



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Mo Ivory
Atlanta City Council
District 1



2017 Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

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.

I am qualified to serve on the Atlanta City Council because I am a motivated, critical-thinker and problem-solver. I am also a 25+ year resident of District 1 and a leader. Additionally, I am an attorney with strong business and legal skills, a former real-estate developer and media personality with exceptional communication skills. I can clearly convey information, ideas and policy. I have worked hard as a citizen's resource for information and engagement in these roles for more than 20 years. Furthermore, I am an educator and community servant with strong relationships, having served my community since arriving at Spelman College in 1987. I have always wanted to serve a greater purpose for people. When I shared my desire to serve Atlanta residents as a City Council member earlier this year, I immediately received the support of several Atlanta leaders, who include:

1. Ernest Greer, President, Greenberg Traurig
2. Janice McKenzie-Crayton, CEO, Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta
3. Frank Ski, V103FM Radio Host and Philanthropist
4. Jim Voris, NPU-W Transportation Chair
5. AFSCME Local 1644

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees endorsement resonates with me because both my father and mother were city workers and lifelong union members. I am humbled by this level of support, which represents 2,000 hardworking men and women local government employees. Their endorsement of me over a 16-year incumbent speaks volumes: They trust me to be an engaged city council member who will respect them and work just as hard on their behalf as they work to keep our city clean, fix our streets, and much more. The support of AFSCME and the above-mentioned Atlanta leaders is important to me because it creates a strong foundation both in business circles and in the communities that I will serve.

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

My vision for the City of Atlanta is to see it continue to be a world-class city in which to live, work and conduct business while insuring its growth includes and reflects the city's diverse residents. As a City Councilwoman, I will focus on four significant areas:

- a. **Finance:** Our city's financial strength and stability to ensure that we can continue the trajectory of sound fiscal management and cash reserves. Over the last seven years, the city's fund balance grew from \$7 million to more than \$151 million (2015 CAFR); it's imperative that elected city leaders build on this and commit to policy-making that will grow our already strong credit rating and our ability to deliver quality city services.
- b. **Economic Development:** I will continue to support job creation through public-private partnerships, business expansion and capital and tax allocation district investments. I would lead the formation of a joint task force with the City of Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools, Fulton County Schools, DeKalb County Schools and community and civic leaders. This taskforce would identify community goals that encompass education and training to build a healthy talent pool of entrepreneurs and employees.
- c. **Arts and Culture:** Public funding for arts and cultural initiatives is valued by our residents. I want to see Atlanta offer greater partnerships with the ever-growing film and television production industry and the arts in general. Both are multimillion dollar industries that bring jobs from production itself, new artists, hospitality to real estate development. I will advocate streamlining the permitting processes to encourage this level of growth.
- d. **Affordable Housing:** We must have the courage to address our immediate need for affordable housing and housing equity. As a city councilmember, I would envision a full-range of strategies including neighborhood stability and redevelopment and increasing the supply of affordable housing inventory especially near transit and major job centers. I want to see our city effectively track workforce housing affordability and displacement and develop a formal policy with fair, affordable housing requirements for developers seeking tax incentives.

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

When I think about how I can best serve not only my District 1 neighbors, but our great city, these three issues appear to be the greatest challenges:

- 1) Affordable Housing
- 2) Public Safety
- 3) Transportation

Affordable Housing: Post the Great Recession, Atlanta is building again and District 1 is clearly represented in this growth; however, as I see the many construction crews arriving early and staying late in various neighborhoods to build luxury homes, high-end apartments and modern renovations, I see affordable housing disappearing. In my

conversations with District 1 neighbors, many like the conveniences of certain resources, jobs, etc.; however, there are others who are being pushed out to make way for these new conveniences and upscale housing options. I grew up in rent-stabilized affordable housing apartments. I understand that affordable housing for families and seniors is vital, and District 1, like other intown neighborhoods, lacks quality, safe, affordable housing options. As a city leader, I would urge my peers to consider the examples of similar cities that successfully balance the affordable and market rate housing options for citizens. I would seek the expertise of the Urban Land Institute; explore making affordable housing an integral part of the City's regular general obligation bond issuances like other basic infrastructure; and develop partnerships with nonprofit affordable housing developers. Affordable housing is simply critical to Atlanta maintaining our world-class distinction.

