



## Candidate Questionnaire

Atlanta Mayor

*Andre Dickens*

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### 1. What are your top three priorities?

The three greatest issues currently affecting the City of Atlanta are public safety, income inequality and infrastructure.

#### 1) Public Safety:

As Atlanta's next Mayor, my first priority will be to halt the crime wave that has swept through our communities through my SAFE STREETS ATLANTA plan. I've authored a 4-Point Plan plan to reduce violent crime, but I also know that we have to fight the crime of tomorrow – and I will simultaneously invest resources in job placement programs, anti-recidivism outreach, after school programs and creating good paying jobs for citizens and communities that have been overlooked for too long.

You can learn more about my plan at [www.SafeStreetsAtlanta.com](http://www.SafeStreetsAtlanta.com).

2) Income Inequality: A driving factor of crime is lack of access to resources. When our city's income gap widens, our crime rate increases right along with it. Since 2010, Atlanta has carried the unwelcome distinction of having the highest income inequality in the nation. An Atlantan born into poverty only has a 4% chance of making it to the middle class. I grew up in one such community, raised by a single mother. And although the city has attracted a steady stream of corporate headquarters and relocations, provisions have not been made to ensure that all Atlantans are able to participate in the city's growth and prosperity.

Bridging the gap between marginalized communities and access to basic services and human rights will be a top priority for my administration. Currently, Atlanta faces the largest most persistent gap in income inequality, which has given rise to issues such as lack of affordable housing and healthcare, and ultimately led to an increase in crime and violence.

To tackle the income gap, my administration will invest to provide low-income families with training programs like the TechBridge Technology Career Program that I co-founded. In just two years, the program trained more than 400 people to earn certifications and helped graduates begin internet technology careers with an average annual salary of \$56,000. My first post at Georgia Tech was recruiting diverse student populations with the talent and drive to apply a top-notch education to becoming a productive member of society. As Mayor, my administration will support the expansion of these programs and others like them to include nursing, aircraft mechanics, electricians, logistics, and more.



I have also taken up the cause of fighting income inequality in my capacity as an elected leader. In 2016, I authored and passed legislation to gradually increase the city's minimum wage from \$10.10 per hour to \$15 per hour over 3 years. Now, every city employee earns at least \$15/hr and my goal is to expand that legislation to city contractors by working with state officials on legislation.

3) Infrastructure: Our roads, sidewalks, transit, sewers, recreation centers, vehicle fleet, and our technical infrastructure are all in need of investment. Efforts have been made to make some improvements by using temporary solutions but now it's time for us to commit to a massive infrastructure campaign. As mayor, I will work with Atlanta City Council to designate more 'complete streets', implement more bike lanes, sidewalks and crosswalks, fulfill promises of More MARTA and BeltLine Rail, fix our stormwater issues that allow flooding, renovate out-of-date rec centers to attract youth participation, build a state of the art public safety training facility with citizen access, bring up our technology infrastructure in our operations and in our neighborhoods to fully eliminate the digital divide. I'll ensure that infrastructure projects include the expansion and preservation of arts and culture within the city. And finally, I will ensure that federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan and forthcoming Infrastructure Plan are used efficiently and without waste or graft.

## **2. In what ways would you like to see Atlanta grow?**

In all things, our growth must be done in a smart and equitable fashion. For too long, those that have helped build Atlanta have not shared in its prosperity. The growth and economic gains that will continue in our city have to be focused on building up the underserved portions of our community. This applies to our zoning policies, our transportation and infrastructure, our workforce development, our parks, and our public safety plans. A growing Atlanta needs to see all Atlantans reap those rewards.

## **3. How will you help Atlanta stay safe and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?**

I will ensure that Atlanta follows CDC guidance, including mask mandates, social distancing, quarantine requirements and contact tracing as this pandemic evolves. I would reinstate hazard pay for frontline essential workers and encourage remote work wherever possible. Recognizing the virus and the vaccine have been politicized, I will work with state lawmakers to use technology and common sense when allowing companies to continue serving their customers. Finally, having overseen Hartsfield



Jackson as chair of the transportation committee, I know how important it is to stop the spread of COVID at our borders. As Mayor, I'll set the highest safety thresholds for the world's busiest airport while ensuring that Atlanta remains a hub for tourism and travel.

#### **4. What would you like to change about Atlanta's budget?**

I would like to see a review of the budget to ensure that we are equitable distributing money throughout Atlanta. We need to be willing to focus our resources on the areas which need the most support from the city. An “equal” spread of the money doesn't help resolve the issues we're facing: homelessness, park deserts, joblessness, income inequality, crime, etc.. We have to be willing to make the hard decisions and prioritize our money on the places that have been underserved and need a more substantial investment from our city budget.

