



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Zelda Jackson
Atlanta City Council
District 2

2017 Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

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.

My qualifications includes the experience of working in the Congressional 5th District Office under the leadership of Congressman John Lewis as a Special Assistant, Atlanta Council District 2 as Chief of Staff under Councilperson Debi M. Starnes, Legislative Aide for Representative Alisha Thomas Morgan District 39, and a Contractor to the Municipal Clerk Rhonda Dauphin Johnson of the City of Atlanta. I have the ability to ensure timely resolution of constituent issues, reviewing proposed changes in laws, policies, and practices to identify potential public relations issues and possible impact on the City of Atlanta. I have assisted with the development and analysis of proposed state legislation and its impact on the communities they affect. I am an individual who possess the ability to develop and maintain effective working relationships with legislative advocacy groups on a local, state and national level.

The five individuals who are actively supporting my candidacy are as follows:

Johnny L. Barrett
Keisha Carter Brown
Ray Cobbs
Sonny Royal
Marvin Smith

Each individual has advised, brought their unique talents, skills, and guidance to enable me to bring my Vision forth to the constituents of District 2 City of Atlanta. I am growing and developing my presence, and my leadership skill set with the assistances of each person on my team. Their support is important in all the above mentioned talents they have shared with me. You have to get the right people on your team to make you better! These individuals that have graciously given of their time, expertise, and are on my team to make me better. They know more than myself in areas of organizing a campaign, voter history, social media, advocacy, and fundraising. I am thankful to have each one, and expressed that to them daily.

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 solve the each issue on the grassroots level. We need to go back to the communities, and open up our lines for communication. We must get everyone involved in this process from the oldest to the youngest. I want to do away with the exclusivity that has developed in our City. I would like to hold monthly Town Hall Meetings where the panels will consist of your local church pastors, Councilperson, School Board Representative, State Representative, County Commissioner, Atlanta Fire & Police, all City Utilities, and US House Representatives. In these Town Hall Meetings, the constituents will have the opportunity to meet, know, and learn how to communicate issues they may have, and how to solve them together. I would like these Town Hall meetings to be on the weekend, and at a time when all will be able to attend. Each meeting would be held to give the constituent the opportunity to be heard, then a follow up meeting to state the action that was taken for each issue. Then I would like to formulate a newsletter, this will inform the constituent who may not have a computer or access to the internet, on how to stay involved in their community.

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

The three greatest issues or problems facing the City of Atlanta are as follows: Gentrification, Our Youth Plaque with Drugs & Crime, and a Loss of Revenue.

The Plan to Combat Gentrification

The steps to become an opponent to gentrification are many. First a neighborhood must be organized. We must start developing Workshops and Town Hall meetings in the affected neighborhoods to educate Constituents on what is happening to their community. Each Council Member must have an appointed chair in each neighborhood that will hold monthly meetings to address their concerns of gentrification. The Council Member should appoint chairs ranging from 25 to 35 years of age. The key is to get the involvement of the BUPPIE[i] networking group to sustain growth back into the community.

The chairs must be able to identify their particular vulnerabilities concerning gentrification in their perspective neighborhoods. The main factors that promote great risk to each district stems from the fact that it is a predominantly older black community, next the great amount of displacement of the elderly/disabled, vacant buildings, also those with the most limited incomes who are facing eviction, lastly when the ethnic companies and service organizations can no longer afford rent in the neighborhood. There are four major categories of action that can help to stabilize a gentrifying neighborhood. The first stage is redevelopment of public and nonprofit structures. The second stage affordable housing made readily, the third stage stabilize the rent (rent control), and the fourth stage would be property tax control, in the form of as a Tax Allocation District or Empowerment Zone. Together, they form the basis for an anti-displacement strategy. Whether communities are working to rehab and fill vacant buildings in abandoned city hubs or to improve community infrastructure in fully populated low-income neighborhoods, a clear housing affordability plan should always be in place first.

