



# 2017 VOTERS GUIDE

BY THE COUNCIL FOR INTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS AND SCHOOLS (CINS)

The [Council of Intown Neighborhoods and Schools](#) (CINS) supports the Grady cluster of schools through advocacy, investment and community engagement. More than 6,500 APS students live in this community, which includes Downtown, Midtown, parts of the West Side, Ansley Park, Piedmont Heights, Old 4<sup>th</sup> Ward, Morningside, Inman Park, Virginia Highlands, Candler Park, and Lake Claire. Our schools are Grady High, Inman Middle, Centennial Academy, Kindezi Old 4<sup>th</sup> Ward, and Hope-Hill, Mary Lin, Morningside, and Springdale Park elementary schools. To learn more about CINS, please visit [www.cinsatlanta.org](http://www.cinsatlanta.org).

## REGISTER TO VOTE DEADLINE

October 10, 2017

## EARLY VOTING

Monday, October 16, 2017 to  
Friday, November 3, 2017

## ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, November 7, 2017  
Polls open 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

## RUN-OFF DAY

Tuesday, December 5, 2017  
Polls open 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

## HELPFUL LINKS

- Voter registration, districts, and polling locations at: [My Voter Page](#)
- [City Council Districts and Precincts](#)
- [City Council & Board of Education Districts](#)
- [General Atlanta Municipal Election Information](#)

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## ATLANTA MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

In early September, CINS sent questionnaires to 68 candidates seeking to represent the intown neighborhoods zoned for Atlanta's Grady cluster of schools.

The questions came from CINS members and other intown neighbors, and most fell into one of two categories:

- Quality of life
- Collaboration between the City and the Atlanta Board of Education

As of August 25, 2017, the last candidate qualifying date, there are 13 candidates running for Mayor of Atlanta, 36 seeking seats on the Atlanta City Council, and 19 for the Atlanta Board of Education. We are grateful to all of them for their willingness to serve our community, and we thank those who responded for the time and thought they put into sharing their views with us.

The candidates' responses, which are listed in alphabetical order by office, are published as they were received without editing or verification; however, fonts were changed and extra spacing was removed in some cases. Questions are repeated every few pages to minimize page flipping. Click the page numbers on the "Inside the Guide" section below to jump to the desired page.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, CINS does not endorse candidates. This Voter Guide is provided instead to encourage voter awareness and participation. Readers can learn more about the candidates through their campaign websites and news sources such the [Atlanta-Journal Constitution](#), [www.atlantaloop.com](http://www.atlantaloop.com) and [www.voteatl.org](http://www.voteatl.org).

### Atlanta Board of Education

- Six seats on the Atlanta Board of Education serve all or part of the Grady cluster: Districts 1, 2 and 3, and At-large Seats 7, 8 and 9.
- CINS sent questionnaires to 19 candidates running for the above seats and received responses from 17.

### Atlanta City Council and City Council President

- Nine seats on the Atlanta City Council serve all or part of the Grady cluster: City Council President, At-large Posts 1, 2 and 3, and Districts 2-6.
- CINS sent questionnaires to 36 candidates running for the above seats and received responses from 18.

### Atlanta Mayor

- CINS sent questionnaires to the 13 candidates and received 8 responses.



<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> What is the Grady cluster's greatest asset? What is its greatest challenge? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Grady cluster stakeholders include not only educators, students and parents, but also businesses, community organizations and residents who do not have children in Atlanta Public Schools. If elected, how would you be accountable to all constituents? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 4:</b> How would you address the overcrowding and disrepair/aging of many Grady cluster schools (e.g., Morningside Elementary and Grady)? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 5:</b> As apartment and condominium construction continues in areas served by Grady cluster schools, to what extent do you think increased density will lead to increased enrollment, and how would you suggest Atlanta Public Schools plan for this growth? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe A) that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools, and B) that they should be zoned for Grady cluster schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 7:</b> Major events staged in Piedmont Park during the school year have a significant negative impact on Grady High School. From set-up to strike, the largest events can last up to two weeks, during which time it is often difficult for students and faculty to get to and from school on time and participate in after-hours activities on campus. This affects drivers, walkers, cyclists and those who take transit. What would you do to mitigate the impact of such events? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 8:</b> What is your assessment of public charter schools? What can traditional public schools learn from them? What can they learn from traditional public schools? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 9:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the property deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has withheld deeds, making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 10:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly three fourths of the APS budget, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put APS in a bind. Is there a different school budget procedure you can recommend to protect our school revenues from future actions of this kind by the County? (250 words)</p>
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## District 1

**Leslie Grant**

<http://www.electlesliegrant17.com/>

**Incumbent**

**Answer 1:** I personally attended DeKalb County Schools grades 1-12. My two children have attended APS schools K-12 (my daughter is an IB Diploma Holding freshman at GA TECH – mom brag!!!) and K-9 (my son is a freshman at Maynard Jackson HS). Both attended K-8 at Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School in Grant Park. I've served in leadership positions including: NCS Transition Governing Board and ANCS Board as Parent Involvement Committee Chair, Maynard Jackson Local School Council and currently serve as the District One Representative on the Atlanta Board of Education.

