First, we need to go into the neighborhoods and LISTEN to what the community deems as the priorities for basic services. Second, we need to actually deliver in providing these services.

In parts of the city, these basic services have been crumbling or non-existent altogether. The lack of these services can erode the quality of life in the city and prompts residents to flee and businesses to relocate. Right now, the city has no plan to proactively address these issues. Rather, the city is reactive and only responds to the citizens, businesses, and groups that make the most noise regarding issues in certain locations. This is not viable long-term and we can do better. ALL citizens of Atlanta deserve to have the same level of basic services.

My plan includes doing a complete bottoms-up needs assessment of the basic services, identifying the locations, requirements, and severity of the issues. We need to identify the budget and resources required to bring the basic services up to standard. If this means ramping up hiring and equipment purchases to get the job done, we will do that.

Secondly, we need to employ resources to actively identify gaps and issues with basic services before issues become more severe. Said another way, the CITY needs to be independently identifying issues with basic services before we hear from citizens on these matters. Right now, the current method of waiting for someone to call 311 is not acceptable. Some neighborhoods have been forgotten and ignored for so long that many don't call 311 since they know nothing will be done. As a result, issues go unaddressed and the city is not aware of them. This has to fundamentally change, and I will put into place a new system.

5. What are your views on the Buckhead cityhood movement? What actions will you take related to this issue?

First and foremost, I understand why some in Buckhead want to leave the city. Rather than city leadership engaging in the blame game and disparaging remarks regarding this movement, they should ask themselves: **“What have we done to KEEP Buckhead?”** From that perspective, the city has much work to do – they haven’t shown or demonstrated that they have taken the time to engage and listen to its citizens.

The primary requests that the Buckhead city movement wants are not new and many in Buckhead have been asking for these same things for year – to no avail. As a result, many feel marginalized and ignored by the city.

Rather than pay lip service to the Buckhead group, my plan is SHOW them that we can execute and provide the services needed.

Lastly, the issues and concerns raised by the Buckhead city movement could be transposed to any neighborhood in the city, these are not Buckhead’s issues alone. The city needs to pay attention to this and ensure that other neighborhoods don’t replicate the same movement. It is my view that the city needs to engage more with ALL neighborhoods and listen to the needs of the communities. It should not take a threat of a cityhood movement to galvanize Atlanta into action.

6. What is your philosophy on taxation in the City of Atlanta? What future funding streams do you believe are needed to pay for the things we need to grow? How should these opportunities be evaluated?

First and foremost, no one wants their taxes raised. That being said, the city has obligations and expenses that need to be met. When identifying potential revenue streams, we first need to separate existing expenses into 2 basic buckets:

- Must haves. At a bare minimum, what is the city obligated to provide (ie police & fire).
- Investments in growth. These are investments and initiatives that improve the quality of life here and make the city more attractive to residents and businesses.

When looking at these two buckets, we need to do a complete re-assessment for each of these. First, how much does it truly cost to provide our “must haves.” Looking across the city, basic services are not being met, which means that its possible that these have been consistently underfunded historically. Unfortunately, as a result, this may mean more funding to “must haves” and less available for our investments.

However, there are opportunities to find revenue. The easiest is identifying and eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse within the city. No department or program should be immune from this search. Freeing up these funds means less need and pressure to seek new revenue sources.

Secondly, the cities revenue is not as simple as toggling the millage rate. We currently already have multiple streams of revenue, with some tied to dedicated spending and programs. We should re-evaluate all current revenue streams and assess how these have met estimates when they were created. This is a vital step before we look into the possibility of new revenue streams.

Lastly, we can't even think of seeking new revenue streams if we are not covering the basics. It's insulting and a tough sell to citizens when they have trash in their neighborhoods and crumbling streets to ask them to pay for and subsidize pet projects or investments that may not be located in their neighborhood.

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

Ethics, transparency, and accountability are a core personal belief of mine. I truly believe that I am personally accountable for EVERYTHING that happens in the city and in city hall. The last thing I want to do is stand in front of the citizens and press to answer for more fraud or another scandal.

First, it is my responsibility to model and adhere to a code of ethics and transparency. Second, all of my appointees and cabinet members will be selected, in part, based on how they value and exemplify ethics and transparency.

Third, better monitoring and controls of employee timecards, contracts, purchases, p-card use, and other city resources will be set up. My goal is that any employee, office, or contract should be able to fully pass a rigorous audit without any blemishes or question marks.

