



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Richard Wright
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.

I have a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and a Master's in Legal Studies from Arizona State University 's Sandra Day O ' Conner Law School. I am a practicing Certified Public Accountant (CPA). I passed the CPA in 2010 and started my own firm that same year. I specialize in International, Federal, and State tax compliance and planning for individuals and small businesses. I also help clients with Audits and CFO services. Most of my clients are minorities with African Americans representing over 94 percent of my clientele. Working with the public helping individuals navigate through the maze of income filing, planning and strategy along with working with small business helping them understand GAAP accounting has given me an intimate look at perhaps the great issue facing Atlanta, Financial depression in the urban mostly African American environment. How many African American barbers own the commercial property where they cut hair at? How beauticians or nail salon owners own the building they serve customers in? The truth is not many if any. I am running to help lift the economic plight of the African American community in our city. Crime cannot come under control unless people who live in the community own thriving small businesses and commercial properties.

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

Wealth inequality. Atlanta the so-called black mecca leads the nation in wealth inequality. 1 out of 4 Atlanta households make under \$25,000. In the African Community 30 percent of the households are rent burdened. What we present to the world is in fact a fiction. The reality is that far too many households are in poverty.

2. Crime. Violent crime in Atlanta is up 59% YTD. The crime spike is well known.

1. Financial Depression in minority communities. Number 2 & 3 and most of the issues that plague Atlanta are a direct result of urban environments not being able to financially support themselves. Crime is a systemic issue. The wealth gap is a systemic issue. Addressing economic issues within the west and southwest Atlanta will close the wealth gap and cut crime permanently. Atlanta has 30 Fortune 1,000 companies that are headquartered here in Atlanta. My plan is to create a financial renaissance in the Urban environment. 6.2 percent of employer firms in Atlanta are owned by African Americans. I plan on doubling that figure. My plan calls for creating a Partner's Council made up of retired Big 4 and Big Law Partners. The newly created Council will work with me to create a 6-month accelerated MBA program for small businesses in Atlanta. During the creation of the program, we will reach out to venture capitalists, private equity firms and Corporate America for input on the program. I will elaborate more of the program at our interview.

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?

My management style is a mix of Democratic and affiliative. I believe in hiring the best and giving them full autonomy to do their jobs. My favorite motivation strategies are providing immediate feedback and recognition of goals accomplished. I own a small CPA firm here in Atlanta. Over the past 10 years I have partnered with over 25 people during tax seasons. I feel people work best when they have clear goals. I will look to hire individuals who are committed to making Atlanta a city that other cities emulate. My vetting process will include using the Intelligence Cycle and key intelligence questions. Intelligence Cycle is the process of developing raw information into finished intelligence for policymakers to use in decision-making and action. Hiring is a decision-making activity. The Intelligence Cycle includes direction, collection, processing, analysis, dissemination and feedback. Each area is critical in the vetting process. I will elaborate in greater detail at interview.

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 plan on creating KPI ' s (Key Performance Indicators) for each core service and seeking the community's input and annual review of our performance. The citizens of Atlanta need to know they can depend on our fire department, APD and other core city functions. Those are a few intangible action items. An intangible action item is to increase city employee morale. If I worked for the city of Atlanta, my morale would be down. It ' s the same ole same ole. Legacy candidates who have been in office for years with the same results. I bring a fresh new set of ideas and plans to strategically increase the performance of core services and employee morale.

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

The next Mayor of Atlanta will mitigate or exaggerate the Buckhead city movement. This election is a referendum on African Americans in Atlanta. This election will be a referendum on the Democratic party. Will this election be a popularity contest or a contest of ideas? Are African American leaders serious about changing systemic problems in major cities across American or will continue to underperform and use racism as an excuse. Will Atlanta move forward or take 2 steps back. I plan on addressing Buckhead issues. The 1st thing I will do is listen to the community's complainants. The Mayor has to show he/she cares. Buckhead feels ignored and taken for granted. 2nd my agenda is one that will solve systemic issues in Atlanta. My paradigm for creating and cultivating Corporate/African American business partnerships and true investing in the community will increase east, west and south Atlanta contribution to the city budget, while decreasing crime and homelessness

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?