First Stage involves some significant public or nonprofit redevelopment investment and/or private newcomers buying and rehabbing vacant units. In the next stage, the neighborhood's low housing costs and other features become known and housing costs rise. Displacement begins as landlords take advantage of rising market values and evict long-time residents in order to rent or sell to the more well-to-do. Gradually, newcomers are more probable to be homeowners, and the rising property values cause down payment requirements to increase. With new residents come commercial services that serve higher income levels now lower income residents cannot participate in spending. As rehabilitation develops more obvious, prices escalate and displacement arises in power. New residents have lesser acceptance for current social service facilities that serve homeless populations or other low-income requests; as well as industrial and other uses they view as unwelcome. Original residents are moved along with their businesses, commercial initiatives, churches and ethnic traditions.

Gentrification/displacement is felt most severely in historic communities of color. While community activists have worked diligently to entice new venture to their capital-starved communities, they acknowledge that only just have they begun to exercise the implements or power to essentially mediate and readdress development projects that may bring destruction to the community.

A valuation will usually involve [community mapping efforts](#) that identify renter-to-homeowner rates, vacancy and abandonment taxes, affordability keys (rent or mortgage as percentage of household income) and spatial analyses of race and poverty. The valuation must be tailored to the particular state of affairs. Stabilize current renters. This can contain evaluating dislocation rates, constructing emergency monies for rental assistance, eliminating discriminatory obstacles that renters face or crafting rent stabilization policies such as eviction controls and rent increase programs.

Regulate Land for Community Development. Land use, tax and zoning policies all shape reasonable developments; a housing affordability plan cannot prosper without taking them into account. Communities must evaluate zoning and public land indications and navigate them in the direction of their goals. This will consist of supporting inclusionary zoning ordinances, mixed-use and transit-oriented development and density requirements, all of which can boost affordability and mixed-income areas.

Form Income and Assets Establishment. While stabilizing housing affordability and guaranteeing appropriate features are vital modules of neighborhood planning, income and asset creation are critical to ensuring resident welfare as the neighborhood economy develops. Providing needed resident services—child care, transportation, a basic retail sector and access to health care is a necessity for success. Securing public investment to local-hire and living-wage requirements or otherwise connecting land use decisions to local asset foundations can considerably lessen adverse dislocation burdens by taking some of the benefits of the new investment to current residents.

Cultivate Financing Strategies. Practical financing strategies can provide neighborhood-detailed ways to fund the other three types of action. They are normally most active in communities that anticipate gentrification burdens prior to redevelopment, since communities previously suffering displacement face increased real estate prices and existing capital will not go as far. Opportunities for backing are ample, and can be directed at nonprofits, private developers, or even landlords. They consist of investments from labor union pension funds and regional business associations, exactions and fees on commercial developments, tax increment financing and eminent domain, bank investments under the Community Reinvestment Act, Community Credit Unions and tax abatements, credits and deferments.

Lastly, I advise the focus should mainly be on the elderly in your district. Once your district creates an outreach program that meets monthly to advise each resident over 55 years informing them of services that are available to help combat gentrification. This program will assist one if they cannot pay property taxes, counsel the elderly on pre-need services by neighborhood funeral home's, assistance of medical bills/medications, and all around estate planning so their homes would not be lost for any of the above needs. The Council Member can combine the Mentorship Program (previous draft copy) and this plan to stop Gentrification so the community will work together as a whole, the youth combined with the buppies, and the elderly working together to make your district a more sustainable vital community within the City of Atlanta.

1. [i] A young urban black professional; a black yuppie.

THE YOUTH INITIATIVE PROGRAM

The goal of the Youth Initiative Program for the City of Atlanta is to help shape the prospects of the youth. Teens who are in a troubled environment and circumstances, may need extra help acquiring skill sets that will make them competitive in today's marketplace. Throughout my years, in various positions in life, I have worked with teens and mentored students. I noticed that most of these students before being mentored, did not possess the life skills necessary to remain competitive as they transitioned into adulthood. I want to change that. I want to place myself into their surroundings, gain knowledge of their lifestyle, and prepare them with the correct mindset to thrive while transitioning into adulthood. Ultimately instilling in them a sense of pride and accomplishment which can only motivate them to be successful residents. Creating a culture of "Oneness" or community by giving back to the students/youth. After being elected as Councilperson for District 2 City of Atlanta, I would like to deploy a program capable of creating scholars, or at the very least young adults empowered with knowledge which demystifies everyday life in the working world, as they come of age.