**Answer 2:** What is its greatest challenge? The greatest asset is the diversity of its student population—many races, ethnicities, family structures, income levels, beliefs and cultures are still to be found in our rapidly gentrifying city core. In large urban districts, it is rare to find such

successful k-12 clusters with this level of diversity.

The greatest challenge is to going to be maintaining this healthy mix while we maintain adequate capacity at all grade levels with the rapid growth, and not displace our less-resources families.

**Answer 3:** Accountability means lots of things to lots of folks. To the taxpayers, businesses and community organizations, I will continue work I began in 2016 as Audit Committee Chair to reassert the board's role in oversight of the district. I will also continue my Community Coffees on the First Friday of the Month at Blueprint Church on Rankin Street at 8:30am. I started the Coffees in 2015 to provide a neutral space to discuss any issues the public would like, and I will work to expand the Coffees in my next term. I've also pitched the idea of incorporating a customer service platform that would provide holistic accountability for our staff and families and will continue to advocate for meaningful accountability from the Superintendent.

**Answer 4:** We appreciate the support of our SPLOST V referendum in 2016 that will provide over \$100M in repairs

and renovations to the Grady Cluster alone. This will seek to solve Middle School capacity issues, High School capacity and repairs, Morningside ES Renovation and eventually provide for additional capacity once the Inman building is vacated. By the end of the SPLOST cycle, I believe there will be need for additional space and there will need to be some innovative thinking as to how best to use the additional capacity to allow as many families as possible to remain in their home cluster.

**Answer 5:** I do believe we have many more new families who are choosing to live in smaller, more dense dwellings along the Eastside Trail of the BeltLine and that we've been playing catch-up as a system by trying to stay in front of development. I think we will need to have early and often discussions, with community stakeholders, about how to best grow, redistrict, and rethink "schools." The Grady Cluster sits between the urban "spine" of Peachtree and the Beltline. These two innovative urban design growth areas CAN provide opportunity to rethink our school campuses and traditional programming. Incorporating more flexibility,

work/study programs for older students, as well as possible grade reconfigurations in order to "fit and stay" in the Grady Cluster once the 2021 build-out is complete is an interesting conversation that needs to take place very soon.

**Answer 6:** I do not appreciate how the legislation was written and the reflection is screams about the current Council and Administration's value (or lack thereof) of our public schools. If the expansion helps the City to provide quality services, extend transit and increase the tax base AND the proposed annexed areas WANT to come into the City of Atlanta, I don't think it is a bad thing. I do believe that the law and intent of the law is to co-terminously expand the boundaries of the City of Atlanta (if the city expands, so does the school system). However, I think it would be prudent to assess the enrollment and give a healthy lead time to make any changes necessary for both districts (it's not as simple as moving kids from one bus to another) AND I also would enjoy a discussion about more autonomously



managed clusters that might be able to operate a bit more flexibly within our current rigid "boundaries." A more "metro-wide" approach is something worthy of discussion. Back to earth...I do think that if areas are adjacent to a cluster, and legally we accept them into APS, they would necessarily be zoned to the closest schools. It makes for a very difficult argument to leapfrog over a cluster or go around our elbow to transport kids to another, non-adjacent district.

**Answer 7:** We need a City Councilmember and Mayor who will prioritize communication with our schools so that the impact is negotiated, not forced upon the school community. A plan that allows for manageable access, limited timeframe and compensates the school properly for the disruption should be inked as soon as possible.

**Answer 8:** I have had a great experience for my family through our involvement with ANCS over the years. APS has a pretty good track record of approving quality charter schools and being willing to close down others when they are struggling too hard. I think the culture that is manifested in most of our charter schools is extremely important to attracting and retaining great quality teachers, families and staff. Being able to pilot and grow great initiatives like the CREATE grant, in the Jackson Cluster, showcases some of the best, most innovative practices that have expanded into charter/traditional partnerships.

**Answer 9:** Ridiculous. New Mayor.

**Answer 10:** A) Consult with outside financial sources who understand "this space" better

than the board in order to ensure quality oversight. B) Cross-check the Audit reports from previous years for the Fulton County Tax Assessor and ensure that all recommendations for improvement have been followed thoroughly. C) Assume less-than-realistic growth for a year and place the increase, when/if, in reserves to build a buffer D) The Board, as a whole, must demand greater accountability for expenditures – what is the purpose, measured outcome, timeframe and tool to monitor.

