



Below is the unedited questionnaire response of:

Eshé Collins
Atlanta City Council Post 3



2024 Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Please type your response to questions in the field provided. Please limit answers to 300 words or less.

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

As a lifelong Atlanta native, public servant, and civil rights attorney, I have spent my career advocating for equity, justice, and the betterment of our communities. My qualifications are deeply rooted in my experience serving as an educator and member of the Atlanta Board of Education, where I led efforts to improve educational outcomes for all students, advocating for equity-based funding and programs that support the diverse needs of our city's youth and families. My background in education, along with my role as Director of the Equity Assistance Center-South at the Southern Education Foundation, has equipped me with the expertise to address systemic inequities and implement solutions that benefit all residents.

I am running for Atlanta City Council because I believe my experience and proven leadership uniquely position me to address the pressing issues facing our city, including affordable housing, public safety, and economic opportunity. I am committed to building a thriving, inclusive Atlanta where everyone - regardless of background - has the chance to succeed. My lived experience and professional background have given me the insight needed to lead with compassion and a clear vision for our city's future.

So far, I am honored to be actively supported by the Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council, the Atlanta Realtors Association, State Senator Jason Esteves, State Representative Stacey Evans, State Representative Kim Schofield and a few others. Their support is crucial because it reflects a broad coalition of labor, housing, and legislative, servant leadership. These organizations and entities can speak directly to my service and impact as I have worked collaboratively with them to improve opportunities for all in Atlanta. Their backing strengthens my ability to advocate effectively for the diverse needs of our city.

2. 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 facing the City of Atlanta are affordable housing, public safety, and equitable economic development.

First, as Atlanta grows, the cost of housing continues to rise, pricing many residents out of their neighborhoods. To address this, we need a multi-pronged approach that includes expanding affordable housing options, increasing funding for low-income housing tax credits, and creating more public-private partnerships to build mixed-income developments. We must also preserve existing affordable housing units and implement policies that prevent displacement, such as rent stabilization and property tax relief for longtime residents. By prioritizing housing affordability, we can ensure that Atlanta remains a place where everyone can live and thrive.

Secondly, ensuring safety across Atlanta requires a balanced approach that includes strengthening community policing efforts and improving response times while investing in mental health and social services. We must increase funding for programs that address the root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of education, and limited job opportunities. Expanding partnerships with community organizations and improving trust between law enforcement and residents will help create safer neighborhoods for all.

Finally, economic growth must benefit all Atlantans, not just a select few. To achieve this, we should invest in workforce development programs, particularly in underserved communities, and support small businesses through grants, mentorship, and streamlined permitting processes. By fostering economic opportunities and reducing barriers, we can ensure that Atlanta's prosperity is shared equitably, enabling all residents to participate in and benefit from the city's growth. Solutions to these issues will require collaboration, innovation, and servant leadership committed to building a more inclusive and sustainable Atlanta for all.

3. Describe your leadership style and an example of a strategy you have used to influence others and deliver results.

My leadership style is grounded in servant and collaborative leadership, with a focus on empowering others, fostering teamwork, and creating a shared vision for success. As a servant leader, I prioritize the needs of those I serve—whether they are students, colleagues, or community members—ensuring that their voices are heard and their well-being is at the forefront of decision-making. Collaboration is key to my approach, as I believe that by working together and drawing from diverse perspectives, we can achieve greater outcomes.

An example of this leadership in action is my role as Chair of the Atlanta Board of Education, where I spearheaded a grassroots campaign for equity-based funding in our public schools. I recognized that achieving this goal required buy-in from a broad coalition of stakeholders, including parents, educators, policymakers, and community leaders. Through strategic collaboration, I facilitated open dialogues, built consensus, and empowered others to advocate for the changes needed. I used data-driven arguments and personal stories from students to highlight the importance of equitable funding, creating a sense of shared purpose.

This strategy influenced others by aligning their interests with the broader goal of improving educational outcomes for all students. As a result, we secured the necessary support to implement funding changes that have positively impacted Atlanta's schools. My leadership style of servant and collaborative leadership has consistently enabled me to build strong relationships, influence others, and deliver tangible results that improve the quality of life for our communities.

4. What improvements are necessary to improve the delivery of the City's core service functions to improve quality of life for citizens and businesses in Atlanta?