The Youth Initiative Program, will benefit at risk youth between the ages of 14-18. I will introduce a program geared toward the youth of Fulton County who may qualify for or already benefit from the Department of Family and Children Services(DFCS). We as a community must stop the "throwaway syndrome" once a child reaches the age of 18. If a child reaches 18 and does not receive proper guidance on self-governance, this 18 year old in the eyes of the law is an adult, but mentally they are still a child. The Youth Initiative Program will allow kids the opportunity to become viable adults through internships within the City of Atlanta throughout the different

departments. We will also offer various training classes to equip our students with a knowledge base that preps them for today's job market. This mentorship program invites students to a 4-year commitment. The youth involved enter the program receiving a paid internship of minimum wage. The goals of the program are:

1. Teach students how to manage their money, e.g. maintain a bank account, and pay bills.
2. Make them more health conscience of their food purchases and preparation.
3. Teach them about credit and how to maintain a healthy credit score.
4. Show them all of the requirements for purchasing and managing a home.
5. Teach them the "ins and outs" of purchasing a vehicle e.g. insurance, car care, tags.
6. Continued education in the form of technical classes, e.g. Microsoft Office, Web Development, Computer Networking.
7. Bi weekly forums to discuss their progress and their challenges to ensure that each student gets the attention they need to nurture their success.

Each tier of requirements will have a partnership with institutions within City of Atlanta/Fulton County. After completion of this mentorship, a youth will possess the tools needed to become a productive adult. The projected time line to start up Youth Initiative Program will begin upon my inauguration as Atlanta City Councilmember. I believe your success as a Council Member can only be based on the people that you assisted while in office, and the fulfillment you brought to their lives. I want to be able to change the outlook of the at risk youth, and promoting this community based organization is the key to their new healthy environment. Throughout the years I have thrown myself into community service, neighborhood groups, and nonprofit organizations. I wish to give back to my community in the areas that have demonstrated a true need.

My future goals are to take this community program to the adjacent counties, then nationally. The timeline for shifting my mentoring program to adjacent counties such as, Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Clayton ranges from 10 to 15 years. Moving my Youth Initiative to a national level starting with neighboring states such as South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi may take at least 20 years. My goal is to use Fulton County as a model. Then enact a progressive move to other counties, and states. The youth are the most valuable asset that the community can invest in. By cultivating and gifting at risk teens with the aforementioned skill sets, we can shape the future of the nation to include scholars and entrepreneurs that the world may have otherwise never known.

24 HR Entertainment District

My vision is to create a 24-hour entertainment district. I believe that without a thriving downtown, the city suffers. Right now downtown (which is only a portion of her district) is a mix of an upcoming university/ business landscape, but is also plagued with homelessness and dilapidated buildings. The entertainment district will revitalize downtown and also bolster the night time economy. Atlanta can become the next 'city that doesn't sleep'. Expansion of the night time economy will create jobs for the locals here, and can curb many problems that are affecting District 2 currently. I also believe in addressing issues that the residents of Inman Park and Poncey-Highland face on a day to day basis. Foremost among these is creating a one-stop transit authority to handle public transport. Making transport accessible to all is a major part of her vision. It is also the key to unlocking the city's potential to cater to the public around the clock. The 24hr Entertainment District will bring revenue to District 2, and the City of Atlanta as a whole.

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

I possess the ability to develop and maintain effective working relationships with legislative advocacy groups on a local and national level. With the previously mentioned skills, I would manage collaborating with my colleagues on difficult issues versus representing my own constituents by remembering the main purpose of being on the City Council to “Move Atlanta Forward”, and with a true love for the City of Atlanta they will see our wonderful city working for every citizen in a productive, effective, revenue gaining, and healthy manner. By having monthly Town Hall meetings, the constituents for District 2 will know my stance for the District, and the City of Atlanta as a whole. The constituents of District 2 will know I have their best interest at heart along with whole body of the City of Atlanta which will establish trust in my vote at all times.