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## Ade Oguntoye

<http://www.ade4education.com/>

**Answer 1.** I have extensive involvement in Atlanta Public Schools since 2001, including program development, tutoring and mentoring in over 35 schools. I started advocating for parents and students of recent immigrants. I went on to manage a AmeriCorps team that provided math and reading supplemental instruction daily as well as after school programs at Hands on Atlanta. Later I write two grants and received federal funding for two programs, one focused on arts education and the other providing tutoring in STEM tutoring. For the past nine years I have run my own non-profit providing mentoring and delivering social entrepreneur training for students in APS, Fulton and Clayton County Schools.

**Answer 2:** It is the city of Atlanta itself that is Grady's greatest asset. If we did an asset map of the cluster would see technology companies, entrepreneurs and infrastructure around to support a world class school system. Atlanta is a growing city and new

technology and ideas are at our fingertips. It is lack of utilization of the entire community to accomplish our mission that is our challenge. This problem is exacerbated by the constantly changing demographics which leads to insular thinking in many cases.

**Answer 3:** Because everyone benefits from the education of students we should all have "skin in the game." The entire community must be informed of what is happening in the schools. I would inform our community by attending neighborhood meetings quarterly to give updates, having meetings in the community at businesses and increasing apprentice and internship opportunities in the surrounding businesses.

**Answer 4:** We have to take a serious look at the needs of each school. Number one, safety issues as it relates to schools must be addressed immediately. Disrepair is not just an esthetic issue. APS has a budget to provide many of these repairs. Number two, develop a plan and a budget with the involvement of the community of what we would like to see these institutions look like (physically and practically to support growing populations) and what it would cost to get us there. In these interactions, I would share the resources we have at APS and make a plan, with the community, to get the additional resources needed to accomplish the improvements.

**Answer 5:** We must be proactive in our planning because there is not an unlimited amount of space at our schools. We can assume that as Atlanta grows, so will the population of students in the cluster. Now is the time to have conversations not only about

what each school can support, but how to have equitable access for all parents to high quality education. We must decrease the disparity in educational outcomes at schools throughout the district so parents are comfortable sending their children to any of the public schools both in our cluster and in the district.

**Answer 6:** As an Emory graduate I am clear on what the school did for me as a student and a member of the community. That being said we have to look at all the implications of the annexation, including changing the voting mix and zoning issues. I think there are both benefits and challenges of the proposal and I have not seen a plan for how this would impact the schools financially and programmatically. I think it is worth it to slow the process down and answer questions related to how the annexation would impact APS.

**Answer 7:** We have to be involved in the planning process. I would advocate for each organization or event to include a plan for how they will mitigate the impact on the school and community as a part of the approval process. Each festival is unique in their utilization of the park, so having a representative on the committee from the school community would benefit everyone. We don't have to be at odds with the community because some of the benefits of attending Grady High School is the proximity to the park and interaction with the people that utilize it.

**Answer 8:** Charter schools are designed to address a specific community concern. They were originally designed to spark innovation that can be shared



with other schools. My experience with charter schools in APS has been a mixed bag. There are stellar examples of charter schools and some charters that have floundered and not produced optimal results (some have even closed down). Ultimately each school, charter or not should be held to the same minimum standards. How they address them does not have to be dictated. I feel that charter schools can also benefit from looking at traditional public schools as an institution and ask how their programs could be utilized in all schools.

**Answer 9:** In order for us to make the case for complete autonomy we have to make sure we are able to fully manage the process. Our case is not helped with the recent halting in the sale of a property due to alleged ethics concerns of one of the board members in the sale of a property in our district. The governing board must be above board on all interactions as it relates to its properties before we can expect the dynamic to change. Once we show we have our house fully in order we can confidently make the case that is is not only right but prudent for us to hold all of our deeds.

**Answer 10:** The public should always have skin in the game but I would like to see our properties taxes account for 51% of the budget so that we understand that we are funded primarily by the community and have a responsibility to said community primarily. The remaining 49% should come from grants, utilizing our assets more including looking at revenue generators. For example, revitalizing abandoned properties we own and renting out units to businesses and

homeowners and assessing branding opportunities in and around our properties. These actions in addition to increasing grants and community investments can make up the 49%. At the end of the day, we need to grow our school populations back to around 100,000 students so that we can grow the proverbial pie and take advantages of economies of scale.

## District 2

### Byron Amos

[www.byronamos1.homestead.com](http://www.byronamos1.homestead.com)  
Incumbent

**Answer 1:** I am a product of the Atlanta Public Schools, attending M. M. Bethune Elem., J.F. Kennedy Middle, graduating from Booker T. Washington High School. As a proud father of three daughters, all graduates of Booker T Washington High School and one son that attends an APS school, my experience with public schools is extensive. I have served my children and their schools as PTA President and Vice president on several occasions. I have been a member of Band Boosters, Athletic Boosters and Alumni Associations. Currently, I am serving as the Atlanta Board of Education District 2 Board member, where I am finishing my sixth year of service.