#### **5. What do you think needs to happen in Atlanta in regards to housing?**

I've spent my time as a Councilmember focused on affordable housing and have championed the Beltline Inclusionary Zoning ordinance that requires new rental developments to provide affordable housing, launched the Beltline senior housing rehab program, and have beaten the drum for more cohesion between development community, policy makers, and rapidly displaced communities.

Our barriers are many fold - rising property taxes in currently distressed neighborhoods, aggressive property investors who prey on residents, and state laws that do little to protect affordability in cities like ours.

As Mayor, I will:

- Create & Scale Current Affordable Housing Development by
  - Working with & incentivizing Atlanta Housing Authority leadership to build housing using their current land and city/federal funding.
  - Partnering with MARTA on its use of the \$100 million affordable housing TOD fund, which is focused on protecting and preserving existing units within a half mile of its rail stations.
  - Lobbying the state to relax the rules that further policy instruments such as expanded inclusionary zoning regulations that could set aside a



percentage of multi-unit developments for rent and sale.

- Preserve Existing Affordability by
  - Expanding upon the recent \$100M Housing Opportunity Bond focused on extending or permanent affordability to retain.
  - Enforcing the laws against predatory tactics to pressure Atlanta residents, particularly seniors, to sell their homes for under market value.
  - Expanding my No Solicitation campaign to educate communities about the programs and legal protections available to keep them in their homes.

## **6. What do you think needs to happen in Atlanta in regards to public safety?**

As a twice-elected citywide councilmember, I have tackled several complex issues (like affordable housing and transportation) through legislation and collaboration. We have changed the way the city works on these issues, and I am proposing that we do it again, with S.A.F.E. Streets Atlanta, a 4-Point Plan to reduce violent crime in Atlanta. Read more at [SafeStreetsAtlanta.com](http://SafeStreetsAtlanta.com).

As Mayor, I will focus on immediately halting the crime that's plaguing our communities. I have a plan to stop crime TODAY - by coordinating and investing new federal resources in additional officers, technology and tactics, including partnerships with groups that can help us identify, arrest and detain dangerous criminals.

I also know that we have to fight the crime of TOMORROW - and I will simultaneously invest resources in job placement programs, anti-recidivism outreach, after school programs and creating good paying jobs for citizens and communities that have been overlooked for too long.

## **7. How do you plan to improve Atlanta's transportation and infrastructure?**

My first priority as mayor would be to streamline the procurement process and deliver on our backlog of projects. The process needs to be cleared of the corruption of the prior administration and done in an open and transparent model. I drafted the legislation which established the Atlanta Department of Transportation for this very reason, and I will continue that work as Mayor.



In the short-term, we need to focus on completing small projects with a high impact. These would include the prioritization of sidewalks within one mile of all schools, transit stops, and senior centers. These types of projects can be completed quickly and efficiently by local and minority contractors.

Lastly, in the long-term, I plan to implement a free public transit system in Atlanta by 2030. Free public transit would have a massive impact on equity in the city and help us to combat climate change. This initiative would begin with subsidizing transit for seniors, students, persons with disabilities, and city employees before expanding to a completely free transit model.

## **8. What is your stance on zoning in Atlanta?**

I wholeheartedly believe that meeting Atlanta's growing need for affordable housing is an exercise in addition, not subtraction. I will explore new and innovative zoning classifications, while ensuring that historic neighborhoods have the ability to preserve the zoning that attracted families to our city and those neighborhoods in the first place.

I am proud to have been the architect of the BeltLine's first inclusionary zoning policy and I know we have much further to go to ensure that Atlantans of all walks of life can have access to affordable housing. I would expand this and enact a city-wide inclusionary zoning ordinance to encourage more affordable housing on the path to at least 20,000 new or preserved affordable housing units in my first two years. In order to reach that 20,000 affordable housing unit goal, we will need to have additional density around our transit hubs to encourage more affordable development.

## **9. How will you ensure that Atlanta is run ethically and transparently?**

Corruption is a crime that erodes public trust in our government. We have to ensure the demand for ethics and transparency starts at the top, which is why I've taken the steps to release my tax returns to the public. It's a small step, but an important one in showing that I am ready to run an ethical and transparent government.

During my time on council, I have pushed for and enacted sweeping ethics, procurement, and transparency reforms, and I intend to expand that as mayor including the following:



- Creating government purchase card regulations to ensure accountability in how government officials spend discretionary funds.
- Establishing the Independent Procurement Review Office to provide mandatory independent review of all procurements over \$1 million, helping to ensure transparency and fairness in government contracting.
- Working closely with the City Ethics Office to review existing practices and create a set of recommendations and policies to ensure that tax dollars are spent with integrity, and oversight.