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 AA2 Credit Rating is an important element in the city’s ability to draw new businesses, provide for its schools, entertainment options, and to attract Federal/ State dollars. I pledge to see that our rating holds its value, and the way I feel the City of Atlanta should establish tools in place to ensure financial management forward would be to have random forensic audits within City departments, cross-training of staff, and term limits for Commissioners, Heads of Departments, and Council members.

We can also end the practice of allowing retired employees from returning their former role after the City has hired a new employee to perform the same job.

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

I believe the last property tax assessment notice that was mailed out in May 2017 from the Fulton County Board of Assessors was filled with multiple errors and miscalculations, and I argued this with the Board in numerous meetings. I believe we need to have an accurate body, instrument of judging property valuations, especially in our high rise condominium communities, we should re-evaluate zoning laws so we are not forcing older model homes property taxes to increase, and there should be a tax freeze on a citizen homes that has been purchased 30 or more years ago to eliminate gentrification.

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

Atlanta's MOST was established during Mayor Shirley Franklin's Administration, and it was to help with two consent decrees the City of Atlanta had established with the Federal Government. My approach is to avoid what happened in Flint, Michigan. The citizens of Atlanta are entitled to clean, fresh, and safe water. As a council person I would make sure the Watershed Department are meeting the guidelines to the consent decrees by asking for a summary on what has been accomplished, and what projects are still needing to be performed. I would check the timelines by auditing the accounts then from there determine the projects urgencies, and funding capabilities. And only from there one would get a true understanding on the budget, long term projects, and reserving of reservoirs needed.

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

Yes, I would change the current procurement process that makes the public feel there is a "pay to play" in the City of Atlanta Procurement process. As a councilperson, I would institute guidelines on ethics, there would be workshops to educate the public on the bid process, and I would also have forensic audits performed on every department using the Department of Procurement, and never would we use the same accounting firm for the audits. The company who performs the audits would be drawn by a blind straw process so it is not known what company is selected. Lastly, there would be term limits, to the Chief of Procurement, and Department Heads.

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

I would established mandatory ethical training, and servant leadership classes for credit for any employee of the City of Atlanta. These classes will be required for advancement within the City of Atlanta, and given yearly for follow up studies. As an elected council person, I would also do away with the stamina of being a "whistleblower" too many employees have been penalized and ridicule by being honest employees and that will stop. And again, it will be established a term limit on Chiefs and Heads of Departments.

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

I would establish the 24 Hour Entertainment District as I previously mentioned. Atlanta should become the City that does not sleep. The City of Atlanta was awarded the Olympics in 1996, and that meant we were an International City 21 years later we are not meeting that objective. There are too many abandoned buildings in the heart of the city, and this is a severe loss of revenue. The City of Atlanta should be open 24 hours, and downtown Atlanta should not close up at 5pm

or 6pm. We need to increase all cities departments, and this will especially include police, fire, and the city utilities. We must establish incentives for Mom & Pop Shops to still exist, and we should give help to our Arts & Culture Communities. Atlanta is a true melting pop, and we must invest in our art communities. We should have a Fashion Week just like New York, and working towards these goals will eliminate Atlanta becoming a ghost city like Detroit.

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

I will implement to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing by requiring, and giving incentives to developers who institute affordable housing in their dwellings. I would invite Invest Atlanta to start attending the Town Hall meetings that I will have within the District, and hopefully other council members will be to hold Town Hall meetings within their prospective districts to educate their constituents. This practice will also be giving to anyone company who wants to do business within the City of Atlanta be it residential or commercial. Lastly, I will constitute education of the pitfalls of Gentrification as I have previously stated.

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?

