



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Brionte McCorkle
Atlanta City Council
District 11

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 a mother, wife, activist, environmentalist, community organizer, millennial, advocate for people, and a supporter of transit, bikes and sidewalks. I am a movement builder who believes that everyone should have access to opportunities to improve their lives for the better.

I earned my degree in Public Policy from Georgia State University because I wanted to learn how to make things better for my future and my community.

Over the years, I have served as a volunteer in the 411 call center at the United Way, ensuring that people got the help from various nonprofits and government programs that they were looking for. I also served as a volunteer for Operation Hope, working to teach financial dignity to our children and our community members. In 2012, I worked at the Atlanta Regional Commission on storm water pollution management and water conservation. From there, I joined Southface, a nonprofit focused on improving energy and water efficiency in buildings. There I played a role in training and certifying workers in high quality green jobs.

In 2013, I began working on transit expansion at the Georgia Sierra Club, the nation's largest grassroots environmental organization. Transit expansion is a crash-course in all of the major power dynamics facing the city. This work requires an in-depth understanding of how the state, federal and local regional governments work with one another to solve major problems. I have engaged in lobbying and relationship building in the state legislature, city and county government. I have also engaged with the public through grassroots organizing, key to getting most policy makers to acting on a specific policy proposal.

My proudest moment was the successful effort to expand MARTA to Clayton County. On July 5th, 2014 I sat in the Clayton County Board of Commissioners building along with hundreds of other people waiting to see if the county's leaders would vote to put MARTA on the ballot. When the commission finally voted in favor of MARTA, everyone in the room celebrated. I had tears in my eyes because I knew this would help make everyone's lives better. Expanded transit meant access to better schools, jobs, healthcare, recreation, food, housing and more. In that moment, people felt empowered, like they finally had control over their lives and their community.

Organizations and Individuals from whom I have earned support include:

- The Georgia Sierra Club and several 501c3 nonprofit organizations that deal with environment, transit advocacy and social justice
- Robert Ashe III
- Stephanie Stuckey Benfield

- Laura Turner Seydel
- David Worley
- Norman Slawsky
- Carole Dortch
- Fred Hicks
- Thomas Fanning

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

I believe that people from all walks of life deserve to live in healthy, sustainable and connected communities in which everyone can fully engage and where opportunities are not tied to the color of one's skin or the size of their bank account. These qualities create resilient cities, and these are the cities of the future. I work to achieve this vision by equipping people in the community with tools to self-organize, and by building strategic partnerships to push for and implement solutions that protect the environment, create equitable and inclusive communities, and reduce barriers to civic engagement.

I applaud the growth the city has experienced over the past several years. Major redevelopment projects like the Atlanta Beltline, the Atlanta Underground, both Turner Field and the Georgia Dome are underway. They are taking Atlanta one step further to becoming the thriving, world-class city we have strived to become. The investments will pay off by attracting higher income residents and business activity to the region's core.

However, as we grow, I want to make sure that everyone is positioned for success. Some of our major redevelopment initiatives are contributing to a growing affordable housing crisis that is leading to a loss of many of the city's African American residents. It is also putting pressure on lower-income households and young people. This presents a problem in several ways:

- 1) The city's legacy is its civil rights heritage. Many people like myself have specifically moved to Atlanta because of the promise of success and opportunity it had for people of color that is not present in other cities. As we grow, we are systematically erasing that history, letting go of important cultural markers, buildings, and people in the name of development. The importance of a city's cultural heritage to its ability to thrive cannot be understated and is well documented. I believe there is a way to be more intentional and proactive with how we preserve our history, while also preserving affordability and promoting growth.
- 2) Startup culture is changing the American economy. Atlanta should be an incubator for young professionals, the growing tech industry and for entrepreneurs; many of whom moved here because they believed Atlanta was still a place where someone could make an impact. As we make our city less and less accessible to people with lower incomes, we

lose the intellectual capital they can bring when they locate to more affordable cities within and outside of the metro Atlanta area.

- 3) Low-income people are displaced through increased rent and property taxes, forcing them to locate to counties like Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton, where suburban poverty is becoming an epidemic. These people do not have access to the same services available in the city, including transit, higher education, and vital nonprofit services. This exacerbates income inequality in the region and perpetuates our transportation woes as workers commute into the city for jobs. Atlanta's fate is tied to the region's success. We cannot do this alone.
- 4) Finally, but not all, development is infringing on Atlanta's tree canopy, and putting a strain on our water resources (the Chattahoochee). I am happy city officials have taken steps to address these items, investing millions in green infrastructure projects like the Bellwood Quarry expansion, and putting a moratorium on tree removal for projects with larger acreage. Still, we can be more assertive in protecting these resources.