Lastly, I will set up an independent commission, with unwavering access to investigate any claims of waste, fraud, or abuse in the city of Atlanta government. This commission would be beyond the reach of influence or interference from the Mayor's office or any other department. While the City currently has an ethics board, the efficacy, true oversight, and work of the board is in question, given the investigations that have transpired over the last few years. This board either needs to be scrapped or we need to bring in the resources to allow them unfettered access to all aspects of city business.

Finally, if elected, I want citizens and journalist to hold my feet to fire. As Mayor, I am responsible for everything that occurs within the city of Atlanta government. Ignorance is not an excuse. Demand answers from me, demand accountability from me.

8. Describe your philosophy as to the City of Atlanta's role in implementing public safety reform. Which strategies should be prioritized, and if elected, how will you work to advance them? What partnerships are necessary to achieving success?

First, public safety doesn't need reform, we just need to reinforce and implement policies, laws and framework that is largely already in place.

The solution to stemming violence in Atlanta is to actually have criminals serve jail time. Violent criminals need to be in jail – not endangering our communities on the streets.

The spike in crime is solely due to the incompetence of the previous Fulton County District Attorney and the leniency shown to violent criminals by the Judges. It's the worst kept secret amongst violent criminals that Atlanta is the best place to get caught. Chances are that their case will be dropped, mishandled, or botched in some form by the DA's office. Even if they do see a judge, the odds are in their favor that they won't see the inside of a jail cell.

Further, this is not a new issue – the last 'Atlanta Repeat Offender Commission' report showed that for violent, repeat offenders that *"just 23 percent of City of Atlanta repeat offenders were sentenced to confinement"* – that's a horrifying statistic. This clearly demonstrates that criminals have no accountability, even after they get caught. This puts everyone in harms way.

Specific solutions that I plan to implement to reduce crime:

- Re-open the Atlanta city jail. Fulton county has repeatedly cited overcrowding and COVID as the reason for releasing violent and dangerous criminals into our community. Let's take this excuse away.
- End the use of signature bonds / joke bond for violent and repeat offenders. Releasing these criminals puts everyone in harms way.
- Provide more support for the Fulton County DA. We have a new DA, Fani Willis, and she does deserve support from the city. She recently asked for additional funding to help reduce the case backlog in her office. The city of Atlanta should provide all the support she asks for, and more.
- Provide better transparency with judicial records and decisions. There is clearly a lack of consistency when it comes to sentencing.
- Identify and close venues that are magnets for criminals and crime. A disproportionate number of business (typically bars and nightclubs) account for the majority of 911 calls and crime. The City should work with the business owners to implement solutions to reduce crime. Businesses that fail to work with the City or fail to reduce crime should be closed.

9. What role should diversion and policing alternatives play in the City's broader public safety strategy? How are these programs evaluated and funded?

A few years ago, the majority of crime was related to quality of life – burglaries, robberies, break ins, etc. If this was still the case, diversion and policing alternatives may be a higher priority today. However, the criminals and crime has become much more violent with shootings, murders, and violent aggravated assaults being the primary concern.

While diversion programs are politically popular, they usually have high recidivism rates, and generally are not effective, especially for violent and repeat offenders. This has been demonstrated nationwide, time and again.

For lower-level offenders (ie non-violent), diversion should be considered, but should not be a first choice. Incarceration continues to produce outcomes that are most effective at protecting innocent members of the public from criminals.

When considering diversion, we need to be mindful of the victims and their right to see justice served. Too often, diversion is a first choice, but is often made without consulting the victims. This can leave victims feeling ignored and marginalized in the process. We should put victims, not criminals, first and ensure that their voice is heard in the process.

With policing alternatives (PA), we need to open to the idea. We need to be cautious not to respond to a populist movement regarding PA without having a framework and process in place to consistently evaluate these alternatives. We need to be able to measure the efficacy if these programs and ensure that they can demonstrate value to the community. For example, do we see a change in crime rates after these PA have been implemented? Do we see a change in behavior with individuals who are subjects of PA? Lastly, PA should supplement and complement the current policing in place – not replace it.

10. What role should the City of Atlanta play in economic development? What is your perspective on urban redevelopment tools as the City competes for jobs, talent, and its share of economic growth?

Atlanta's role in economic development should focus on being a destination for residents and businesses alike. This brings jobs, job opportunities, and more development to the city.