My "Initiative for Youth" would be the troubled minors within the City of Atlanta. The mentorship plan would be a 4 year term that each youth would have to complete, and if the youth has any blemishes on their record it would be expunged once the program is completed. Also, I would like to establish green job training. After giving incentives for commercial and residential buildings, I would like to see green rooftops on these buildings, and training be given to constituents in the neighborhood. We can establish cross training with the Youth Initiative through City Hall, Fulton, and neighboring counties. Also, I would like to see a one stop shop with Marta, Relay Bicycle, and the Street Cart this will enable an individual to get a discount if they meet a certain income requirement, discount for the elderly and disabled, and grant more connective ability. Lastly, Invest Atlanta can establish more affordable housing on the Marta Rail lines to help the lower income individual has access to employment and homes.

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.

Once elected as District 2 Council Member, My first important transportation/infrastructure project is to propose we change the Blue Loop for large conventions, games, and concerts. The Blue Loop concept was created in 2000 by the Atlanta Police Department. It now needs to be updated.

The concept calls for turning off streetlights after events. That act can result in attendees of events feeling unsafe. We want the each visitor visiting Downtown Atlanta to have a pleasant and safe experience. Keeping the street lights on also makes it easier for visitors to find the nearest highway.

My second proposal, one way streets that were changed back during the Olympics of 1996, should be changed back to two way streets immediately. The change back to two way streets will eliminate a majority of the gridlock in the morning and afternoon by commuters.

And my third would be the Traffic Grid repairs of streets, highways, and bridges should be on a timetable for maintenance. We should also have reviews of civil engineering issues of gas/water pressure problems throughout Downtown Atlanta. Manholes should not explode up from the streets this is a dangerous problem that should not be ignored or addressed only when it occurs.

District 2 needs a one stop shop when it comes to transit. A rider should be able to pay for Marta, street car, and the relay bicycle with one pass for them all. It is too confusing to figure out what you are paying for especially if you are new to Atlanta or a tourist. We also should offer discounts for Seniors, Disabled, Students, and low income passengers. Everyone should have the ability to travel to work and home without a burden. Invest Atlanta should also give initiatives for affordable housing and Mom & Pop shops, on Marta lines to help low income families to compete in the workforce. District 2 can get this done with Federal and State taxes or a Commuter Tax.

The Department of Transportation should come to Neighborhood and NPU meetings to inform the community on alternate ways to commute to and from home and work. After the recent collapse of I-85 , and streets caving in, these information sessions are deeply needed. Let's be honest, most neighbors only know one way to get home. Atlanta is truly a melting pot, and many of our current residents are not originally from Atlanta. The Department of Transportation needs to be more proactive to the cause and effect of this dilemma. The information session will truly be welcomed by the neighbors.

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?

Again to answer this question concerning improving safety both real and perceived of all residents, visitors, and workers in Atlanta, I believe it starts with the Town Hall meetings that I will establish for the District as previously mentioned. I also believe that we should have a neighborhood police officer. This officer will live in the neighborhood, and this will be a re-establishment of a beat officer who knows the community, and the community knows the officer. Also, I would like each and every Atlanta Police and Fireman to go have a monthly evaluation with a psychologist to give them a mental check up for maintenance & prevention.

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?

Atlanta Once had a Beautiful Festival Season, with an open free Marketplace for Artist during the National Black Art Festival. As Council person for District 2, once elected I propose to bring the Artist Marketplace back. The market will invite local Artist to share their works from Graffiti, Folk, and Fashion. Giving Atlanta a true fashion week. This focus on the Arts should also include Music, Theater, and Cinema. Please feel free to include your feedback to this proposal. I need the Community to express their ideas on what they want for their District.

District 2 Festivals can also include Pop up Shops that can work with artist to receive an initiative via legislation for the Artists. The Pop up Shops will be a win win for the vacant spaces in Downtown Atlanta and throughout District 2. The owner of the space will receive an initiative to rent to an Artist, and the Artist has a chance to show their work/Art. The Pop up Shops in conjunction with the Mom and Pop shops, will help to revitalize Downtown Atlanta.