To improve the delivery of the City of Atlanta's core service functions and enhance the quality of life for both citizens and businesses, several key improvements are necessary. First, infrastructure modernization is essential. Atlanta's aging roads, public transportation, and utilities require significant investment and maintenance to reduce service disruptions and improve accessibility. By prioritizing infrastructure improvements, such as repairing roads and expanding public transit options, the city can facilitate smoother commutes, promote economic growth, and make Atlanta more livable for residents and attractive for businesses. Second, affordable housing and homelessness solutions are necessary to address the growing housing crisis in Atlanta. Expanding affordable housing options, protecting against displacement, and providing services to those experiencing homelessness will ensure that all residents can live and work in Atlanta.

Next, enhancing public safety is vital to improving quality of life. This requires a balanced approach that strengthens community policing, increases transparency and trust between law enforcement and citizens, and invests in true crime prevention programs that address root causes, such as poverty and lack of education. A safer city benefits everyone, where residents feel more secure, and businesses are more likely to invest and thrive.

Finally, the streamline of city services and permitting processes is crucial for efficiency. Currently, navigating some of city's bureaucratic processes can be time-consuming and frustrating for both residents and businesses. By investing in digital tools and platforms and improved customer service training, the city can create a more user-friendly experience. Simplification of permitting and licensing processes will help businesses operate more efficiently, while citizens can access the services they need more quickly.

By focusing on these areas, we can improve the delivery of core services and, again, create a thriving, inclusive city for all.

5. What are your views on Downtown Atlanta and its role in the healthy and vibrancy of Atlanta? What actions will you take related to improving the downtown experience for visitors, employees, and residents?

Downtown Atlanta plays a pivotal role in the overall health and vibrancy of our city. As the historic and economic heart of Atlanta, it serves as a hub for businesses (where my office is located), tourism, and culture. The success of Downtown directly impacts the city's economic growth, attracting visitors, retaining businesses, and fostering a sense of community for all stakeholders. However, Downtown must evolve to be a place that is not just visited but also lived in, worked in, and enjoyed by all.

To enhance the Downtown experience for visitors, employees, and residents, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. First, infrastructure upgrades and improved accessibility will boost the overall experience. Expanding public transit options, improving pedestrian walkways, and enhancing green spaces will make Downtown more walkable and accessible, attracting both residents and businesses. Investing in these improvements will create a more vibrant and sustainable community where people want to live and work.

Secondly, fostering small business growth and cultural vibrancy is essential. Supporting local businesses through grants, streamlined permitting processes, and public-private partnerships will help revitalize commercial areas. Additionally, promoting cultural events, festivals, and public art can transform Downtown into a destination that celebrates Atlanta's diversity and creativity.

Lastly, improvements in public safety is crucial. By expanding partnerships with local organizations and investing in innovative community public safety measures, we can create a safer and more welcoming environment. This will encourage both residents and visitors to explore Downtown's offerings with confidence.

As a member of the Atlanta City Council, I would work collaboratively with businesses, local organizations, and residents to implement these initiatives. By enhancing safety, accessibility, and economic growth, we can make Downtown Atlanta a thriving center of activity and a place that reflects the spirit of our city.

6. What is your philosophy on taxation in the City of Atlanta? What future funding streams do you believe are needed to pay for the things we need to grow? How should these opportunities be evaluated?

My philosophy on taxation in the City of Atlanta is rooted in fairness, equity, and responsible fiscal management. Taxes are necessary to fund essential services, infrastructure, and public safety, but they must be implemented in a way that ensures the burden is shared equitably across residents and businesses. It is critical that taxation not disproportionately affect lower-income families or small businesses, as this can hinder economic mobility and growth. I believe in a balanced approach that keeps taxes reasonable while generating the revenue needed to invest in Atlanta's future.

As Atlanta continues to grow, we must explore future funding streams that support sustainable development without overburdening taxpayers. Expanding public-private partnerships can help fund critical infrastructure projects, such as affordable housing, transit, and green spaces. Additionally, leveraging impact fees on new developments can ensure that developers contribute to the costs of infrastructure improvements required by growth.

Evaluation of these opportunities should involve transparent and data-driven decision-making. We must analyze the long-term benefits and costs of any new revenue streams to ensure they support economic growth, protect vulnerable populations, and address community needs. Engagement with stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and community organizations, is essential to create a funding strategy that aligns with the city's priorities.

Ultimately, my approach is to ensure that taxation and funding strategies align with my overall focus to create a thriving, inclusive Atlanta by supporting essential services, fostering growth, and preserving affordability for all of us.

7. As Atlanta prepares to host the World Cup in June 2026, what specific strategies do you believe the city should implement to ensure a successful and impactful event? How do you plan to leverage your role to make the most of this opportunity for both visitors and residents?

