

Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

**Kwanza Hall**  
Mayoral Candidate

## 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.**

I have served the people of Atlanta for 15 years in public office, first with the Board of Education for three years and 12 years on the City Council. During my service on the City Council I have been a forward thinking and creative legislator and have demonstrated the leadership to get good things done.

Examples include:

- “Year of Boulevard” (improved public safety, provided after-school and summer programming for kids, connected families with greatest need to services)
- Criminal Justice Reform (Ban the Box, Pre-Arrest Diversion Program, Body Cameras, Police Transparency and Quality of Life reforms).
- Clean Energy Policies (100% Clean Energy by 2035, Property Assessed Clean Energy, Better Buildings Challenge).
- Champion of programs and policies that enhance all neighborhoods and improve the quality of life for all citizens (Atlanta Streets Alive, Tiny House, Food Trucks, Art on the Beltline, Bicycle Lanes and Relay Bike Share program, AC3 Conference)
- Led and funded development of individual Neighborhood Plans for every neighborhood in District 2, which helped individual neighborhoods to define their interests and concerns so that the City could support their vision and resist development plans inconsistent with it.

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

I envision an Atlanta where every neighborhood, every community, every Atlantian will benefit equally from City services and public safety protection; where City government is honest and transparent and provides cost-effective and efficient municipal services; where opportunities for doing business with the City will be based solely on merit and ability to perform; where every new development will be consistent with the character of its proposed location; where our parks and green spaces will be protected and enhanced, and our air and water will be cleaner; a city where children have good schools and local, national and international businesses find a good home. This grand vision will inform and guide all the policies and actions of my mayoral administration. And I will appoint a top notch team of dedicated administrators and public servants to strive for its realization.

Our challenging agenda will start on my first day in office when I will announce the pro bono services of efficiency, financial and management experts who will review all elements and functions of City government. At the same time, and to make sure that those experts keep our vision firmly in sight, I will also appoint a citizens' task force involving neighborhood and community leaders, environmental activists, business leaders, faith leaders, park and greenspace advocates, and affordable housing experts to work closely with the professionals in the analysis of City government. Once that initial work is completed, we will proceed to the step-by-step implementation of the recommendations that are consonant with our vision and supported by practical and prudent financial considerations. Of course, none of this will happen in one year, or maybe even four. But I believe that by the end of my first administration we will be significantly close to the fulfillment of our grand vision for Atlanta.

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

- 1) Public safety and crime: I think that a central public safety issue revolves around attrition. Our police officers are doing their best everyday to protect our city, but they are hampered by their numbers. No matter how successful our recruiting efforts are, our force is perennially short a few hundred police officers. That is so because of age-based retirements and, more worrisome, because too many of our trained officers move to police jobs in other mostly metro-Atlanta jurisdictions where pay is higher and risk is lower. We need to stop or at least slow-down that revolving door. Experts in this field are suggesting a review of our pay scale, promotion processes and opportunities and consideration of incentive pay for higher education and specialized training, among other measures. There are other issues and areas for improvement and changes, and those will come too.

I would continue to strengthen police and community relationships, as I have as a Councilman. I authored the ban-the-box legislation in 2014 that has led to hundreds of people getting a chance at a job. Furthermore, I authored legislation for the Pre-Arrest Diversion program which will be in the pilot stage this summer in parts of Downtown, Old Fourth Ward and Midtown. This program will train APD officers to offer addiction recovery or mental health services as an alternative to arrest. If successful, my Administration will expand this program city-wide. That way, our officers will be able to focus more of their time and resources on Part 1 crimes.

- 2) Affordable Housing: Affordable housing is a major challenge that Atlanta must address in the immediate future. There is no "silver bullet" solution; it's a complex problem that requires a whole range of solutions.

According to a 2016 report by the Federal Reserve Bank, Atlanta lost 5,309 low-cost units between 2010 and 2014. ARC reports that today 95 percent of new apartments being built in metro Atlanta are considered luxury apartments.

There is no indication that this situation is improving. The loss of affordable housing is especially acute along the Beltline where property values continue to rise. Because Georgia prohibits rent control and inclusionary zoning may be limited legally as well, we need to focus our solutions on the supply side of the market. In 2005, we lost 32 affordable apartments to a fire in Bedford Pine. I led the effort to bring City Lights, an affordable senior housing development with 87 units to reality, and I'm excited that we'll be adding 96 more units for families in the next year. We need to do that all over the city and focus our efforts where we control the land cost and can tell developers exactly what we expect, rather than the other way around.

As Mayor, my housing priorities will be to:

- Deliver at least 10,000 new units at a variety of price points, utilizing Atlanta Housing Authority property or other appropriate land and by buying down the cost of the land around corridors needing redevelopment that are served by transit.
- Encourage more diversity in housing types, including micro-housing, duplexes and garden apartments, that can be incorporated into existing neighborhoods and expand on the Accessory Dwelling Unit legislation I passed this spring.
- Restore and increase the capacity of Community Development Corporations across Atlanta and ensure that smaller, local investors can have a financial stake in the success of their community.