For economic development, the focus should be on return on investment. The city has a finite amount of funds and resources and investments in economic development need to bring the highest return – this will allow us to stretch our resources further and have the maximum impact possible.

This can be accomplished in several ways:

- Focus on improving the quality of life and most importantly, the safety of individuals working and living in the city. This brings residents, business, and vibrancy to the city.
- Second, we need to rethink what investments in economic development look like. Historically, these have been narrowly focused on specific companies, projects, or businesses. As a result, the City has partnered and invested in some projects that have questionable returns on investment and come at a great opportunity cost to other initiatives. Examples include the MB stadium deal and the gulch deal. While the return on the gulch deal is still TBD, many experts and academics question the wisdom of the deal and the return on investment for the city.
- Potential investments will be independently reviewed to verify, score and evaluated on a number of criteria, including return on investment. The firms or entities chosen to review these projects should demonstrate true independence and show no bias toward the city or any other entities involved. We don't want to hire consultants to rubber stamp pet projects.

Lastly, we need to recognize that the biggest hindrances to economic development in Atlanta are:

- Traffic, congestion, and the lack of accessible transit from the suburbs and surrounding bedroom communities. This is holding back some development and prompting some businesses to rethink locating in Atlanta. We can apply lessons learned from the pandemic to alleviate some traffic and congestion, but investments in highways and public transit are needed that are well beyond the funding capacity of the city. We will seek to work with other stakeholders and decision makers at the metro, state, and even federal level to seek funding for these projects.
- The dismal state of Atlanta Public Schools (APS). The deteriorating performance at APS is driving many residents, who would otherwise live in the city, to surrounding areas to seek better education opportunities and outcomes for their children. The Mayor has very little influence or impact on APS. However, I will seek to develop a better working relationship with APS and provide resources to assist in improving the performance of the schools.

11. What role should the City of Atlanta play in addressing economic mobility and the racial wealth gap? Which tools and strategies would your office advance, if elected?

Atlanta overall has historically made and continues to make great strides in addressing economic mobility and has become a hub for entrepreneurs, especially minorities. However, gaps continue to persist.

The City can continue to promote and advance strategies to address economic mobility, however the complete scope of efforts is beyond what the City alone can provide. Economic mobility is very closely tied to education opportunity, attainment and outcomes. Unfortunately, Atlanta Public Schools (APS) continues to fail to community and its students. APS has continued its downward spiral, with no indication that a turnaround plan is gaining any traction. The Mayor has very little influence or impact on APS. However, I will seek to develop a better working relationship with APS and provide resources to assist in improving the performance of the schools. I believe the city can successfully partner with APS to identify areas of critical need and address these together. APS alone can't fix economic mobility and the City alone can't fix it either – but the two working together can implement strategies to address it.

The best strategy the city can implement address economic mobility has to do with safety and security. While this may seem strange, this is supported by research and academic studies. Too many citizens and neighborhoods in our City are besieged by crime. When this occurs, an individual's primary concern is safety and survival, not education, job training, or advancement. Further, the crime in Atlanta is not evenly distributed. A disproportionate number of serious crime victims (shootings, murders, aggregated assaults) in the City are black and the problem is considered by many to be a public health crisis for the black community. This has to be addressed and we have to reduce the crime and stabilize neighborhoods. By removing barriers that impeded success, we can see advancement in economic mobility which directly translates into a reduced racial wealth gap.

12. As we emerge from the pandemic, what are the major challenges facing the City for economic recovery? How will your candidacy address them?

There are two major challenges facing the city regarding economic recovery. The first is simply health, the second is related to the uneven recovery that is ongoing. Basically, we need to keep everyone healthy and when safe to do so, get them back to work.

First, on the health side, we have to keep our citizens safe, healthy, and alive. While the metro area has a higher vaccination rate than the rest of the state, we need to continue to find, identify, and encourage the unvaccinated to get the vaccine. We need to be vocal about encouraging vaccinations and continue to do so until we reach an acceptable overall vaccination rate. Second, we need to follow the guidance of experts, not politicians. This applies to gatherings, venue/business capacities, and masks. I don't pretend to be an expert and I certainly like being healthy and alive. I want as many of my fellow citizens in the city to be alive, healthy, and ready to go back to work when all of this is over. The easiest way to do this is to remove the political posturing and follow the guidance of experts. I plan to do my part as Mayor and not get dragged into the politics of COVID.