As Atlanta prepares to host the World Cup in June 2026, the city must implement strategic actions to ensure a successful and impactful event that benefits both visitors and residents. First and foremost, infrastructure improvements are crucial. Atlanta should prioritize upgrading its public transportation system, ensuring smooth access to the stadiums, hotels, and attractions. Enhancement of roads, walkways, and parking facilities will also help manage the anticipated influx of visitors. These improvements will not only benefit the event but will leave a lasting positive impact on daily transportation for the city.

Also, the city should implement more innovative marketing and economic development strategies to promote local businesses and cultural landmarks. We must position Atlanta as a premier destination, showcasing our vibrant neighborhoods, restaurants, and arts scene to the global audience. This will help boost tourism and create economic opportunities for our local businesses.

Finally, public safety will be more crucial with Atlanta on the international stage. The city needs to enhance diverse security measures and collaborate with other agencies to ensure a safe experience for all. As stated before, strengthening community policing efforts and fostering trust between law enforcement and residents will create a more welcoming environment during the event.

In my role as a member of the Atlanta City Council, I would advocate for policies that ensure local businesses and underserved communities benefit from this global event. This includes working to secure employment opportunities for residents, grants and incentives for small businesses and ensuring equitable access to the economic opportunities the World Cup will bring. By leveraging partnerships with the business community and city agencies, this will help position Atlanta to shine on the world stage, leaving a lasting legacy that enhances quality of life for both residents and visitors.

8. Describe your philosophy as to the City of Atlanta's role in continuing to improve public safety outcomes in the city? Which strategies should be prioritized, and if elected, how will you work to advance them? What partnerships are necessary to achieving success?

My philosophy on the City of Atlanta's role in improving public safety is grounded in a holistic and community-focused approach that prioritizes both proactive crime prevention and responsive law enforcement. Public safety isn't just about policing—it's about addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to mental health services. I believe the city must invest in a comprehensive strategy that strengthens community trust, supports law enforcement, and provides social services that uplift vulnerable populations.

Key strategies should include enhancing community policing to build stronger relationships between law enforcement and the neighborhoods they serve, improving response times, and ensuring transparency in police operations. Additionally, we should prioritize violence prevention programs that target at-risk youth and communities through mentorship, education, and job training initiatives. The expansion of mental health crisis intervention teams and integrating social workers into emergency response can also help address issues before they escalate into violence.

If elected, I will work to advance these strategies by advocating for increased funding for policing alternatives, mental health services, and social programs. I will also push for accountability measures, ensuring that law enforcement agencies maintain the trust of the communities they serve. Success requires strong partnerships with various stakeholders, including local businesses, community organizations, non-profits, and educational institutions. Collaborative efforts between law enforcement, public health agencies, and community groups are essential to create safer neighborhoods. By working together, we can develop sustainable public safety solutions that reduce crime and improve the quality of life for all Atlantans.

9. What specific measures would you propose to strengthen the relationship between the City of Atlanta and MARTA? Which capital projects on the More MARTA program do you consider most urgent to address in the next 1-3 years?

To strengthen the relationship between the City of Atlanta and MARTA, I would propose fostering ongoing collaboration and transparent communication between city leadership and MARTA officials. Regular joint meetings should be held to align the city's transportation needs with MARTA's planning and execution. This will ensure that the priorities of residents, businesses, and commuters are taken into account as we expand and improve our transit infrastructure. I would also advocate for dedicated funding streams and explore public-private partnerships that support MARTA's long-term financial sustainability, allowing it to invest in critical infrastructure upgrades.

A comprehensive transportation plan for MARTA and the City of Atlanta is essential to ensure efficient, sustainable growth and connectivity across the region. By integrating transit options such as rail, bus rapid transit, and bike lanes, we can reduce traffic congestion, improve accessibility, and support economic development. This plan should prioritize equity by ensuring underserved communities benefit from enhanced transportation options, while promoting environmental sustainability and fostering collaboration between city leaders and MARTA.

In the next 1-3 years, the More MARTA program must focus on the most impactful capital projects. One of the most urgent is the upgrade and expansion of the bus rapid transit (BRT) system. This would provide faster and more reliable services to underserved communities, improving access to jobs, education, and healthcare. Another critical project is the renovation of existing MARTA stations, making them more accessible and user-friendly to encourage greater ridership.

As a member of the Atlanta City Council, I would work closely with MARTA to ensure these projects are prioritized and funded. By improving public transit, we can reduce traffic, enhance economic mobility, and build a more connected, sustainable city for all residents. Partnerships with state and federal agencies will also be vital in securing the resources needed to advance these projects.