My tax policy is centered around increase growth in all areas of Atlanta. One area of optimism is property tax collection and the hotel and motel tax revenues. Property taxes represent the biggest contributor accounting for over 32% of the general fund revenue. The budget estimated a lower amount of taxes collected due to lower valuations due to Covid 19 and lower real property valuations. I believe the robust vaccination program that the Biden Administration will continue to accelerate the return to a normal individual and business environment. My other reason n for optimism is my plans for robust investment in south, east and west Atlanta. Microsoft is opening a new facility for AI and cloud support in Midtown. Is there a reason why the facility can't be located in west Atlanta? Logistically it better for facilities to open in west and south Atlanta. It takes leadership to have a vision and act on it. Atlanta ranks 2nd in the most visited cities and 6th in the US in hotel usage. We have the best airport in the world. I am extremely optimistic about the upcoming months so I believe Hotel and Motel tax revenue will be closer to FY19 \$21 million then the FY2022 budgeted amount

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

Tone starts at the top. My role as Mayor is to set the tone. Ethics is another area where African American leadership struggles especially at the local level. I heard Mayor Reed ask us to name a African America executive who hasn't or isn't under investigate for ethics and other violations while in leadership. I can name two Barak Obama and Patrick Duval. One was US President and the other Governor of Massachusetts. Transparency is more than just a word politicians use when they are asked about ethics. It's a tone that set from the Mayor all the way down to the lowest city employee. I think the procurment ceiling needs to be lowered to \$500,000. Any purchase over that amount need city council, CFO and mayor sign offs. I think the citizens should be more involved in the budget process.

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?

My philosophy is speaking truth to power. An honest conversation about public safety and policing need to happen and will happen under my administration. My program will be called Equality in Policing. Defunding the police is an unrealistic idea and that 's being nice. I don ' t like the phrase at all. I may lose a few black votes but so be it. Any relationship takes both sides working together, that ' s relationship 101. The community that's being policed need to recognize it must improve for the relationship to be productive. Police reform is important because no institution is above reproach. A Major part of my Equality in Policing Program will be to build a better relationship with APD and the community. One of the 7 points in Equal in Policing paradigm is a robust investment in Community Relations Council one per zone. This Council will be made up of 4 police and 5 citizens in that zone. The Council President will be a person from the community. Another part of Equality in Policing will be to create a PAL (Police Athletic League). The league will consist of 4 teams of APD officers and 1 team per zone. The league will start in May and end in August. The funds raise from tickets sales will go towards several programs like daycare vouchers for single mothers and fathers and capital for small businesses within the community.

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

Great question. PAD is an imitative where APD and MARTA police have the flexibility to speak with PAD associate to create a diversion referral instead of arresting the individual. I think PAD has a small place in public safety strategy. How does the policeman make the decision to refer the individual to PAD? Is it arbitrary or charge driven? How do we measure success? I would like to see how the program is evaluated and how is success measured.

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?

Addressing the economic situation in Atlanta is the biggest reason I am running for Mayor. Crime, affordable housing, homelessness and education are a result of 40 years of financial mismanagement in African American communities. Questions 11, 12, 13 and 14 are centered around the same idea, how will I address the systemic economic issues facing Atlanta in the African American community. Atlanta has the largest income inequality gap in the country. 30% of African Americans in Atlanta are below the poverty line. Until we attack the financial conditions in communities of color in particular African American communities the issues of crime and other will continue to grow.

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?

I explained some of my ideas for my plan in the 2nd question in the questionnaire. I plan on leveraging my finance knowledge to increase Private Equity, Venture Capital and corporate America investing in the black community. These groups do give currently but it patronage not true partnership. One example of true partnering is Corporations investing in small and medium sized business using Reg D of the 1933 Securities Act. 506(b) and 506(c) are the sections that allow businesses to sell unregistered securities to accredited investors and large institutions. I would cultivate business relationships between African American businesses and investors. Over the next 4 years I would set an investment goal of \$500 million dollars in funds invested through nonregistered securities offering. I plan on creating a office who sole responsibility create and cultivate private sector relationships with minority businesse