To address these major dynamics, I will double down on Dr. King's philosophy of building the [Beloved Community](#). I want to make sure everyone has a quality home and a good job. I want safe communities with great schools and childcare for our kids to learn and grow in. Our neighborhoods should be clean, healthy, and easy to move around. I will work to make sure our businesses are thriving, and that our streets and parks are taken care of. To achieve this, I will make sure that everyone is informed and involved.

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

As a student of public policy, I know there are many problems facing the city of Atlanta. Reducing these into three singular problems creates a silver-bullet mentality that we must get away from. Instead, I have grouped numerous issues into three major categories:

I. Improving Our Neighborhoods

I know that a major challenge for the city is attracting businesses and families into the city. The quality of a neighborhood is a major determining factor for where businesses and families choose to locate.

- Get more resources for code enforcement to end blight. The City of Atlanta currently has 15,000 abandoned homes and buildings that are located in the city limits. Among other things, I will explore something similar to Cobb County's proposed "Community Redevelopment Tax Incentive Program" to encourage absentee property owners to act on their holdings, and will direct the funds generated back into the code enforcement department.
- Fix roads and sidewalks, and improve bike lanes and transit access in neighborhoods that need them most. Thankfully, Renew Atlanta, TSPLOST and the MARTA expansion have allowed us to make substantial progress in this area. I am particularly interested in the

project prioritization process for the MARTA expansion as Emory attempts to join the city to get the Clifton Corridor built. I am actively working with MARTA and city planners on this. I also support the effort to establish a city Department of Transportation to consolidate an array of roadway, transit, and infrastructural responsibilities. This will streamline planning and implementation of projects for city works, and allow frustrated residents to have a clear understanding of the status of any projects impacting their ability to move around.

- Attract investment to bring Cascade Heights, Campbellton Road, and Greenbriar Mall back to life. This is specific to my district. The Campbellton Road smart corridor project is promising, as is the Greenbriar Mall LCI. Nearby projects like the Ft. Mac redevelopment, Atlanta Beltline westside trail, and Aerotropolis initiatives will help activate southwest Atlanta—a huge, but underplayed asset for the city—adding to the city’s tax digest. I am also interested in establishing an overlay on Campbellton road and reactivating the TADs in our area.
- Create a proactive plan for historic preservation in the city, encouraging public art installations to support placemaking
- Simplify permitting to make it easier for locally-owned, small businesses to start up. We need to increase community commerce. A common complaint is that navigating the permitting process is difficult. I’d like to identify inefficiencies in the permitting process, as well as working with Invest Atlanta to increase knowledge of their small business development initiatives.
- Stop the dumping in our community and improve our recycling culture.
- Protect our trees and advance our sustainability efforts. I’ve been involved in the 100 Resilient Cities initiative and the city’s commitment to be powered by 100% clean energy by 2035. I am looking forward to the plans that are produced from these efforts, and making it a priority to allocate resources and adopt legislation necessary to achieve their goals. I am anticipating needing to increase funding for the Office of Resilience, Sustainability, and public works; as well as facilitating zoning code and building code rewrites.

II. A City that Works for Everyone

Another key factor for businesses is access to an educated and stable workforce. Families too are moving to cities where they believe they can live comfortably and pursue opportunities to improve their lives.

- Expand our affordable housing policies to keep our seniors and low-income people in their homes. I am particularly interested in expanding the Inclusionary zoning ordinance for people living below 60% AMI, and expanding the Westside Ant-Displacement tax fund that will pay qualifying homeowners’ property tax increases, and implementing anti-displacement zones that cap property taxes in exchange for a cap on rental rates.
- Build partnerships with AWDA, unions, universities and the state to provide job training for young people in Atlanta’s existing and emerging industries like film and music, tech, healthcare, and green infrastructure. For example, [the Georgia Film Academy](#) is an

collaborative program that could be expanded with the city to include programs for APS students.

- Strengthen the city's relationship with Atlanta Public Schools; Establish a Board of Early Childhood Development to pursue public-private partnerships for a minimum of \$20 million in yearly funding for early childhood development initiatives in the city.
- Work with the state and Fulton County to reduce marijuana penalties in our city and stop destroying the futures of our young men. I support making marijuana a ticketed offence, as it currently serves as an introduction point into the criminal justice system for most young African American men; we are losing a whole generation of people who could otherwise be successful contributors to Atlanta's economy
- I also support working with the state and Fulton County to adjust the juvenile point system, ensuring that the most violent young offenders are held accountable for their actions and not perpetually released
- I supported increasing pay for all city workers to \$15 an hour, and investing in higher salaries and more training for our police and firefighters who keep the city safe

III. Keeping People Informed and Involved

Much of the discontent in the city is that residents and business owners feel like development is happening at their expense. Inclusive decision-making with more thorough public engagement almost always leads to more equitable outcomes, allowing businesses and residents to have buy-in and position themselves to take advantage of growth—not allowing growth to take advantage of them.