10. What role should the City of Atlanta play in economic development? What is your perspective on urban redevelopment tools as the City competes for jobs, talent, and its share of economic growth?

The City of Atlanta should play a central role in driving economic development by fostering an environment that supports business growth, attracts talent, and promotes equitable opportunities for all residents. This includes investing in infrastructure, workforce development, and policies that encourage innovation and entrepreneurship. The city must also prioritize the creation of affordable housing and transportation options to ensure that Atlanta remains attractive to both businesses and workers, while promoting economic mobility for residents.

Urban redevelopment tools, such as tax incentives, Opportunity Zones, and Tax Allocation Districts, are valuable assets in the city's strategy to remain competitive. These tools can attract new businesses, revitalize underdeveloped areas, and encourage private investment. However, they must be used responsibly, ensuring that they benefit the entire community and not just specific developers or industries. It is crucial to maintain transparency and community engagement in the decision-making process, ensuring that redevelopment projects do not lead to displacement of existing residents or exacerbate inequality.

As Atlanta competes for jobs and talent, inclusive economic growth should be at the forefront of redevelopment efforts. By aligning urban redevelopment tools with workforce training programs, small business support, and investments in historically underserved communities, the city can ensure that economic gains are shared broadly. Attracting industries in technology, green energy, and advanced manufacturing will position Atlanta for future growth while ensuring long-term job creation.

The City of Atlanta should leverage public-private partnerships and collaborate with educational institutions to ensure its workforce is prepared for emerging opportunities, while utilizing redevelopment tools to build a thriving, inclusive economy that benefits all residents.

11. What role should the City of Atlanta play in addressing economic mobility and the racial wealth gap? Which tools and strategies would your office advance, if elected?

The City of Atlanta has a critical role in addressing economic mobility and the racial wealth gap by implementing policies and programs that provide equitable opportunities for all residents, particularly those in historically marginalized communities. Economic mobility hinges on access to quality education, affordable housing, good-paying jobs, and financial resources. The city must prioritize creating pathways for residents to move up the economic ladder and build generational wealth.

If elected, I would advance several key tools and strategies to address these disparities. First, I would advocate for expanded affordable housing initiatives, including inclusionary zoning and increased funding for low-income housing. Housing stability is crucial to enabling families to save and invest in their future. Next, workforce development programs that target underserved communities should be expanded, with a focus on training in high-demand industries such as technology, healthcare, and green energy. Partnerships with local businesses and educational institutions can provide job training, apprenticeships, and mentorship opportunities that lead to sustainable careers. Also, I would champion small business development and support for minority-owned businesses through grants, technical assistance, and access to capital. By empowering entrepreneurs and promoting economic growth within underrepresented communities, we can help close the racial wealth gap.

Finally, the city should pursue financial literacy programs that equip residents with the knowledge and tools needed to manage their finances, invest, and build wealth. By addressing the root causes of economic inequality and promoting inclusive policies, Atlanta can foster economic mobility and begin to close the racial wealth gap, ensuring a more prosperous future for all.

12. Atlanta's water infrastructure is aging and requires long term solutions to meet the demands of citizens and businesses. What solutions would you propose to address this critical need?

Atlanta's aging water infrastructure presents significant challenges, and long-term solutions are critical to ensure reliable access to clean water for both residents and businesses. To address this, I propose a multi-pronged approach focused on modernization, sustainability, and efficiency.

First, we need to invest in modernizing Atlanta's water infrastructure by prioritizing the replacement of outdated pipes, pumps, and treatment facilities. This can be achieved through targeted capital improvement projects funded by federal grants, state funding, and public-private partnerships. By upgrading our infrastructure, we can prevent leaks, reduce water waste, and ensure that our system can meet the increasing demands of a growing population.

Second, we must integrate sustainable water management practices. This includes expanding the use of green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and bioswales, to naturally manage stormwater and reduce the strain on our existing systems. Additionally, we should promote water conservation programs that encourage businesses and residents to reduce their water usage through incentives, such as rebates for water-efficient appliances and irrigation systems. Also, the enhancement of water quality monitoring and disaster preparedness is essential. The city should invest in advanced technologies that provide real-time data on water quality, leak detection, and system performance. This will allow for quicker response times and more effective maintenance, minimizing disruptions to service.

I would advocate for an equitable rate structure that balances the need for funding with affordability for low-income residents. Ensuring that everyone can access clean, affordable water is a fundamental responsibility of the city. By addressing these key areas, Atlanta can build a resilient, efficient water system that supports long-term growth and sustainability for its citizens and businesses. Additionally, these initiatives can serve as achievements to meet the compliance measures of Atlanta's consent decrees.

