



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

**Joyce Sheperd**  
Atlanta City Council  
District 12

## 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 been the incumbent in District 12 for 17 years and I have lived in my district for 42 years. I have worked and fought hard to make a difference in an underserved district on the southside of Atlanta. After many years of work, great things are beginning to happen in my district such as economic development, greenspace expansion, the Beltline, public safety improvements and more. I want to continue the work.

Organizational Support:

- Chris Cooney /EUE Screen Gems
- Scott Taylor/Carter Development,
- Atlanta Fire Fighters Union,
- CWA Local 3204,
- Longtime neighborhood advocates and leaders. This group of supporters are business owners, unions and residents who are committed to making a difference in district 12 and have openly stated their support of me and my work
  - Shirley Nichols of South River Garden
  - Keith Mosley of Capitol View Manor
  - Gloria Hawkins of Lakewood Heights

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

*Public Safety, Economic Development, Affordable Housing*

### Public Safety

We are short over 200 police officers, crime is up over 60% and people are in fear. As the Chair of the Public Safety Committee, I along with other members of council have introduced legislation to study the structure of a public safety department. There has been ongoing discussion of this as an approach to improve public safety in our city. Other cities are now using this structure. I have also introduced legislation for a public safety commission. This commission's role is to assess our public safety departments and make recommendations on changes that would be effective in making our city safer. I also introduced the legislation that is before city council currently to build out the Public Safety Training Academy for Police and Fire. I believe that this is the best decision for the present and our city's future.

## Economic Development

There is a major imbalance of economic development inequities across the city. In district 12, I continue to fight for decent grocery stores, commercial development, and more. Most of the residents in my district do not work with a decent living wage, which means affordable housing is in shortage. We must have a balance of equity across the city from affordable housing, jobs, training, education funding and much more. I will also continue to advocate for city, state and federal policies on these issues. Atlanta Technical College, Atlanta Metropolitan College and a New Goodwill Training Facility opening soon on Metropolitan Pkwy are some of my partners and advocates making a difference in my district and across the city.

## Affordable Housing

I have worked to balance affordable housing with new growth and incomes that are moving into my district and across the city. This includes legacy residents who have lived in their homes for over 30 years. There are 11 senior citizen high rises with more being built. The city has programs that have been rolled out to provide funding for seniors to stay in their homes and provide needed funding for repairs. I also support the Atlanta Beltline program for existing homeowners. I supported the homeowner tax decrease for seniors over 65 and have partnered with affordable housing developers to build out more multi-family housing in my district. I am in support of bond financing, land trust and other tools to continue to build affordable housing in all areas of the city.

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

I am a servant leader. I assess all sides, listen, engage, educate, and work to build consensus.

*Example:* Fort McPherson has been an ongoing development in my district for years. The communities surrounding the base did not feel that they had a seat at the table concerning the re-development. I advocated to the Ft McPherson Redevelopment Board to create a Community Engagement Subcommittee as a structure for community input. The board supported the inclusion. There is now a structure in place that includes written reports and input from both the board and the subcommittee. This structure also requires presentation and consensus building not only of the board but with any developer who will be doing development at Ft Mcpherson.

### **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?**

This is an ongoing problem within the City. My first attempt to work to improve this problem was within the violations of housing code. We formed a Commission to address the issues and transferred code enforcement to the division of police. The restructure has been very successful. We are now studying the same approach for the building and zoning department. There is an audit being done now to make the final decisions. The council is

also working with the new commissioner of the Department of Public Works for a complete revamping of the Public Works department. Covid-19 has hindered all of our departments at this point in terms of employee wellness and staffing. We have a major shortage in some of our departments. I am committed to continuing the work to correct some major changes we need to make.

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

It's unfortunate that this movement seems to be predicated on crime in the City of Atlanta and Buckhead. However, I don't believe moving out of the city will stop crime. People committing these crimes don't care about boundaries. Buckhead has been a major component of the City of Atlanta and we should be working to address crime there and in every part of our city and work to address the factors that lead to crime. Again, we must hire more police, do a deep analysis to determine where we need to reorganize in a way to address crime and public safety concerns city wide. I am committed to working to fix this major issue.

**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?**

The City has a series of taxes that we use to provide service and support to the city. They include property tax, tsplost, local option sales tax (lost) and more. There is also hotel tax, alcohol tax and other charges to keep our city running. I am in support of taxes that are fair and equitable.

