



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Jason Winston
Atlanta City Council
District 1



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 am a small business owner; my company Winston Media Group is a Marketing Consulting Agency. I am also a part-time instructor at Georgia State University where I teach Social Media Marketing, and I have been a long-time volunteer in my district. I started volunteering at the Boy & Girls club almost 15 years ago as a coach/mentor for children in my community. I later joined the Grant Park Conservancy board of directors in 2015 and co-chaired the Summer Shade Festival from 2016-2018. The festival is Grant Park's largest fundraiser and during my tenure as co-chair over \$200,000 was raised for Grant Park. I later co-chaired the board of directors and helped lead the organization through a large historic preservation project which included over \$500,000 in upgrades to the park and worked closely with the City of Atlanta's Parks and Recreation department during the construction of the \$45 Million Gateway Parking Project that opened in Grant Park in winter of 2020.

My business background, community volunteer work and experience leading the Grant Park Conservancy has prepared me for the work of a City Council representative for my district. I have worked closely with city officials and community leaders for over 14 years to make my community a better place to live, for everyone. I hope to continue serving my community at a higher level.

So far, I have received the endorsement of former GA State Representative Margaret Kaiser. I hope to be announcing several other key endorsements soon.

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

- 1. PUBLIC SAFETY** - We must solve our public safety crisis and expand the (PAD) Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative to reduce the incarceration of people who need supportive services, like professional mental health support. I will prioritize investing in Youth Violence Prevention Centers and working to strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and private citizens through neighborhood-based initiatives and a focus on community policing. I will look at pragmatic evaluation of our law enforcement policies, addressing biases and disparities in policing, while moving resources to the programs that need them the most.
- 2. AFFORDABLE HOUSING** - Every citizen of Atlanta deserves safe, affordable housing. I will lead the way to more affordable housing by expanding the use of underutilized public assets and fostering coordination between Atlanta's housing agencies.

I will work with Invest Atlanta and the Atlanta Housing Authority to identify underutilized city-owned property with public transportation access that can be developed primarily for low and moderate-income families and individuals.

I will also prioritize working with non-profit and private companies to expand and create more projects like The Haven at South Atlanta, which will provide affordable housing to families at 50-60 percent of the area median income.

- 3. TRANSPORTATION** - For our city to thrive, it must be accessible. Investing in transportation means cleaner air, less congestion and more opportunities for everyone.

I didn't have a car for two years when I moved to Atlanta and relied on MARTA for transportation, so I understand the importance of public transportation that works. I'm personally committed to additional investment in MARTA. With the "More MARTA" program, we have a huge opportunity to expand Atlanta transit and make our city cleaner and more connected.

I will work to expand our transportation options and prioritize the safety of all Atlanta residents, including making our streets safer for pedestrians and bike and scooter riders. I will work to ensure our city streets and sidewalks are ADA compliant and safe for wheelchairs and strollers.

We must also prioritize more "Complete Streets" projects throughout the city to safely accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, public transportation riders and vehicle traffic in dedicated transit lanes.

3. Describe your leadership style and an example of a strategy you have used to motivate others and deliver results.

Communication is one of my greatest strengths. I lead by facilitating communication with various constituencies to be a connector of common ground and a voice of reason.

During my time at the conservancy, we worked closely with the city of Atlanta on the Grant Park Gateway; this project caused some consternation in the community because of its enormous scale and its environmental impact. There was also concern by several Grant Park Conservancy board of directors about whether we should take a leadership role on a project that was controversial. Through transparency and communication, I was able to organize my fellow board members and those who were opposed to the project, including an organized "Save The Trees" group to be in the same room to have a collaborative conversation. Through these discussions I was able to help facilitate a community engagement process through Atlanta's Park Pride to create a landscape architectural plan for 8 acres of park land adjacent to the Gateway project. This process helped heal some tension between different groups and bring the community back together!

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?

The city needs to focus on the core fundamental functions of a municipal government and improve upon the basic needs of its constituents. Transparency and equitability is key to addressing the delivery of services. It is paramount that we work closely with all the communities' leadership. This will foster better communications to gain a full understanding of their concerns and develop collaborative solutions to ensure the delivery and responsiveness of City services. Through

collaboration the communities will provide their input and gain the transparency to create a necessary environment of trust.

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

I believe in ONE Atlanta. I firmly believe all neighborhoods in Atlanta should be united when it comes to addressing our city's biggest issues, like increased crime. I understand that some Buckhead residents feel they are not receiving city services that are commensurate with tax revenues. We need to work collaboratively with city officials and neighborhood leaders to come up with a better regional approach to addressing increased crime and diminished city services throughout the city of Atlanta. We can do this by working closely with the Atlanta Police Department, community leaders, and the business community to work together to create both long term and short-term crime reduction strategies for the City of Atlanta. We really need to do a better job of listening to our constituents and working collaboratively to come up with proven solutions.

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?

Taxation is always an area of concern for citizens. However, if we are to continue to prosper as a city we must continue to levy taxes fairly and equitably. This includes our personal property taxes and providing tax incentives to attract business to continue our economic growth. We should leverage the economic impact studies that have been previously commissioned and charter a committee to evaluate our growth trajectory to ensure it is being pursued and accomplished in a directorial fashion. Additionally, we should ensure that our personal property tax assessments are not riddled with inflationary factors.

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

The stewardship and accountability of the management of city resources is critical. We must eliminate the apparent enticements for fraud and abuse by creating a checks and balance system that performs periodic audits of all our city employees who are charged at every level with committing and expending city resources. The results of these audits must be made public to give our citizens a transparent view of where and how their resources are being managed. Relying on long after the fact reviews allows for the potential for fraud and abuse to go on unchecked for an unreasonable amount of time.