1. Attend one of the four NPU meetings in my district each month, allowing for a total of 3 visits per year. These visits will be structured as town hall meetings to keep my residents informed on what is going on and how it affects them
2. Reinvest in and revitalize our NPU system and Atlanta Planning Advisory Board (APAB) by increasing resources for training for citizen leaders and communications with the public about their activities.
3. Use my city council budget to hire a full-time staff person who will help residents navigate solving issues they have with the city
4. Be more transparent by posting all city contracts and spending online in a searchable format. This includes a potential re-design of the current bidding process, allowing contractors to easily see criteria for project selection and understand why they were or were not selected for a given contract.
5. **As a City Council member, how would you manage collaborating with your colleagues on difficult citywide issues versus representing your own constituents?**

After engaging with the Georgia State legislature for several years, as well as working on regional transit expansion, I have found that the best approach is to begin with relationship building. I must understand the key priorities, demographics, assets and concerns in other districts. I must also understand these dynamics from a city and region-wide perspective. Relationship building with the other council members should begin immediately, before any controversial issues arise. Once they do, it is essential to engage in committee meetings where questions and concerns

should be raised. From there, I would meet with other council members individually as needed to address their concerns and work out compromises. If we do not arrive at a mutually agreeable conclusion, I would identify another person to reach out to the council person that may be better suited to negotiate a compromise. Most importantly for me, I will assemble a list of my priorities and ensure that other council people are aware of them as they make decisions.

4. 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?

I am aware the city's fund balance grew from \$7 million to over \$151 million under Mayor Reed's watch. I am also aware of other substantial public investments such as the renewed MOST, Renew Atlanta bond, TSPLOST, \$6 billion airport expansion and more. Overall, I think the city has plenty of resources to address its needs. I'm concerned about ensuring departments are properly resourced during the annual budget process, and structured in a way that will ensure successful implementation of all of these projects.

As I suggested above, the city should be more transparent by posting all city contracts and spending online in a searchable format. This includes a potential re-design of the current bidding process, allowing contractors to easily see criteria for project selection and understand why they were or were not selected for a given contract. This holds us accountable to picking the best contractors for our city, and ensuring dollars are being spent responsibly.

Finally, I am interested in a more robust business and public engagement process during budget process. One public hearing is not enough.

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

Taxes pay for vital city services. I would like to see properties assessed consistently and fairly across the city. A common complaint in my district is that our properties are consistently valued lower, despite us having similar, if not better assets than other neighborhoods in Atlanta. I believe tax assessments should reflect the actual value of the properties, and to keep up with rising values each year.

If we fall on hard times, I think it is our responsibility to examine eliminating ineffective programs, reducing bloated department budgets, and pursuing additional private and non profit partnerships to solve any funding gaps before resorting to increasing property taxes.

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

I voted to renew the MOST in 2016 and will continue to do so each time it is on the ballot. With water infrastructure crumbling all over the nation and no clear pathway for increased federal support, this tax provides a vital tool to finance our federally mandated Clean Water Atlanta infrastructure overhaul and keep water rates lower than they would be otherwise. As it stands, I do not see a better way to fund these operations. Further, I support the current renewal process as it keeps us accountable to Atlanta residents to deliver tangible improvements to our water infrastructure.

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

The measures the city enacted earlier this year in response to the unfolding scandal applied primarily to emergency contracts. Those measures included a mandate to explain why the city chose one contractor over another during the emergency and also justify any costs above a certain amount in the contract. The office then must make that contract public within three days. I support making these measures apply to all contracts, allotting for a two-week window instead to make any executed public contracts public.

I stated above that I support putting all executed city contracts online in a searchable format. I would like a portal that allows contractors to easily see criteria for project selection, understand how their proposal scored, and clearly identify why they were or were not selected for a given contract. After speaking with several contractors, they have expressed frustration with not knowing why their proposals are rejected in favor of others. This holds us accountable to picking the best contractors for our city, and ensures dollars are being spent responsibly.

I would be open to conversation on creating an oversight committee for procurement. Though, I am wary of duplication and overcomplication. The city already has an independent board of ethics, in addition to numerous other oversight committees, commissions and boards. All of these are not functioning at their full ability. Rather than creating yet another board to be filled and supported, it may be best to examine the current ethics board, determine ways in which it can be more effective in general and with procurement, and restructure as necessary.