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

As the incumbent, I have supported and advocated for ethical and transparent policies. We have implemented numerous policy and departmental changes to ensure a more ethical and transparent city.

**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?**

The City must implement public safety reforms that protect our citizens from any tactics that are being misused by the police and other entities of the city. We have already begun to implement changes as a result of the Mayor's use of Force recommendations.

Some examples include: training our officers on de-escalation tactics, peer intervention, pre-arrest diversion training and partnership with the pre arrest diversion (PAD) program that is now enacted in all police zones across the city. This was a result of Atlanta City Council increasing funding for the PAD program. I also advocated for increasing funding for the Atlanta Citizen Review Board, which is the agency citizens can report any concerns of police misconduct. We also have the @ Promise Center for Youth, the first location is in Zone 1. The second is in Zone 3, my district, and the next Center will be opening in Zone 4 before the end of the year. This is key in keeping our youth engaged, off the street and protected from crime. I appreciated The Atlanta Police Foundation for their support and

funding. We must continue to work with all agencies across all boundaries including the court system, the DA office, and judges. This includes any and all agencies, reform has to be a collective effort. Atlantans deserve safety and reform of public safety.

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

As stated earlier, the City Council increased funding for the Pre-arrest Diversion Program (over 1 million dollars). We are also creating a new program (cure Violence) to the tune of 5 million dollars. We must have programs that turn citizens' lives around. I serve on the Mayor's Use of Force Advisory Committee and The Atlanta Criminal Justice Commission to accomplish these goals.

**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?**

The city must play a major role in economic development, growth and equity in order for our city to thrive and grow. Urban redevelopment is a necessary part of that process. Atlanta has not updated its zoning laws in years. We are now beginning that process. This will come with a huge amount of controversial discussion and change. This process is necessary.

**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?**

The City of Atlanta has increased our living wages for all employees to \$15 an hour. We must advocate on a local, state and federal level for a national wage increase for all. We must prepare our citizens through a strong job training program, technical and four year college. We should provide a thoroughly vetted incentive for companies moving into the city, hiring citizens who live in the City of Atlanta. This includes collaborating with as many agencies and major companies across the city and country for a fair and balanced employment program.

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

Preparing companies and citizens for re-entry into work. This includes new rules and regulations based on health guidelines and a changed work environment. Work and collaborate with all municipalities and companies to dispel misinformation. Continue to provide funding for families and citizens who need help.

**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?**

Continuing to provide funding through the City of Atlanta department of housing, Hire a housing Director to oversee the City's programs. Continue bond financing through the city and Invest Atlanta. Funding through the Department of Community Affairs, and federal funding. Work in partnership with developers to provide affordable housing. Make sure the funding received is spent and disbursed as appropriated.

**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?**

The creation of a City of Atlanta Land Trust entity that would provide continuous affordable housing. The build out of existing buildings or properties owned by the City, Atlanta Public Schools, Fulton County and the State for permanent affordable housing. Continue to provide funding for affordable funding programs that are now in place for the City.

**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?**

The City of Atlanta has a process of selection for board appointment to the Marta board through the City's transportation committee. Marta also provides quarterly reports to the transportation committee. Marta is actively engaged in district 12 through Tsplost funding for Metropolitan Pkwy, Cleveland Avenue and Campbellton Road. My community and I are engaged in all of these projects.

**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 infrastructure is extremely antiquated. The best thing we did was to create the Department of Transportation, whose sole purpose is assessing and bringing solutions to our infrastructure. I have just met with the transportation department on a comprehensive plan to address these concerns. They include recommendation for another tsplost, bond funding, federal funding, impact fees and more. I will continue to do everything I can to expedite these plans.

**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?**

Sustainability is vital to the ecological system in Atlanta. We must do everything possible to grow our city in a healthy environment. That includes water, air, green space, solid waste, recycling, building to LEED standard and more. We are already seeing the effect of Global warming and its impact around the world. The City is supportive of LEED certified buildings. I am an active member of the Keep Atlanta Beautiful Commission which educates and supports community engagement on keeping the community and environment clean. We have received numerous grants from major companies. I have been a major advocate of the illegal dumping of tires and holding the state accountable for funding received as a result of illegal dumping to make sure it is disbursed back into municipalities for clean up. I also serve on the advisory board of the LifeCycle Building Center which is a non profit organization that recycles building material that otherwise would be going to the landfills. I have continuously supported funding from the city for CHaRM, another recycling organization that is supporting our environment.