13. What strategies would you implement to improve the City's supply and preservation of affordable housing? What are the barriers to succeeding on this front and how will you work to overcome them?

To improve the City of Atlanta's supply and preservation of affordable housing, I would implement several key strategies focused on expanding housing options, preventing displacement, and leveraging public-private partnerships.

First, I would advocate for inclusionary zoning policies that require developers to allocate a percentage of new units as affordable housing in rapidly growing areas. This ensures that as the city develops, affordable housing is integrated into all neighborhoods, rather than concentrated in specific areas. Additionally, I would push for increased investment in the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which can be used to support the construction of new affordable housing and preserve existing units.

Second, preservation of existing affordable housing is crucial. I would propose providing incentives to property owners to maintain affordable rental units, such as property tax breaks and grants for necessary repairs. Additionally, I would work to expand programs that offer property tax relief for longtime residents to prevent displacement due to rising property values in gentrifying areas.

Barriers to affordable housing include rising land costs, limited funding, and regulatory hurdles. To overcome these, I would advocate for reducing red tape and streamlining the permitting process for affordable housing projects. As stated before, public-private partnerships should be leveraged to attract developers and investors to affordable housing projects by offering incentives such as tax credits and subsidies.

I would also work closely with state and federal agencies to secure additional funding for affordable housing initiatives and explore innovative financing options like community land trusts that enable long-term affordability. By addressing these barriers and prioritizing affordable housing, we can create a more inclusive Atlanta that offers opportunities for all residents to live and thrive.

14. Describe your philosophy on the City's current infrastructure backlog. If elected, what strategies will you pursue to ensure forward progress is made? How would you expedite project delivery in the City?

My philosophy on Atlanta's infrastructure backlog is that it represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The current backlog, which includes aging roads, water systems, and public facilities, is the result of years of underinvestment and deferred maintenance. Addressing this backlog requires a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach that not only fixes what is broken but also modernizes our infrastructure to meet the future needs of a growing city.

If elected, I would pursue strategies that focus on prioritizing critical infrastructure projects, securing sustainable funding, and streamlining project delivery. I would advocate for a transparent, data-driven approach to prioritize projects based on need, impact, and urgency, ensuring that the most critical infrastructure issues are addressed first. Again, I would explore diverse funding options such as public-private partnerships, federal and state grants, and innovative financing mechanisms like infrastructure bonds. Securing these funding sources will be crucial to accelerating the pace of repairs and new developments without overly burdening taxpayers.

To expedite project delivery, here is another opportunity to reduce bureaucratic delays by streamlining permitting processes and improving coordination between city departments and contractors. Additionally, I would propose implementing performance-based contracts for infrastructure projects, where contractors are held accountable to clear timelines and deliverables.

Finally, I would ensure regular communication and transparency with the public regarding project timelines and progress. By prioritizing key projects, securing funding, and improving efficiency, we can tackle the infrastructure backlog and build a more resilient Atlanta.

15. How important is sustainability to Atlanta's continued growth and vitality? What sustainability initiatives have been most successful in Atlanta to-date and how build you upon them?

Sustainability is critical to Atlanta's continued growth and vitality. As the city expands, ensuring that development is environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable is key to maintaining quality of life for residents and creating a resilient economy. Sustainability efforts help to address challenges such as climate change, urban sprawl, and resource scarcity, while enhancing public health, reducing energy costs, and fostering economic growth.

While access is an issue still, one of the most successful sustainability initiatives in Atlanta has been the Atlanta Beltline, which has transformed underused industrial land into green space and multimodal transit options. The Beltline project promotes walkability, reduces car dependency, and encourages economic development around its trails. Another significant initiative is the city's Clean Energy Atlanta plan, which sets a goal for the city to achieve 100% clean energy by 2035. This effort has spurred investments in solar energy, energy efficiency programs, and building retrofits.

Building on these successes, I would prioritize expanding green infrastructure, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and green roofs, to manage stormwater and improve water quality. I would also advocate for enhanced public transportation through MARTA expansion and the integration of electric buses to reduce emissions and traffic congestion. Additionally, I would push for sustainable building practices in new developments, including stronger incentives for energy-efficient construction and renovations.

By continuing to invest in renewable energy, green infrastructure, and sustainable transportation, Atlanta can ensure its growth remains sustainable and equitable. These efforts will not only improve environmental outcomes but also create jobs, reduce costs, and make the city more livable for all residents.