**Answer 2:** I believe that the Grady Clusters biggest asset is its parents and its long history of academic achievement. All of the schools in the Cluster have a robust PTA and a parental engagement process. The parents and caregivers of the Cluster ensures that the students are equipped for success. The biggest challenged of the Grady Cluster is equity and overcrowded

facilities. We have not been able to find the correct formula of delivering access to an equitable education to all of the students in the Cluster. Then there is the overcrowding issue. The Grady Cluster is a desired educational designation for many but our facilities are not able to accommodate the need.

**Answer 3:** As an elected member of the Board of Education, I will be accountable to my student population first, then to their parents. As other stakeholders look to support our students and their families, I will be held accountable by all to ensure that we have a complete plan of action, that is student focus and family grounded to achieve student success.

**Answer 4:** I have begun to address this issue by supporting the upcoming SPLOST. Although the monies that have been earmarked for future remodeling and expansion is on the way, we must do more. We need a plan that speaks to the proper growth of the Cluster and the ability for others to transfer into it. I will support a comprehensive plan that will address the structural growth of the Cluster and its needed repairs but inside of this plan, we must also begin to address the equity issues of Atlanta Public Schools that in many ways supports the overcrowding of the Cluster.

**Answer 5:** I will advocate for a comprehensive plan that most include APS expansion data and data from the City of Atlanta and other governmental agencies. In regards to APS, our plan must include designs for new or remodel building as well and the moving of attendance zone lines to achieve our goals. A plan of action the will ensure smart growth is needed.

**Answer 6:** (No response.)

**Answer 7:** I better partnership between the City of Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools and the promoters of these events is what is needed. There should never be an event in the park that compromise the learning environment of our students. All events should be plan around our schools and the needs of our students and families. Then I also believe that an "impact" fee should be discussed that should go to address the needs of our student. In this partnership, our students should also be given the opportunity to be an active part of the event in a learning capacity.

**Answer 8:** (No response.)

**Answer 9:** (No response.)

**Answer 10:** (No response.)

## Tony Burks

[www.drtonyburks.org](http://www.drtonyburks.org)

**Answer 1:** I started teaching when I was 22. I taught at The Branson School in Ross, CA, and the University School of Nashville, both top tier independent schools. I became an elementary school principal when I was 27 (Crockett Elementary School, Brentwood, TN). I am the founding principal of The Early College at Guilford, North Carolina's first early college high school and one of the first such schools of its type in the world. I've served schools and districts in various roles over the years: + Guilford County Schools: Magnet Director + San Diego Unified School District: School Improvement Officer, Executive Director of Small School Innovation, Executive Director of Charter Schools, Area



<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> What is the Grady cluster's greatest asset? What is its greatest challenge? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Grady cluster stakeholders include not only educators, students and parents, but also businesses, community organizations and residents who do not have children in Atlanta Public Schools. If elected, how would you be accountable to all constituents? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 4:</b> How would you address the overcrowding and disrepair/aging of many Grady cluster schools (e.g., Morningside Elementary and Grady)? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 5:</b> As apartment and condominium construction continues in areas served by Grady cluster schools, to what extent do you think increased density will lead to increased enrollment, and how would you suggest Atlanta Public Schools plan for this growth? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe A) that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools, and B) that they should be zoned for Grady cluster schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 7:</b> Major events staged in Piedmont Park during the school year have a significant negative impact on Grady High School. From set-up to strike, the largest events can last up to two weeks, during which time it is often difficult for students and faculty to get to and from school on time and participate in after-hours activities on campus. This affects drivers, walkers, cyclists and those who take transit. What would you do to mitigate the impact of such events? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 8:</b> What is your assessment of public charter schools? What can traditional public schools learn from them? What can they learn from traditional public schools? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 9:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the property deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has withheld deeds, making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 10:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly three fourths of the APS budget, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put APS in a bind. Is there a different school budget procedure you can recommend to protect our school revenues from future actions of this kind by the County? (250 words)</p>
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Superintendent + North Carolina Department of Public Instruction: School Transformation Coach + North Carolina Central University: adjunct instructor + APS: Area Superintendent (i.e. Regional Executive Director), Principal Mentor, Principal + National Center for Urban School Transformation: Superintendent-in-Residence

**Answer 2:** The Grady Cluster's greatest asset and challenges mirror those of the district as a whole. People (our students, our parents and our staff) are our greatest asset. We transform schools into places where children and adults thrive by supporting the adults who support children. The core work of education involves relationship and human effort. We must ask critical questions about how we are supporting students, teachers, and staff, and how we are engaging parents. Our greatest challenge is equity. We operate in a system that is still a tale of two school districts: The Haves and the Have Nots. Equity is just a big word for making sure students and schools get what they need to be successful. Put another way, equity is giving

everyone shoes to wear and those shoes fit each person (e.g, my shoes would be Size 14 and yours might be a Size 10). The whole point of equity is to remove roadblocks and barriers so our children succeed.