Public Safety: Public safety remains a critical issue no matter where you live in Atlanta. I believe in working with police, firefighters and other first responders to develop public safety solutions. In District 1, random gunfire is a major problem for us. I would advocate for immediate implementation of existing gunfire protection technology that is being used in other cities. The technology is an aid to law enforcement tracking down the sources of gunshots and ensuring safety in our communities.

I would also advocate for an appropriately-sized police force and police officer staffing target to support daily public safety operations. Understanding that recruitment and attrition remain a challenge, I would support Atlanta Police Department's efforts to use innovative recruitment strategies, training, and succession planning to ensure consistent development of the next round of department leaders. I know these recommendations—across all public safety operations—will require additional funding to recruit top talent, offer competitive salaries, first-rate equipment and opportunities for advancement. However, if public safety is the most important city service that our residents expect, then we should do all we can as elected officials to provide the best-in-class public safety operation.

Transportation: With all of Atlanta's growth underway, our plan to get people moving efficiently will continue to challenge every resident and visitor alike. As an effective city government, we must do a better job of moving people across District 1 and the city at-large. My plan is to support alternate transit options that are more accessible and to change the perception of how to best get around Atlanta. I will push for more bike lanes, walkable sidewalks, and extended MARTA bus and train routes. District 1 is not alone in benefitting greatly from more efficient synchronization of the city's traffic light system to improve the flow of traffic on major streets. I will also implement strategies to fix lagging infrastructure problems and necessary speed reduction barriers to support safe travel among our drivers and walkers in the city.

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

I would manage collaborating with my colleagues on difficult issues by being an active participant on the Council, promoting transparency and the free flow of information in order to achieve successful outcomes that represent the interests of my constituents. It is important to be regarded by your colleagues and your constituents as a truthful, honest and fair person, which opens the door for difficult conversations, honest communication and accountability for outcomes.

Difficult citywide issues affect all constituents as we continue to grow our city into an economically inclusive metro Atlanta. As I attend neighborhood and NPU meetings, I constantly hear that constituents feel unaware of developments at City Hall and somewhat caught off-guard when they learn of initiatives that have been adopted. If elected, I plan to develop an extensive communications network with constituents using the latest technology to keep them apprised of citywide issues in real time. I also plan to invite my colleagues to tour District 1 to understand the landscape, our constituent concerns and the viability of my proposals or my position on difficult citywide issues. Furthermore, I plan to be equally accessible to do the same with my council colleagues.

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?

The City of Atlanta's overall financial position appears to be strong. Our solid AA+ rating speaks to our potential to continue to be good stewards of our taxpayer dollars. This is in large part due to the strong fiscal management of the current administration, the growth of Hartsfield International Airport, and the explosion of film and television production in the city.

While the 2018 budget shows a slight increase overall, I think we must continue to spend wisely. Given the growth happening across the city and the demand for more city services—from traffic management to hiring additional workers to provide required city services—I want to have a voice in making sure that the spending is equitable across the city. I would like to see increased government efficiency and expanded monitoring of the annual budget.

Additionally, I would push for greater oversight of the city's investment in grant services and how it leverages our assets. I would work to provide information to constituents to involve them in understanding the budget preparation process and how to maximize allocations in District 1.

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

I would recommend an absolute overhaul of the Fulton County tax assessment process. I would work in collaboration with Fulton County to review the current operations because it is time to update the process to align with the advances of modern times. In addition to the City, the school district and others who share in these taxes should be included in this review. I would like for us to explore recommendations such as conducting assessments annually using a fair comparison and revising or possibly eliminating the incentives awarded to the Tax Assessor.

Additionally, I believe it is important not to lower the mileage rate, which helps us to provide city services. We collect the least amount; therefore, we should be mindful that we are providing services for more than 500,000 residents, and the impact to our services from the nearly 400,000 people who come to Atlanta daily to work and to visit.

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

I believe, like most taxpayers who supported it, that MOST will serve its purpose to improve our infrastructure greatly. When then Mayor Shirley Franklin committed to cleaning up our sewers, that commitment and support by Atlantans must continue to address our infrastructure challenges. The sewer separation is still a problem and the overflow is still happening, and this is still a violation of the consent decree. I would support using MOST to address these issues and finally put us in compliance with the consent decree. Furthermore, MOST should be considered for an extension after this latest four-year cycle and be used as a source to support long-term water and sewer operations. This will not only potentially protect our water and sewer rates from rising again, but allow us to focus on implementing the best environmental quality standards for drinking water to green infrastructure projects.