3) Neighborhoods renovation and protection:

As many of our intown neighborhoods are experiencing renovation and renewal (not a bad thing), it is reassuring that we already have a series of ordinances and processes, including the various zoning boards and the City's own planning process that includes significant neighborhood and NPU participation. All that helps us manage the process and protect our neighborhoods from inappropriate development plans.

The consequent rise in property values and the interest of developers and, in some instances, speculators, in acquiring properties in up and coming neighborhoods is a concern.

The City must explore all avenues to protect long term residents and property owners across Atlanta, but particularly so in all the increasingly attractive neighborhoods. Among other initiatives, we must have a program to educate and assist property owners to deal with tempting purchase offers for their homes. Additionally, we must explore the possibility of freezing property-specific taxes in some areas for long-term resident owners.

I will always be open to creative ideas that will encourage the renovation and rejuvenation of existing neighborhoods while protecting their character and securing the rights of local property owners.

**4. As Mayor, what would be your goals for your first 100 days in office and what would be your approach to achieving them?**

In addition to starting the review of all elements and functions of City government by pro bono experts along with a citizen's task force (as described fully on the third paragraph of item #2, above), I will create the Office of Neighborhoods, Non-profits and Faith modelled after my "Year of Boulevard" initiative. That office will match the particular needs of a given neighborhood with the people and the capacities that we have in Atlanta in government, private non-profit and faith entities, to bring services and support to meet specific, community-identified needs. As we experienced with the "Year of Boulevard," that will be of particular help to youth.

**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?**

To this day, most independent analysts report that Mayor Reed has done a commendable job putting the City in a strong financial place as we recovered from the 2009 recession. I agree with that assessment. Nevertheless, there is an ebb and flow to the national and local economies, and hence to government financing, which demands top notch public finance expertise, not just at the very top but down to financial analysts throughout City government. I will make sure we have that expertise. In all things, however, we must always keep in mind that City government functions with money that belongs to the public, which obligates us to operate as efficiently, effectively and frugally as possible, with honesty and transparency.

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

Municipal property taxes are a given. Without taxes, government cannot function and provide the services that all its citizens need and demand.

The value of properties must be accurately reflected in the taxes assessed. However, as property values fluctuate up and down we must ensure that higher assessments in particular must be phased in so as not to unduly burden the taxpayers with a sudden huge increase in taxes, as happened recently with the Fulton County property tax assessments.

Additionally, our tax system must include protections for low-income seniors and other low-income property owners to ensure that property taxes don't drive them from their homes. This is an area that requires further consideration in the immediate future.

Because the City operates with the people's money, we need to be attentive to the cost of providing the regular municipal services and do so effectively and efficiently. When a capital project like a new city building is considered, we must determine not just the initial cost of construction, but the projected operating costs for the years the building will be in service. That is the only way to identify the true cost of that hypothetical building.

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

Local option sales taxes are a reasonable way to raise significant funds for multiple municipal projects. Sales taxes carry the virtue of having earned public support through binding referenda. Nevertheless, we must be careful that we don't burden the sale of goods and services in Atlanta by sales taxes that put us at a distinctive disadvantage with surrounding jurisdictions. Today, the fees for service that help fund our water and sewer operations are carrying a reasonable share of funding water and sewer operations. So at this point, I would be cautious about seeking higher sales taxes in Atlanta.

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

In the overall review and assessment of all City departments and operations that I will initiate upon assuming office, those involved in purchasing and procurement will be at the top of the list.

That review will look for ways to improve and streamline all the processes in these critical areas but also will search for soft spots that may provide opportunities for dishonest employees to cheat the City and hence the taxpayers. Through that process we may identify "bad apples" and I will root out those immediately.

As Council member, I have already been directly involved in efforts to increase oversight over certain purchases and procurements. As Mayor, I will tighten all such processes and will define ways to reduce the discretion that some City administrators' have when it comes to emergency procurements and contract extensions.

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

My role will be to establish the highest standards of ethical conduct and transparent management practices from the Mayor's Office, to all top managers and down to the rank and file employees.

We all are involved in delivering the services that our citizens need and deserve and we are doing that with their money. Honesty and transparency will be hallmarks of my administration and wrongdoers will find themselves at the receiving end of swift justice.

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

My Administration will:

- 1) align our investment in transportation and catalytic parks, greenspace and waterway restoration with legacy neighborhood revitalization.
- 2) focus on attracting greater amounts of foreign direct investment coupled with intentional development of global opportunities for Atlanta-based companies.
- 3) make Atlanta the Motown of clean energy, creating tens of thousands of new jobs by 2035.

**11. What strategies would your administration implement to ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing?**

(This answer is the same as for the second response to #3, above.)

Affordable housing is the most challenging issue that Atlanta will need to solve over the next four years. There is no “silver bullet” solution; it’s a complex problem that requires a whole range of solutions.