The second big challenge is making sure that our workforce has the skills needed to match what employers are seeking. Even prior to the pandemic, the workforce and business environment was rapidly changing. The pandemic has exacerbated this which has resulted in an uneven recovery. While there are a record number of job openings and high unemployment, businesses are struggling to find qualified employees. This is a great time to re-evaluate our workforce development and workforce preparedness programs in the city. We need to make sure that we are developing job seekers and providing them with the skills that employers are looking for. Further, we need to make sure that our workforce is career ready. This will help ensure that we are matching the needs of employers with those looking for work.

13. What strategies would you implement to improve the City's supply of affordable housing? What are the barriers to succeeding on this front and how will you work to overcome them?

Atlanta, like many cities in the country has not been building enough new housing to meet the demand for housing overall. This is especially acute in Atlanta, which has been growing and is getting new residents week after week. Housing in Atlanta is getting more expensive due to simple supply and demand – demand for housing is outstripping the supply available and is driving prices higher (both rent and housing prices).

On the demand side, there is little direct input that the City has. However, as my vision for the City is implemented, it will induce increased demand for housing in the City as more people will want to move back in town, making the need more urgent to supply more housing options. On the supply side, we need new housing and lots of it. Even though there is already a large amount of residential development taking place, this is still insufficient to meet the demand.

As mayor, the biggest impact we can have to stimulate housing development is by focusing on policy and regulations that exist. We can make Atlanta the most attractive place in the metro area for developers to build. While each *individual* element of existing housing policy and regulation has good intentions, in *aggregate*, a myriad of policy and regulation may actually be limiting development. Looking at other cities with respect to their housing policies, regulations, and development environment reveals a high correlation between regulation and housing prices and affordability. Said another way, the cities with the most regulation and the most restrictive housing policies have the highest housing prices and the least affordable housing. I don't want this for Atlanta.

Putting further pressure on housing in the City is the fact that we (the City of Atlanta) are competing for developers with other cities/counties within the metro area. Our goal should be to make Atlanta the most attractive place for developers in the metro area.

One area to be cautious is providing direct financial assistance, packages, or incentives for the developers to work in Atlanta. All too often, it's easy for developers to exploit municipalities for these financial incentives on projects that they were going to develop anyway, even without incentives. It's a race to the bottom when cities start using financial incentives to attract developers, especially when the developers can pit two or more cities against each other.

My focus areas for development are:

- Developments within proximity to Marta stations (rail stations);
- Developments along already established high density/commercial corridors; and
- Vacant or underutilized land in high density/commercial corridors – we need to put our land to use if we want to have a chance at stabilizing the housing prices.

14. What strategies would you implement to protect residents from being displaced from their communities, as housing prices continue to rise and eviction moratoriums expire?

This is a sensitive subject and is not an easy one to approach policy-wise. If there were easy solution, it would have already been addressed and implemented. The complexity of this issue is multiplied because homeowners and renters have different situations. Homeowners have slightly more control over their housing situation, renters have less control if an owner or landlord sells or decides to cease renting.

This ties in closely with my overall strategy for housing – which, to oversimplify, is to focus on substantially increasing the supply of available housing in the city. Right now, the demand for housing in the city is outstripping the available supply. Not only does this drive housing prices up, but it also inevitably introduces gentrification into some neighborhoods as individuals and developers look for available options. My housing policy, once implemented, will create housing inventory that will reduce gentrification and pressure in these neighborhoods.

One strategy to utilize is the current Westside Future Fund as a go-by, which has been in place for a number of years. We can evaluate the efficacy, efficiency, and scale of the program to date. Has this been reaching the intended residents? Is it having the intended impact? What changes/improvements can be made to the program? Based on the results of this evaluation, we can consider implementing similar programs. However, this does need to be paired with the identification of at-risk households. This is vital given the approaching expiration of the eviction moratorium. As the next mayor is taking office in January, the identification of at-risk housings may be playing catch up, not allowing us to get in front of the issue.

Lastly, we need to evaluate the use of programs to intercede before evictions get to court. With dedicated funding, we can give the opportunity to mediate and negotiate landlord-tenant disputes without the need for eviction or displacement and stabilize communities and individual households.

15. What improvements, if any, need to be made to transparency and oversight on the More MARTA program? How should candidates for city appointments to the MARTA board be vetted and approved?