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

I absolutely believe that the City of Atlanta's procurement process needs to be reviewed and refreshed to become more transparent, professional and to reflect today's business technology advances. The procurement operations need to be revised to follow best practices as used in other cities. I would support changes that remove the onerous requirements and bring in simplified and digital practices that would encourage competitive bidding, pricing and quality products and services. A streamlined approach to procuring services will be in the best interest of taxpayers. Furthermore, considering the recent developments related to alleged bribery in the City's procurement process, ethics and transparency should be a focal point of the 2017 municipal elections. The City must restore integrity, eliminate conflicts of interest

and rebuild trust with its citizens and businesses. I also support commissioning an internal audit of procurement procedures by an independent firm and implementing new ethics and procedure training for City employees who handle sensitive financial matters. An external oversight committee of procurement practices would be appropriate and build public trust.

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

Accountability, transparency, and openness are standards of good government that enhance public trust. We must always commit to act from this standard. As a City Council member, I would first recommend an annual code of conduct review and commitment from city employees. I would also call for a review of current operations—from hiring policy, performance management and evaluations to compensation/benefits. I would expect the outcome of these audits to trigger actions to remove unethical practices from city government, acknowledge the honest and fair practices; and rebuild the public's trust.

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

The Atlanta Regional Commission recently launched "Catalyst" an effort to address and update the region's most critical challenges in economic development. The Catalyst strategy will be complete in the Fall of 2017 and will provide strong data for the incoming elected officials to use as a tool for policy focusing on economic prosperity.

The basis of all economic development is investment. When private investment fails to meet the needs of the community, public-private partnerships become increasingly important. The economic development strategies that I would prioritize include:

- a. Increase public-private partnerships to strengthen workforce development opportunities.
- b. Expand affordable housing options for those workers who are now both skilled and able to afford to live in the city and invest in the marketplace.
- c. Promote continued innovation and entrepreneurship through Invest Atlanta and a focus on small businesses and streamlining the process for them to do fair and honest business with the City.
- d. Provide transparency in the procurement process by overhauling, updating its operations and other city business services that are key to marketplace growth.
- e. Retain the jewels Atlanta is known for like the downtown master plan launched by CAP and the Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, the Zoo Atlanta expansion and more.
- f. Invest in thriving industries like film and television, which will continue to generate jobs, revenue and economic stability in addition to attracting and retaining a stable middle class to our city.

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

housing?

In this post economic recession, we know there is now an affordable housing problem in Atlanta. My candidacy is focused on finding workable solutions for our neighbors who are unable to keep up with the growth and high-end housing that is permeating District 1 and across Atlanta.

I will support policy that provides continuous funding for anti-displacement initiatives, educating communities on predatory purchasing tactics, and creating residential development alliances and partnerships with developers and investors. Moreover, I want to make affordable housing an integral part of the City's regular general obligation bond issuance, like other basic infrastructure, it is critical to our success.

Equally important, I believe our residents can be proactive and have a strong voice in the early phases of the development process. District 1 has neighborhoods that are extremely popular with developers. I want all our Atlanta neighborhoods to thrive, but that means working together with the honest intention that there is room and housing options available for everyone.

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?

I believe that workforce development involves bridging the gap in job skills. Employers have job opportunities; however, the challenge comes in identifying a talent pool with the technical and soft skills (work readiness) to hire for those positions. Atlanta appears to be on track for job opportunity for our population with advanced education; therefore, the workforce priority for the next city administration should be jobs that do not require a college degree. The research and the success of many well-known entrepreneurs show that career success and a middle-class lifestyle can be obtained from skilled labor jobs such as building trades (plumber, carpenter, pipe-fitter, welder, etc.) and in transportation/logistics and manufacturing.

Jobs need to be employer driven—meaning that elected leaders and the private sector must work together to bring in business and industry sectors that are growing and in need of employees in IT, construction, healthcare, transportation, logistics, manufacturing and entertainment.

