



2017 Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Please type response to questions in the field provided. You may also attach a resume or other description to provide us with additional detail

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

As a Federal Program Reviewer, I oversee and audit urbanized areas for the U.S. Government. With more than 28 years of city planning experience, I have worked with municipal, regional, State and Federal government agencies. As former Principal Planner with the Atlanta Regional Commission, I delivered the 1996 Olympic General Aviation Plan. As a Contractor, I coordinated NTD work for GDOT, as well as the development of the Regional Xpress bus service for GRTA.

My supporters have offered encouragement at this challenging time of local tax frustrations and desire for political change. I believe the office of City Council representatives should be a position for public service, not a public job. Council positions should provide a service contribution to improve city operations, and not create a retirement package. My impression is that the idea of term limits is a lost concept for the majority of current Council members.

2. What is your vision for the City of Atlanta and how would you implement it? Please be specific.

Federally funded projects could provide the City with 80% of the funds for capital investments. For some air and water quality improvement projects, it could be up to 90%. I am concerned about the City's lack of experience with Federal investments for projects other cities use and which result in reduced tax costs for their citizens. The current Council might argue that they have Federal investments. I don't believe that this is true. They have pass-through arrangements with agencies like GDOT, GRTA, MARTA, Invest Atlanta, etc. I don't know all of the agencies involved. That information is recorded in the Federal report to the City of Atlanta, and City Hall is not a designated Federal recipient. The Hartsfield-Jackson airport and the Department of Housing are Federal recipients and have received substantial Federal funds during the President Obama Stimulus program award to cities. According to www.usaspending.gov (Federal Transparency Act website), the City of Atlanta operations under the direct control of City Council received \$0.

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

Crime – I would propose a property tax waiver for police homeowners in District 1. Similar to the homestead exemption, the officers must reside in the home of the waiver and cannot own multiple homes.

Blighted property – I would propose a hefty tax rate of 10x the neighborhood rate for abandoned/blighted homes and commercial property in District 1. I would create a file for each property along with photos and any police reports of criminal activity on the site.

Economic development – I would negotiate for tax perks with businesses that maintain a 20% full-time employment staff requirement. While new business is much needed in my District, there remains a need for quality employment even for businesses with “all part-time” employment. I recognize this as the most difficult of all three issues. I have negotiated a full funding agreement on behalf of the Federal government, a process that took at least a year. I am confident I can make headway on this issue.

4. As a City Council member, how would you manage collaborating with your colleagues on difficult citywide issues versus representing your own constituents?

As a City Council member, I would be charged with the task to represent all constituents of District 1. I am of the strongest opinion that our current Council representation has suspended any Council leverage in favor of votes on frivolous lawsuits and foolish zoning matters. Both were situations that an experienced city planner and professional representative would have easily avoided. i.e. Glenwood Park development and LaFarge zoning adjustment.

5. How do you view the City of Atlanta's financial position? Should the City of Atlanta have additional tools in place to ensure financial management going forward?

This is best addressed by example: If an employer offers 401K matching funds up to a certain amount, and an employee fails to provide the initial funds for the employer matching offer, that employee is stepping over money left in the street. This is not a smart option for the employee. However, it is an option, one that mirrors the City Council's approach to municipal project financing.

The City Council has a great deal of interest in bond referendums, tax increases, and services fees. All revenue fund sources which increase taxes and fees to residents and visitors. But, apparently very little interest in securing Federal funds for municipal projects and service improvements. Federal funds could offer 80% of the total costs for most capital projects. Special projects with environmental mitigating improvements could be as high as 90% of project cost, leaving 10-20% of the project costs to the local tax payer.

The use Federal funds for municipal projects provides more local tax funds for other city efforts while leveling the tax burden to citizens. The omission of Federal funds from the City's financial plan would no longer be an acceptable method, in my own opinion, if I am elected to City Council.

6. Please describe your philosophy regarding property tax assessments and municipal taxation.

The County and City's tax assessment approach is "shock and switch." Jointly, they announce the Notice of Assessment without coordinating current information. The County's property assessed value relayed to the Cities in time adjust the millage rate to the City budget. They send it out and wait for residents' reaction. Then offer excuses for last year's millage rate and/or value not being properly adjusted in the prior year.

I believe that there is absolutely no reason the Fulton County Assessor's office can't provide property assessments to the cities in time for an accurate calculation of the millage rate. It may appear to be ineptness. I believe it's an annual game they play to keep homeowners on their toes.

I remember the year Fulton County sent the letter canceling homestead exemption for Seniors. Another "oops" stunt and nothing came of it.

7. What is your opinion of Atlanta's MOST, and what approach do you support to fund long-term water and sewer operations?

During my tenure as Principal Planner with the Atlanta Regional Commission, I learned of the sewer and storm water run-off environmental impact on the Chattahoochee River. This issue had been kicked down the road for decades, at least since the second Mayor Jackson administration in the early 1990's. Unfortunately, the issue with Federal government continued and became massive penalties which landed on Mayor Franklin's tenure.

Again, no Federal funds were used, and local tax payers were again burdened with 100% of the sewer rebuild costs. City Council has suggested that Federal funds were not an option, but this is not true. They apparently don't know how to go about it and I could help. Look at Flint, Michigan. They have Federal sewer money. So should we.

Unfortunately, at this stage of the project, I would have to support the reauthorization of MOST for another final four years with a caveat to explore Federal funds in time for the next reauthorization.

8. Would you change the current procurement process to protect against “pay to play”? If so, what changes would you support?