[Full disclosure: I previously worked for HNTB, which had contracts with MARTA to consult and advise on the More MARTA program. Further, I previously worked with Jeff Parker at HNTB, he is now the CEO at MARTA.]

Jeff Parker, the current MARTA CEO, made a speech a number of years ago stating that MARTA and the City need a “moonshot” when it comes to public transit in Atlanta, with up to \$100B needed in funding. Many scoffed and ridiculed the idea, but I agree with him. We need to think big regarding transit and make an investment of tens of billions of dollars to expand MARTA where it needs to be in the metro area. The current trillion dollar infrastructure deal in congress is the perfect opportunity to liaise with our congressional leadership to get some funding to jump start the initiative.

More MARTA is very well intentioned, but has two critical shortcomings. First, the available funding is woefully insufficient to have any meaningful impact on public transit, traffic and congestion in the city. The available funding is a rounding error compared to what is truly needed. The second key shortcoming is the decision to politically placate the numerous advocacy groups across the city and spread the funding over these projects. This decision is not made in the best interest of the public relative to need, purpose, and impact that each project will have. As a result, we have an initial slate of partially funded projects with questionable benefit.

Bringing transparency and oversight to More MARTA now won’t alleviate these shortcomings. However, being honest with the public about what was sold and what to expect goes a long way in establishing trust and demonstrating transparency. We can, however, ensure that the available funding is spent effectively and is going to the most impactful projects first.

Regarding MARTA board appointees, I want to seek individuals who share my grand vision for the City’s and regions future for public transit. It’s vital that we think big about the long term. We do need a “moonshot” and we need board members who share that mindset and will not only think big to achieve this, but are adept at collaborating with state and federal partners to make this a reality.

16. Describe your philosophy on the City's current infrastructure backlog. If elected, what strategies will you pursue to ensure forward progress is made? How would you expedite project delivery in the City?

I have previous experience in my career working on and setting up multi-billion dollar portfolios directly focused on enterprise level project delivery (and specifically for municipal agencies). This is second nature to me and I have a very clear vision, backed by years of experience, on how the framework for this needs to be set up.

Right now, the infrastructure priority in the city is besieged and manipulated by political influence. Projects championed by influential members or groups within the city, and city administration are given a higher priority, even if other higher need projects exist. This creates distorted and uneven outcomes that leads to inequity in some neighborhoods.

The framework and process needs to be free of any political interference or influence and should solely be based on a bottom-up approach with clear, specific, and measurable technical guidelines. A needs and condition assessment should be performed on all infrastructure in the city, with associated cost estimates.

Lastly, this needs assessment must drive the budget allocation for the infrastructure, not the other way around. It's very common in municipalities for budget line items to be dictated by prior year budgets – this practice needs to stop.

As far as expediting the project delivery within the city, there needs to be two strategies employed. First, we need to remove bureaucratic and paperwork hurdles within the procurement process to help speed the time between identifying a need and fixing it. Second, we need to evaluate the possibility of bringing on additional resources in-house to tackle some of the backlog. Depending on the scale and magnitude of the backlog, it could be more cost effective over the long run to pursue this strategy.

17. How important is sustainability to Atlanta's continued growth and vitality? What sustainability initiatives have been most successful in Atlanta to-date and how build you upon them?

Sustainability is key to continue to make Atlanta an attractive destination for residents and businesses alike. There's no reason that Atlanta can't serve as a model for a "green city". With this, we don't need to reinvent the wheel – we can look at successful initiatives in other cities and implement these programs and policies here. Examples include making Atlanta safer and more friendly for pedestrians.

Further, given the large amount operations under the umbrella of City Hall, we can implement sustainability measures in house. An example is seeking to upgrade (over time) the cities vehicle fleet to a more green and efficient fleet. The city can also advance sustainability at the airport, through its oversight of this asset.

My focus for sustainability will be on the following: renewable energy, water management and resources, and conservation.

We need to recognize that one of the hurdles related to sustainability is that the metro area and much of the city is still very car dependent. Without multiple transportation options for residents and workers, this impacts how aggressive we can be with sustainability. My vision for the regions public transit future has been discussed in other answers. Expanding regionwide public transit is one of the best ways we can significantly improve the sustainability of the city.

Lastly, sustainability needs to be a long-term goal and continuing effort in the city. Over the coming decades, Atlanta is poised to become a destination for climate change refugees from other cities. We need to prepare now for this future.