**Answer 3:** Diane Ravitch, an educational policy analyst and a research professor wrote, "The goal of accountability should be to support and improve schools, not the heedless destruction of careers, reputations, lives, communities, and institutions." It's important for me to advocate, inform, listen, learn, represent, translate, and question when representing District 2. Of course—beyond advocating for District 2—I will advocate for all students in APS. All students, regardless of the area in which they reside, must have access to a quality education. Ultimately, I wish to be judged by and held accountable for my collaborative work with my fellow board members creating policies and conditions that our sole employee—the superintendent—help educators help students. When we remove roadblocks and barriers, our schools

improve and our children succeed.

**Answer 4:** (Answered together with Question 5.)

**Answer 5:** At the core of questions 4 and 5 are conversations that can become heated very quickly: SPLOST, school attendance zones, and redistricting.

SPLOST: On May 24, 2016, voters approved our district's E-SPLOST, the penny sales tax used to pay for school construction, renovations and other improvements. By law, it expires after five years unless voters agree to renew it. Almost 50% of this new E-SPLOST is earmarked to address overcrowding in the Grady Cluster including expanding Grady High School, making the closed Howard School a middle school, and renovating Morningside Elementary School. Our charge as a body of nine board members is to ensure we support this work of the district through policy and governance.

ATTENDANCE ZONES AND REDISTRICTING: We know official zone boundaries for our elementary, middle, and high

schools are established by the Atlanta Board of Education. One way to address overcrowding is to rezone or redistrict to balance student enrollment at schools. Of course, this hasn't been popular any time I've seen it over my 25 years as an educator; but, from time to time it is simply necessary. Another unspoken reality is the perceptions we have about people, neighborhoods, and schools. Therefore, another way to address overcrowding is improving the performance and perceptions of individual schools and the Atlanta Public Schools overall (all of this is in addition to ensuring all schools in our district are safe and welcoming places of learning for all children).

AND YES, increased density will most likely lead to increased enrollment.

**Answer 6:** Over the years—as early as 1846—various parts of what are now Fulton and DeKalb Counties have chosen annexation into the City of Atlanta. When people chosen to be a part the City of Atlanta, they typically have been "all in" with every aspect from taxation to representation to schools.



Although this is ultimately a City of Atlanta decision, Emory should not be excluded or exempt. It is very unusual to annex property in a city and exclude or exempt the property from the school district. A question to ask is, "why this was done?" Another question to ask is, "Where will children in this area attend school?" As a board member, I would ask "why?" and "where?" and so should the voters of Atlanta. The annexed areas should be served by APS. I think it would be important for the Board of Education—as a governing body of nine members—to review the zones before determining if the annexed areas should be connected to an existing cluster or be identified as a separate cluster.

**Answer 7:** Grady isn't going anywhere, nor is Piedmont Park. It will be essential for APS to develop stronger ties and connections with the City of Atlanta and various city departments and agencies. Also, it will be important for groups like GO Teams or the PTSA to connect with organizers of annual events in advance to discuss concerns and seek win-win solutions to the challenges. For example, it may be possible to establish a shuttle service through MARTA. It might be a dilemma—given the cluster's focus on College and Career Preparation—for a class of students to work through and solve in partnership with the event organizers.

**Answer 8:** Innovation can be found, nurtured, and sustained in public education from traditional neighborhood schools to public charter schools. A charter school designation does not automatically translate to innovation and excellence for the students we serve, and a

neighborhood school is not automatically low performing because of its location. We must continue trying innovative things to help our students in all educational settings. Likewise, we also must simply do the right things well to help our students achieve excellence.

One key goal innovation is actually incubation—and this is something both types of schools can learn from each other. The flexibility given to schools is meant to encourage a deeper exploration of innovative practices so that they can be replicated at other schools. All schools—not just charters or themed schools—must have freedom and flexibility, challenge and choice coupled with strong coaching, ongoing professional development, and face-to-face support using data as a flashlight to illuminate what works and what does not work. Sadly, many schools operate with a "Elephant tied to a Chair" mentality; that is, they perceive that have policy barriers and restrictions where such barriers don't exist.

I would really like school choice to be about a child attending a school that has something that strikes their interests and learning style as opposed to a child leaving because the school in their neighborhood is a low achieving school (or perceived as such).

**Answer 9:** There wasn't talk of these property deeds until recent history (about the last 5 to 7 years). Over the years the City of Atlanta has given deeds to Atlanta Public Schools when the deeds have been requested. A better set of questions about the matter might be: What has happened to cause a breakdown? What can be done on APS's part to improve things?

**Answer 10:** About 72% of the budget comes from local taxes and about 26% comes from the state. We simply need to spend less than we receive. Additionally, as is the case with our relationship with the City of Atlanta, we must look at improving our relationships with those in Fulton County government.

## Keisha Carey

[www.keishacareyatlantaboard.com](http://www.keishacareyatlantaboard.com)

(Did not respond.)