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

Several challenges face Atlanta as we look to move forward in a post Covid 19 world. Covid 19 exposed our health care inequities, our core services issues, income inequality and race relations. Can the citizens depend on Government for answers is the unanswered question. We have systemic income issues that become more glaring year after year. We need a sophisticated financial paradigm to improve economically depressed area of Atlanta. I plan of expanding access to capital for small and medium size businesses. I plan on partnering with our colleges to create more opportunities for our citizens to gain skills in construction and other fast-growing fields. Race relations and social progress are sensitive issues. I look at myself as an example of what could be. I dropout out of high school because I thought I was dumb. People look at me and assume because I wear glasses and went to Georgetown Law School, I am smart. The CEO of company I use to work for use to work for us to take me to lunch often. We would talk politics and about school. A Co-worker mentioned the fact he never took any non-executive to lunch. A white male CEO took an interest in me a young black male who dropped out of high school. I used to look back and wonder why he liked me. As I got older, I realized he saw something in me very few friends and family saw in me. He saw something I didn ' t see in me. I plan on leading Atlanta forward. Just like in the 1960 ' s Atlanta can and will help lead American forward in race relations

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?

I think we pose questions dealing with affordable housing backwards. We should deal with affordable housing by analyzing some of the reasons why 26% of Atlanta households make under \$25,000 annually. 58% of Atlanta households make over \$45,000 annually. By analyzing the gap rationally, we will come up with rationale solutions. Currently in Atlanta 60% of new construction is single family. I would work to get that number down to around 49%. I also would create more 4-5 family structures as the trend is either single family or apartment complexes. I also think a true analysis of the more systematic problem, getting people the skills, they need to compete. A big reason is people who are making more have more skills to offer to employers. How do we bridge the skill set gap? Another area of concern is the fact in black communities the only close jobs are ones that don ' t pay well. Of the 45,600 estimated new jobs that will be created in 2021-2022, how many are west or south of downtown Atlanta? Will adding a new facility in mid-town help raise the annual income of people who live on MLK Jr Drive? Creating true partnerships and increasing capital opportunities for small and medium size companies will. Creating commercial office space in building owned by REITs with majority African American ownership in predominantly African American communities will. Increasing skills sets and creating opportunities for every citizen of Atlanta is my biggest reason for running for Mayor.

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?

During the pandemic I completed around 3 to 4 hundred tax returns. A person ' s tax return reveals a lot about them as a person. That ' s why Donald Trump fought so hard to keep his from being revealed. I have seen 1st hand the amount of unemployment people got. The amount of loans and other stimulus funds people received. I ask tough questions to get tough answers. I have been in clubs where I have seen 1st hand people spend \$5,000 for a section in a club. What strategy can I put in place to overcome bad behavior? Rising house prices are a issue that new zoning strategy can help to mitigate. People who spent their stimulus checks and didn ' t pay rent need to be held responsible for bad decisions.

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?

A leader requires vision. At some point in 2021 a infrastructure bill will pass both houses of Congress and President Biden will sign it. That ' s the power of voting especially in Georgia. The bill will be at least 2 trillion dollars that will be used to fix American ' s infrastructure. The next Mayor of Atlanta will lead the expansion of Marta. I see that as a positive for Atlanta. Question is are we prepared to tackle such a project? Do we have the local manpower? Do we have enough skilled workers? The mayor ' s office needs to get to work immediately preparing for the infrastructure funds that will come to Atlanta. I believe MARTA can expand to twice its current size. I plan on creating an Infrastructure office with a chief officer reporting directly to me.

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 can expand on my plans as highlighted in question 15. An office that dedicated to helping me craft a vision for Atlanta ' s infrastructure. Tackling the back log with will increase with time and the passing of the federal infrastructure package. Making sure projects are completed on time and under budget. Making sure minority contractors are given an opportunity to compete and received projects. I am excited about the opportunity to lead Atlanta in expanding MARTA, helping cut commute time to and from work and addressing issues that have need solving for a while.

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?

I am so glad this question was asked. Sustainability is vital to Atlanta. How do we meet the needs of today with scarifying the needs of future generations? Sustainability consists of three pillars: economic, environmental, and social. One of my core action items is leveraging ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) disclosures that all publicly trading and companies that are required to issue annual 10-k reports must disclose to stakeholders. That mean creating a more dynamic relationship with public accounting firms and corporate America. Investors are looking to invest in businesses that realize the importance of ESG/sustainability. One of the KPIs of the newly created office in community investment is to work with companies here in Atlanta and around the country to help them invest in communities of color. Atlanta has 30 Fortune 1000 companies that are head courted here. There is no reason for the west end to be financial depressed. What type of citizens are our Fortune 1000 companies? Investment decision makers want to know. I can types 10,000 words on this subject. I am excited about leveraging my financial experience to real create a paradigm that creates a robust economy using sustainability as a guide.