I am best-suited to bring about these solutions because I’ve been doing it in my own Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. While it’s true that the average rent has skyrocketed in the Old Fourth Ward, new housing developed around the Historic Fourth Ward Park was built on empty land and didn’t displace people. During this time, I led efforts to add new affordable units, like the 87 new senior apartments on Boulevard to be followed by another 96 units for families opening next year.

Because Georgia prohibits rent control and inclusionary zoning may be limited legally as well, we need to focus our solutions on the supply side of the market.

As Mayor, my housing priorities will be to:

- Deliver at least 10,000 new units at a variety of price points, utilizing Atlanta Housing Authority property or other appropriate land and by buying down the cost of the land around corridors needing redevelopment that are served by transit.
- Encourage more diversity in housing types, including micro-housing, duplexes and garden apartments, that can be incorporated into existing neighborhoods and expand on the Accessory Dwelling Unit legislation I passed this spring.
- Restore and increase the capacity of Community Development Corporations across Atlanta and ensure that smaller, local investors can have a financial stake in the success of their community.

**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?**

The competitiveness of cities of the future, like Atlanta, will be predicated on our ability to align our priorities at the Atlanta Workforce Development Agency and Invest Atlanta with our partners

at the State of Georgia, Metro Atlanta Chamber and academic institutions to ensure that we are developing workers whose skill sets are portable and empower them to add value in the ever-evolving innovation economy. We need to strengthen the cradle to career pipeline in traditional building trades and vocations as well as FinTech, Health IT, Clean Energy, Logistics, Music and Film. Economic mobility for low and mid-skill workers will not depend on having a 4-year college degree.

**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.**

- 1) MARTA expansion execution a) start with buses b) expand the streetcar to the Beltline and turn operations to MARTA and c) [S-Concept](#) is my idea but should be vetted to ensure maximum support from state and feds d) North Avenue Smart Corridor take lessons learned and bring to other key corridors
- 2) Multi-modal station - Greyhound and Megabus, Amtrak, and future commuter trains should have a common station. I hope Clayton Commuter Rail happens and I hope Gwinnett and Cobb will join MARTA and further strengthen our regional transit infrastructure.
- 3) Continued expansion at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and Aerotropolis

**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?**

We now understand the benefits of trust between community and police, and understand that the relationship works best as a partnership. Twenty-first century policing focuses on building trust and legitimacy, policy and oversight, technology and social media, community policing and crime reduction, training and education, and officer wellness and safety. The Atlanta Police Department has been recognized as a leader in 21st Century Policing and the Kwanza Hall Administration will build on this success with these priorities.

- 1) Safety First: Strengthen the Atlanta Police Force by Focusing on Retention, Professional and Personal Development and Shared Success.

The Atlanta Police Department (APD) established a benchmark of employing 2,000 sworn officers. Today APD has 1,600 officers on the street and 200 in training. While some officers retire or move to other jurisdictions, Atlanta loses too many officers who have served 1-5 years. The Hall Administration will work to double down on on retention efforts for APD officers. Strategies will include fine-tuning recruitment efforts and increase military veteran recruitment, offering best-in-class salary packages, increasing opportunity for training and professional development, expanding incentives to live in the City of Atlanta and offering regular psychological and emotional evaluation and support.

Further, in close collaboration with the Atlanta Police Foundation, the Hall Administration will recognize and celebrate public safety careers and develop a public relations and



communications strategy that will make the career and the police profession appealing and rewarding.

2) Modernize APD's training facilities.

There is a substantial need for improvement and modernization of APD's training facilities. The Hall Administration, working with the leadership of APD, will invest in the state of the art training facilities, so as to give the City's police force every possible advantage in carrying out their mission to protect and serve.

3) Affirm Commitment to 21st Century Policing.

The Atlanta Police Department has been recognized as one of 15 cities nationwide as an example of implementing 21st Century Policing recommendations. APD is superior in data and technology, and the Hall Administration would make further investments in technology to help make data useful and usable. New policy is needed to provide as much transparency and accountability for video footage that is collected through the network of street cameras and body-worn cameras.

As a Councilman, I led the legislative effort to develop and approve Atlanta's Pre-Arrest Diversion program. During the 2017 Pilot, officers on beats in Zones 5 and 6 will be trained to offer non-violent, low-level offenders housing and supportive services as an alternative to arrest. Expansion of the successful Pilot Pre-Arrest Diversion Program throughout the City of Atlanta will help our police officers focus on violent crimes and robberies, while also helping to improve community relations by keeping more poor and minorities out of the justice system and giving them a hand up to contribute to the Atlanta we want to be.

Laws in Atlanta's Code of Ordinances, like possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, which have disproportionately impacted people of color, will be re-examined and reformed so that making a small mistake doesn't ruin a life or tear apart a family.

**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?**

As Mayor I will continue my role as a convenor/connector/champion of the arts, seeking to unite the various entities for mutual benefit and optimal outcome. I support revisiting .01% sales tax referendum to support the arts. There are cities that are much higher volume and more structurally supportive of the arts than Atlanta. As Mayor, I will ensure that we open the floodgates of support from old and new sources, like venture capital, who will benefit from the increased strength of our arts community.