## District 3

### Adzua Agyapon

[www.adzuaforaps.com](http://www.adzuaforaps.com)

**Answer 1:** Special Education Teacher, Midway Elementary, Fall 2011-Spring 2013 New Teacher Coach, Teach for America Summer Institute, Benteen Elementary, 2013 New Teacher Coach, Teach for America Summer Institute, Slater Elementary, 2014 Lead Teacher, Grade Level Chair, Instructional Coach, and Member of the Extended Academic Leadership Team, KIPP STRIVE Primary School, Fall 2013-Current Founding Coach and Site Director, KSP Girls on the Run, Spring 2016 School Director, Teach for America Summer Institute, Cascade Elementary School Director, 2017

**Answer 2:** One of the Grady cluster's greatest assets is strong parent engagement. Parents are an essential part of dedicated communities of students, families, and educators that can transform students' lives and propel them toward an opportunity-rich life. One of the greatest challenges of the cluster is overcrowding.

**Answer 3:** If elected, I will make decisions that put our kids' needs first. I will be accountable to all constituents through transparency and resource stewardship. A school board ensures fiscal responsibility in its budget planning process by creating a high return on taxpayers' investments. That would mean that all students are reading at grade level, graduating on time, going to college and becoming adults who contribute to society. These are discrete goals that we can achieve; we owe it to students and taxpayers. Thriving schools help ensure we have thriving communities that benefit all constituents.

**Answer 4:** APS and the Superintendent have a solid plan in place to address the overcrowding and disrepair of many of the schools in the cluster. This includes renovating Grady and creating a new middle school at Howard, however, we must ensure that the plans are implemented in a timely manner and reflect the city's projected growth and increased school enrollment.

**Answer 5:** The Grady cluster will certainly face increased enrollment as a result of continued housing construction. Advanced planning for a growing population requires consistent collaboration with city council. We must create a structured communication system between APS and the city's planning department to inform APS of new zoning and permitting agreements as well as growth projections before construction begins, so APS has time to plan for a growing student population.

**Answer 6:** While annexing Emory, the CDC, and surrounding properties into the city of Atlanta could heighten



the prestige of our city, I cannot fully support the annexation proposal until we have more information about the cost of serving that area.

**Answer 7:** I would mitigate the negative impact of events at Piedmont Park by collaborating with the City of Atlanta to advocate for an event set-up schedule that works around the school day. Arrival and dismissal typically occur at the same time each day, so set-up should occur outside of those hours so events can enrich our community without detriment to our students' learning environments.

**Answer 8:** Charter schools were initially created to be learning labs, untethered from the slow pace of public school bureaucracy. This allowed innovative teachers and leaders to implement changes and discover best practices.

I know firsthand that some charter schools and some traditional public schools are serving kids and can be models for others. These best practices include strong teacher and school leader recruitment and training, a culture of high expectations and joy, in addition to a rigorous, integrated academic curriculum.

**Answer 9:** The City of Atlanta should transfer all remaining property deeds to Atlanta Public Schools, especially now that APS has adopted an affordable housing policy for the land.

**Answer 10:** Atlanta Public Schools' \$12 million dollar budget shortfall was the result of poor planning by Fulton County Commissioners office and under-assessing property values across the county. While Fulton County plans to create an equitable solution to right-

size and adjust previous assessments, APS and our students cannot wait.

To avoid a similar shortfall in the future, APS should audit the budget to ensure we are spending taxpayers' dollars effectively; create a conservative general fund budget for future years that includes austerity planning to accommodate mandatory costs increases for expenses such as rising health care costs and pensions; create an alternative budget to be used in the event that Fulton County adjusts tax assessments that lead to growth in the overall tax digest.

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## Lewis Cartee

[www.lewiscartee.com](http://www.lewiscartee.com)

**Answer 1:** BURGESS-PETERSON ACADEMY ES Governance Team Chair, (2016-PR) Local School Council Chair, (2013-2015) PTA Academic Enrichment Chair, (2015-PR) East Atlanta RunFest Committee, (2014-PR) JACKSON CLUSTER Cluster Advisory Team, (2016-PR) Jackson Cluster Planning Team, (2015) SOUTHEAST ATLANTA COMMUNITY FOR SCHOOLS (SEACS) Board Member, (2015) Officer, (2014-2015)

**Answer 2:** The greatest asset of the Grady Cluster is its engaged and involved parents that continue to advocate for every child in the cluster. The Grady Cluster's biggest challenge is, quite simply, space. As the cluster gained strength, lack of building capacity became an issue.

**Answer 3:** As an engaged member of both our local schools (LSC/GO Team Chair, Cluster rep) as well as the community at-large (Community Association President), I have

had the pleasure and responsibility of forming relationships with all interested parties. As these relationships are the definition of community, I will continue to be open, transparent and available for everyone.