I believe this is the central reason for having no Federal funds in City Hall. As a Federal fund recipient, the City would be audited every three years for accounting and procurement compliance. All financial activities would be reported monthly and reviewed quarterly by the U.S. Government. This would bring an end to all “pay for play” and other such ethical concerns.

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

I attend each of the four NPU meetings in District 1 every month. I have made this a practice for the last five years. This is not as a “campaign reference.” I actually attend every monthly NPU meeting. I know each of the Board Presidents, most Board members, and many residents in NPU meetings of V, W, Y, and Z.

I look forward to continuing my attendance at each of these monthly NPU meetings as a Council Representative. I would attend “in-person” (not through a staff member) and provide each group monthly project updates and finance reports, and I would welcome questions and concerns from residents.

10. What economic development strategies would you prioritize to ensure the City of Atlanta captures its fair share of future job growth?

As an often choice market for company relocations, I think Atlanta has surpassed much of the nation, and definitely the Southeast U.S. region, in job growth. However, I believe there is great concern about the area disparity with the actual physical job site location and new hire employment efforts. Job site concerns should include city revenues and transportation within the area. Employment concerns should include new recruitment hires versus transferred employees from previous Atlanta company sites. In addition, Atlanta has the burgeoning technology service market that seems most promising. I like the pace of the tech market. It's not the all-or-nothing attempt to duplicate the Silicon Valley, but rather a social blend to enhance other local non-tech businesses as well. The availability of a skilled and educated labor force would be the only concern I have for economic job growth for all Atlanta.

11. What strategies would you implement to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing?

Raise income levels (addressed in next question) and a "super tax" on blighted properties. A brief answer, but any other response would be a long dissertation. This is a simple equation of supply and demand. There is no shortage of affordable housing in my District, but rather a much larger share of inadequate and abandoned housing. The City must also look at providing fair rate employment opportunities to overcome the affordable housing issue. I found the following excerpt most troubling:

--24/7 Wall Street review of US Census Data

As one of the most segregated places in the country, Atlanta also has one of the widest income disparities of any major U.S. city. While 11.2% of households earn less than \$10,000 annually, 8.6% of households earn \$200,000 or more -- each share larger than the corresponding national figure. Similarly, while nearly every other adult in the city has a bachelor's degree, which increases earnings by more than \$20,000 on average, 22.5% of city residents live in poverty -- one of the larger shares of any U.S. city.

12. What workforce development strategies should the next administration prioritize? How will these strategies address and improve economic mobility among low-to-mid skill workers?

Our City Council often writes into every resolution and amendment some reference to another city, i.e. "similar to New York and Los Angeles," when promoting major policy changes. Yet they seek to privatize every employment opportunity for our citizens "unlike New York and Los Angeles." Outsourcing or privatization contracts should be for highly technical specialized skills like electrical engineering, actuary services, tunnel drilling, etc.

Positions like a school cafeteria worker or parking enforcement officer should not be outsourced to private contracts. Those contractors simply hire more employees than is necessary and assign work schedules of part-time employment to reduce employee benefits. An increase in profits for the contractor at much risk to the City's labor force and overall community morale. I believe this reduces employee pride in the work, often shows in the business, and simply one of the multiple jobs for that person.

As Councilman, I would not agree that we should be outsourcing jobs that could be performed by our residents. I know we can do much better.

13. What are the three most important transportation/infrastructure projects that should occur in the City of Atlanta? Please rank them by importance and urgency and explain your reasoning.

While I am certain many candidates will say MARTA here, I will present a few non-transit strategies.

SMART STREETS – a technology-based roadway of light signalization, communication notices, and multi-modal use. This would be very effective "traffic calming" by reducing gridlock during peak travel periods.

REDUCE PARKING SUBSIDIES – many zoning districts have parking requirements on new development. The City should look at reducing those parking space requirements, improve Transportation Demand Measures (TDM) of alternative travel, as well as expand Special Permit districts of blended use.

TOLL ROADS – As Principal Planner with ARC, I introduced the idea of ramp metering to the Transportation Committee in 1992. The idea was outright rejected. Fast forward: Today, it is difficult to find a freeway ramp inside I285 without a metering light.

As Candidate for City Council, I am once again pushing the envelope to encourage the serious consideration and discussion of toll roads. As travel patterns into Atlanta increase, the City should receive benefit from non-residents utilizing and damaging streets, crowding available parking, and draining other municipal services for residents. Such toll roads exist for drivers traveling into the urban centers of Chicago, New York, and San Francisco.

14. What strategies would you pursue to improve the safety – both real and perceived – of all residents, visitors, and workers in Atlanta? What partnerships are needed to realize these strategies?

It is most unfortunate that certain criminal activities are common place in large urban areas and to some extent rural areas with high opiate drug use. My focus remains with the communities of District 1. As part of my campaign platform, I will seek every opportunity to fund the property tax waivers for Police Officers who are homeowners in District 1. Similar to the homestead waiver, this would apply to Officers who are a single homeowner, and resident of a sole property.

15. Georgia ranks 49th among states for per-capita arts funding. What actions would you take to ensure our arts and culture organizations have the funding they need to thrive and enrich our city?

Art is a great benefit to urban environs. It nourishes and represents its citizens as a refined culture. I love the murals in this City. The presence of art I find to be refreshingly calming within what is sometimes a very hectic pace of city life.

As Councilman, I would definitely continue art funding. However, the only possible available funding source for additional art development projects that I am aware would be the Parks and Recreation budget, possibly in combination with some charity drives. The Parks Department has submitted a recommendation for a millage increase within this year's property tax assessment. I would explore this and other sources for future art appreciation funding efforts.