I am also committed to making sure we continue to make our procurement process transparent and ensuring the ongoing independence of the Office of Inspector General.

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?

Our citizens demand and are entitled to communities that are safe and free of crime and violence. We must work closely with our law enforcement agencies to increase surveillance in targeted areas where crime has been problematic. Additionally, we must vector our resources towards the perpetrators and root out all individuals involved in activities that threaten the safety of our citizens. This includes violent and victimless crimes. If elected I will work with and forge a partnership with all our law enforcement agencies to ensure they are properly resourced and have the necessary support to effectively safeguard our communities.

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

I believe diversion programs and policing alternatives should be a part of our broader public safety strategy like the P.A.D. program. Programs such as, "Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative," which is a great new approach to community safety, needs to be expanded. It is apparent that the old conventional ways of policing need updating. We need to evaluate our public safety history and look at areas where a diversion program and some type of alternative policy could have resulted in a different or better outcome. Additionally, we must be creative in our approach to funding. We have to focus on areas where we can reallocate funding that does not adversely impact or detract from other critical areas. If we have candid conversations with key agencies and provide all stakeholders with solid rationale for our decisions we should be able to carve out the necessary funding to approach our public safety concerns in a different and pragmatic way.

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 is the key player in the economic development of the state of Georgia. If we are to attract major corporations that bring along with them talented professionals, urban redevelopment and tax incentives are necessary. Additionally, as we create jobs we must create an environment that is attractive to potential job seekers. This includes redevelopment projects that focus on self-sustaining communities that are fueled by affordable housing and mass transportation. Instituting the right policies and promoting Atlanta's resurgence ensures Atlanta is positioned for economic growth.

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?

In my opinion, Atlanta has an opportunity to be a leading voice in addressing economic mobility and the racial wealth gap. If elected, I will be a strong advocate of workplace development and education. My office will work with all major stakeholders to advance legislation and policies that work to close the racial wealth gap by addressing and leaning into diversity, equity and inclusion and by recognizing individual talents of all individuals.

To move things forward, I strongly believe we must commit to existing economic development tools that have helped foster private market investment like tax credits, TADs, and other funding mechanisms designed to provide access to more funding. If elected, I will also work to make sure these resources are made readily available to legacy and minority-owned businesses.

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

As we emerge from the pandemic our challenges are many. However, our economic recovery is hampered by several key issues. We lost many small businesses that could not survive the downturn. We need to look for ways to bring back some of these businesses that fit into our post-pandemic era. The shortage of workers to fill the job vacancies that currently exists is another major concern. Sponsoring initiatives such as city sponsored job fairs will highlight the need for workers in particular areas to prospective employees. And lastly, taking a proactive role in increasing our vaccination percentage to quell individual fears about attending mass gatherings such as symposiums, sporting events and concerts.

We must also work to address our affordable housing shortage and our transportation crisis. The city must urgently work to make up for the current housing deficit and work to expedite transportation projects to make our city less congested and more connected.

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?

It is imperative the City of Atlanta make access to affordable housing a top priority. Affordable housing is important for Atlanta to continue to remain an attractive place for people and businesses to relocate for a better quality of life. The housing deficit and rising rental costs are large barriers that keep us from succeeding on this front.

Currently, there does not seem to be enough coordination between the City's various housing agencies. I believe we should create a Cabinet-level housing position to better coordinate and facilitate resources to address Atlanta's house shortage. The city, through Invest Atlanta, and Atlanta Housing owns over 800 acres of underutilized land. We should consider prioritizing this land for Affordable Housing. I also believe that an additional prioritization of the development should be focused near transit and jobs.

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?

First, I think we need to do a better job of making our legacy residents and those on fixed incomes aware of the multiple Homestead exemptions that are available to them. Many people are not aware of these programs and miss out on the opportunity to take advantage of them in a timely manner.

The city also needs to do everything possible to help keep residents in their homes as housing prices continue to climb. Emergency action should be taken to offer resources such as emergency rental assistance and pro-bono legal services to address the mounting eviction crisis.

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?

There needs to be more collaboration between MARTA, the city, and the public to ensure more transparency and oversight of the More MARTA program. This is important to make sure the project prioritization is done in an equitable manner. Also, city appointments to the MARTA board should be vetted and approved through an open and transparent process that includes input from the City's business community. And the merit to serve on the board should be based on experience, ability, and competency.

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?

The city's procurement system needs an overhaul. Several years ago, the federal government went through what was labeled as Acquisition Reform. From that reform there were some key initiatives that could also be applied to the city of Atlanta's procurement program. The bidding process could be streamlined based upon the size and dollar amount of the project to move it more quickly through the procurement system. Additionally, an oversight committee could ensure the integrity of the process to eliminate any fraud or abuse.

I will also work to cut red tape, ease paperwork and regulations to make it easier to open and operate a business in Atlanta. The current process for entrepreneurs and developers is currently cumbersome and slow. This should be a top priority for city officials to help expedite our economic recovery post-pandemic.

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 do you build upon them?

The city of Atlanta is expected to add 2.9 million people by the year 2050, bringing the entire population to approximately 8.6 million people. It is so important for the future of our city that we invest in smart, sustainable programs and green infrastructure projects to ensure we remain a world leader in economic development for years to come.

The Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge, the Atlanta Commercial Energy Efficiency Ordinance, and the recently LEED certified Grant Park Gateway project, are great examples of successful sustainable initiatives we can build upon to ensure the vitality of our city for further generations.