Furthermore, jobs also cross political boundaries. It is imperative to have a workforce strategy that collaborates at the regional level. Workforce development has traditionally been implemented by state and local agencies that are funded by grants through the U.S. Department of Labor. Funding from the federal government has been steadily declining since the 1990s. There must be public-private partnerships to accomplish successful workforce development outcomes. We can see examples now with the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation's Westside Works (Vine City and English Avenue). The Blank Foundation has partnered with Invest Atlanta to deliver training to low-skilled, chronically unemployed individuals in those communities. I consider this as

the future of workforce development in Atlanta.

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.

All thriving global cities, require a diverse portfolio of transportation options to move people and goods. Future City of Atlanta leaders must continue our commitment to expanding MARTA transit services, bicycle infrastructure, multi-use trails, a dense walkable street and sidewalk network, regional bus connections and other creative ways to leverage our interstates. In reaching this global transportation status, I believe city leaders must be committed to these three important transportation infrastructure projects:

1. **Acquisition of all the remaining Beltline right of ways.** This would complete the 22-mile loop and 17 miles of connector trails and trigger economic development in all segments of the planned BeltLine area. The City could potentially secure the real estate and construction at a reduced cost versus acquiring it piecemeal. We need to act on this now because I believe this approach would position us to complete the long-term planning and the greatly needed 5,600-unit affordable housing commitment.
2. **Extension of streetcar/light rail (MARTA Street Car).** By implementing the Atlanta Streetcar System Plan, we will support our economic development goals by connecting neighborhoods and residents to major employment and activity centers. This plan is also crucial to continued managed growth and quality of life. Positioning this project as a priority means we could align it with current development plans and spur thoughtful transit-oriented investment in underutilized and vacant properties, lower traffic congestion and reduce our dependence on cars and emissions.
3. **Creation of the I-20 East Bus Rapid Transit.** This mass transit corridor could potentially give more than 190,000 jobs access to a new transit option. When we discuss economic development for our city, a strong transportation network is always a factor and the desire to improve east-west mobility particularly to an underserved part of our metro area must be included. As Atlanta grows and we struggle with having more intown affordable housing options and jobs, there still must be access for residents to connect to jobs across the city and in the city proper. We stand to win as well as our neighbors economically by pushing forward with BRT now.

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?

Whether real or perceived, we can improve safety in Atlanta through increased visibility of police officers, criminal justice reform and economic development. I will fight for increased resources for police officers and more community policing and technology that allow for them to do their jobs more efficiently. For example, In District

1, random gunfire is a major problem for us. I would advocate for immediate implementation of existing gunfire protection technology that is being used in other cities. The technology is an aid to law enforcement tracking down the sources of gunshots and ensuring safety in our communities. Working with our law enforcement leaders, I will also support expanding the use of cameras and other tools to identify suspects including individuals who create unsafe conditions on our streets by speeding in their vehicles. This is a major concern for residents who witness it daily on Boulevard, Memorial Drive, Atlanta Avenue, and other major thoroughfares in the city.

In addition, I will work to push for greater criminal justice reform that impacts sentencing, penalties and what happens to residents once they complete their jail or prison terms and return to our neighborhoods.

There must be increased opportunity in jobs and housing which reduces crime. On the community level, I want to offer tools and resources for neighbors to get involved creating safer neighborhoods. I believe working in partnership with police, neighbors and community partners, we can address assumptions and fears, decrease opportunities for crime to happen and provide safe public spaces. Additionally, collaboration and support of the Atlanta Police Foundation and its programs such as Operation Shield, Secure Neighborhoods and At-Promise must remain a top priority for Atlanta's leaders.

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?

The arts and culture in Atlanta are increasingly more diverse and available in Atlanta, and I strongly believe financial support for the arts should be a high priority for city leaders. I would push for partnerships and leverage my community relationships to seek out private partnerships to join us in moving arts and culture to the forefront of what our city should offer for everyone.

A recent study shows that arts and culture are an economic boom to our city. As a City Council member, I would advocate for policies and approaches that cultivate an ever-improving environment for the arts, entertainment and hospitality sectors, such as continued support for the Atlanta Arts and Entertainment District. Although it did not receive legislative approval in 2017, I would support a one-tenth of a penny city arts sales tax to support music, dance, theater, or other artistic ventures in the city.

A rich arts and culture community offers enrichment for our children, opens economic, social and educational opportunities for our city to welcome more visitors and for residents to see Atlanta as a tourist destination. That, in turn, fuels businesses, provides jobs, and much more.