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

Again, the Atlanta Board of Ethics is an independent city agency charged with bringing the City of Atlanta into compliance with the Code of Ethics and instilling a culture of ethics within city government. I am hearing that this board is not serving its purpose. I would commission a program evaluation of the board to identify what needs to change. I am also open to working with the mayor's office and the COO to conduct evaluations for each department to explore

workflow improvements, process enhancements, that might help employees improve service delivery. I'm also interested in implementing mandatory ethics and procedure training for all city employees, especially those who handle sensitive financial matters.

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

Activate our workforce through investing in our people:

- Simplify permitting to make it easier for locally-owned, small businesses to start up. We need to increase community commerce. A common complaint is that navigating the permitting process is difficult. I'd like to identify inefficiencies in the permitting process, as well as working with Invest Atlanta to increase knowledge of their small business development initiatives.
- Building partnerships with AWDA, unions, universities and the state to provide job training for young people in Atlanta's existing and emerging industries like film and music, tech, healthcare, and green infrastructure. For example, [the Georgia Film Academy](#) is an collaborative program that could be expanded with the city to include programs for APS students.

Create communities businesses want to move in:

- Get more resources for code enforcement to end blight. The City of Atlanta currently has 15,000 abandoned homes and buildings that are located in the city limits. Among other things, I will explore something similar to Cobb County's proposed "Community Redevelopment Tax Incentive Program" to encourage absentee property owners to act on their holdings, and will direct the funds generated back into the code enforcement department.
- Fix roads and sidewalks, and improve bike lanes and transit access in neighborhoods that need them most. Thankfully, Renew Atlanta, TSPLOST and the MARTA expansion have allowed us to make substantial progress in this area. I am particularly interested in the project prioritization process for the MARTA expansion as Emory attempts to join the city to get the Clifton Corridor built. I am actively working with MARTA and city planners on this. I also support the effort to establish a city Department of Transportation to consolidate an array of roadway, transit, and infrastructural responsibilities. This will streamline planning and implementation of projects for city works, and allow frustrated residents to have a clear understanding of the status of any projects impacting their ability to move around.
- Attract investment to bring Cascade Heights, Campbellton Road, and Greenbriar Mall back to life. This is specific to my district. The Campbellton Road smart corridor project is promising, as is the Greenbriar Mall LCI. Nearby projects like the Ft. Mac redevelopment,

Atlanta Beltline westside trail, and Aerotropolis initiatives will help activate southwest Atlanta—a huge, but underplayed asset for the city—adding to the city’s tax digest. I am also interested in establishing an overlay on Campbellton road and reactivating the TADs in our area.

- Create a proactive plan for historic preservation in the city, encouraging public art installations to support placemaking

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

Expand our affordable housing policies to keep our seniors and low-income people in their homes. I am particularly interested in expanding the Inclusionary zoning ordinance for people living below 60% AMI, and expanding the Westside Ant-Displacement tax fund that will pay qualifying homeowners’ property tax increases, and implementing anti-displacement zones that cap property taxes in exchange for a cap on rental rates. I also want to explore making affordable housing a key part of the permitting process.

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

- Building partnerships with AWDA, unions, universities and the state to provide job training for young people in Atlanta’s existing and emerging industries like film and music, tech, healthcare, and green infrastructure. For example, [the Georgia Film Academy](#) is an collaborative program that could be expanded with the city to include programs for APS students.

12. 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.

Bellwood Quarry – We need an expanded water supply as strain on the Chattahoochee increases.

Campbellton Road light rail – We need to reactivate the city’s southwest side as an active contributor to the city’s tax base.

Atlanta Underground and Turner Field – These redevelopments are major portions of the city and will set precedent for how the city does redevelopment moving forward.

13. 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?

People commit crime out of economic necessity. My goal is to create opportunities rather than overpolice our communities.

Short Term

- JSD Protective Services - Neighborhood patrol
- Expand the new [Atlanta/Fulton County Pre-Arrest Diversion program](#). Officers will be able to offer someone with a low-level offense access to mental health services and housing, rather than having jail as the only option. Over two years, the \$2.2 million pilot program seeks to help 150 people who are committing crimes of poverty and homelessness.
- Continue to work with county and state to reduce penalization for marijuana possession
- Invest in our police officers so they perform better through increased pay and more training, especially on dealing with racial and mental health situations

Long Term

- Work with Fulton County on an anti-recidivism program. Promote rehabilitation programs for pre and post adjudication first-time, nonviolent, youthful offenders. Rehabilitative programs enhance the employment

potential of individuals with a criminal record while emphasizing the safekeeping of our communities.

- Work with the county and state to reform our juvenile system to keep repeat, violent offenders off the streets

14. 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?

I support the 0.1% sales tax increase for the arts. I would like to see those funds be competitively applied for annually, and not all be directed to mega-art institutions at the expense of supporting locally-based artists.