**Answer 4:** With respect to overcrowding in the Cluster, the bringing online of the new Howard facility is very much needed, and the completion can not come fast enough for the communities being served. Once up and running this will then allow for future capacity usage at Inman, and the impacted communities must be involved in the conversation about how the Inman building can best serve the Grady Cluster.

**Answer 5:** Increased density will lead to increased enrollment. Atlanta Public Schools needs to be at the table with respect to issues normally viewed as being City of Atlanta owned. Affordable housing, transportation and public safety are just as much school policy issues as they are City Council and Mayoral matters. We must elect members to all three that understand that our schools are the key driving force in getting the equity we all want, the diversity we all need and the city we all deserve.

**Answer 6:** In supporting the annexation of Emory University, the CDC and the surrounding properties, I believe this can only be an all-or-none proposition. Just as one would not expect the affected areas in the proposed area of annexation to request not to have APD or city garbage service, one should also expect that this area to be part of APS. Today, given the small amount of residential property, zoning them for Grady should not have an impact.

However, if this single annexation request creates future ones from the surrounding residential neighborhoods then it will be APS' responsibility to have inclusive and thoughtful conversations with all stakeholders about how this would potentially affect student population in nearby schools.

**Answer 7:** To mitigate the impact of Piedmont Park activities on Grady High School, I believe we need to bring together a representative from those that suffer from these events, the City Council representative as well as both concerned neighborhood associate and NPU leadership. As these festival permits work their way through their prescribe process we often are having decisions made by those least impacted. We need to create a specific dialogue that focuses on how the city can work to create a better situation for the school. While understanding the desire to have these events, we need to make sure that all parties involved completely understand the impact created from setup to breakdown, not just the day of the event.

**Answer 8:** Charter Schools are meant to be small schools of innovation, not separation, within our communities. By remaining flexible and nimble Charter Schools can alter, edit and correct actions when not working. Inversely, when true innovation is created and proven successful, APS must work to better communicate these successes to all our school communities in an effort for school leadership to determine if a particular piece of innovation can stimulate increased academic achievement for their students. Regardless of structure we can



all learn from one another. We need to break down this false borders, create relationships and share any and all ideas that will move us to what should be our one and only true goal, increased student outcomes.

**Answer 9:** When actions are taken simply for political reasons, problems are created. We need to elect leaders at every level that share the same goals, and not politicians that wish to create roadblocks that do not allow APS to make the decisions needed to produce a stronger system, both educationally and fiscally.

**Answer 10:** In order to create solutions they must be done proactively while emotions are calm. We must create relationships of trust prior to emergencies happening. With sincere relationships proactively working on matters we can non-emotionally discuss different strategies because in the heat of the moment political moves are made, not thoughtful ones. From ideas such as capping the percentage increase that can be applied any given year to, as in the case with Fulton County for this one year, staggering the collective amount owed over X number of years, there are solutions that can create a compromise for both parties. However, having conversations prior to the problem occurring will produce much better results.

## Michelle Olympiadis

[www.michelleforboe.com](http://www.michelleforboe.com)

**Answer 1:** An APS parent since 2007 with three children - one each in high school, middle school and elementary school, along with my experiences at the state and local levels of education and leadership roles in Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) at the local, council and

district levels, as well as service on local governance teams, state, district, and cluster advisory panels and committees positions me as the longest, most engaged and active candidate: President, Morningside Elementary School PTA — 2015-2017; VP of Communication Ga PTA District 10, 2016–2017; Member, State Advisory Panel, Georgia DOE, 2015–Present; Member, Student Success Stakeholder Committee, Georgia DOE, 2015–Present; Grady High School Cluster Advisory, 2016–Present; Inman Middle School Go Team, 2015 - Present; Special Education Advisory Committee, Atlanta Public Schools, 2014–Present; Principal Selection Committee Tier 3 - Morningside Elementary School, 2015 and Inman Middle School, 2016

**Answer 2:** The Grady cluster's greatest asset is its community. The Grady cluster hosts a diverse set of neighborhoods. The residents in these neighborhoods are engaged and supportive of all of the Grady cluster schools.

The Grady cluster's greatest challenge is its schools capacities. As the neighborhoods in the Grady cluster continue to attract all types of families, and knowing that the Grady cluster community values smaller class sizes, our greatest challenge is ensuring that we have facilities that meet our continued enrollment growth. Our schools are the center of our community and we need a comprehensive facility plan for the next 10 years that addresses facility management, maintenance, and capital improvements and supports our educational framework for 21st century learning.

**Answer 3:** The best way to be accountable to all constituents is by continuing to be engaged in the community. Speaking with people, sending and responding to emails, attending neighborhood association and school meetings, and local events are the ways I will be accessible to all stakeholders.

**Answer 4:** Recently both Springdale Park and Mary Lin Elementary schools received expansions to support their growing enrollment. In the fall of 2020, the Howard building in the Old Fourth Ward will open as the cluster's new middle school with a capacity for just over 1400 students. When Howard opens, Morningside Elementary school will move into the Inman building while Morningside undergoes a renovation. Hopefully by the fall of 2022, Morningside will be open again. As soon as Howard is up and running the Grady cluster community will need to engage in conversations on what it believes will be the best use of the Inman building. It could revert to an elementary school, or can be used as another configuration depending on what the educational reasoning will be and the feedback from the community. Grady High School is also slated to have a renovation and additional building added to its campus. The Walden property is being transformed into an athletic complex mainly for the Grady cluster's use.

Continuous monitoring of the Grady Facilities Plan and on enrollment in the cluster schools will dictate where adjustments may need to be made. A Grady Cluster Facilities Plan with community input should be made for the next 5 - 10 - 15 years with "triggers" based on

capacity, enrollment and facilities.

**Answer 5:** In the past APS stated with certainty that these types of developments would not attract people with children. We now have proof that these types of construction do attract people with children if the schools are desirable. We must understand that if there is increased density how does it relate to the city's infrastructure as a whole - city services, roads, public transportation and schools and if it is doable and sustainable. We cannot be informed after the fact.

The mayor, the city council, the superintendent and the board of education need to have some rich dialogue about the continued focus of construction in certain areas of the city versus the city as a whole and take into consideration where there is limited access to school seats and where there is an abundance. As we know large real estate tracks are very limited in the Grady cluster and come with a very high price.

**Answer 6:** It is my understanding that under the current proposal the annexation of Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta are exclusively asking for these properties to be annexed into the city of Atlanta. Thus, in the annexation proposal, no taxes will be coming into the city, yet city services like police, fire and sanitation will be required. With no tax revenue coming into the city, careful consideration should be given to understand how these entities plan on supporting the city through public and private partnerships. Furthermore, Dekalb has requested to keep its school buildings. If the properties are annexed into the city and have



residents with children wanting to attend APS schools, it is under the recommendation of the superintendent with broad approval as to where and when children will be zoned to schools.

APS is a district of choice and offers families the opportunity to apply to any schools that are not at capacity. Several of the Grady cluster's elementary schools are at capacity including its middle and high schools. Until the cluster's capacity issues are properly addressed for its current zoned areas as well as potential new areas being zoned into the city that are contiguous, any new zoned areas should be assigned to clusters with capacity. Once the Grady cluster has a long-term facility plan to manage long-term capacity, consideration can be considered to move areas into the cluster.

**Answer 7:** APS, the city council, the city's Office of Parks, and the Piedmont Park Conservancy must work together to better support the surrounding neighborhoods and schools impacted by various activities at Piedmont Park. More consideration should be given in the logistics of how events are managed. Recently even the handicap parking in front of Grady High School was completely blocked by event trucks. This is not acceptable.

In order to mitigate the impact of such events, better consideration and planning should be given to street closures; traffic signal timing should be assessed and realigned with street closures; information dissemination before events and in real-time for drivers to understand the impact; better city transit to and from events; the bike lane should not be blocked and

additional bicycle parking should be implemented; encouraging folks to use the beltline and enhancing other pedestrian paths to the park; issuing neighborhood parking permits will all assist in relieving the impacts of events in the park.

**Answer 8:** Atlanta Public Schools is a district of choice. Any school that is not at capacity offers families the option to apply to transfer. Since the opening of APS' first charter school in the early 2000's, we have seen the benefits of public and private partnerships, the positive results of providing birth to preschool education, offering Saturday school, as well as, an extended calendar and school day, the benefits of extra recess and the options of various extracurricular activities, the requirements of family engagement, and the power a community can have in driving the direction of its school with strong leadership and flexibility.

Charter schools must continue to learn and incorporate practices that promote all students the opportunity to attend a school closest to their homes and recognize inclusive practices for all students, including those whose aspirations may be high but whose talents are not yet as obvious, as are the duties of traditional schools.

Now that we are in a charter system, the ability for clusters and the schools within them to gather to ideate and innovate on an educational framework which works best for its community will leverage the "best practices" we see in successful charter schools. By allowing communities the flexibility to define their expectations and deliverables - Strategic Plan - with the BOE and district

making it a priority to provide the resources and supports necessary for clusters to succeed, we will see new processes evolve and yield the excellence we know can be achieved for all students.

**Answer 9:** When the school system parted with the city, it should have received all the deeds. The city is requesting that APS consider affordable housing options with the vacant properties. APS has received 10 deeds in the past six months and should continue to work with the city council and the mayor to secure the balance of the deeds.

**Answer 10:** APS' greatest strength is its budget. When the total of government funds are added together APS has roughly \$1 billion to serve approximately 50,000 students. Both Fulton and DeKalb counties receive roughly the same \$1 billion and serve closer to 100,000 students.

With respect to budgeting for fiscal year 2018, it would have been prudent for the budget process to follow the same budget as in year 2017 with consideration to a few contingency plans: 1) How would we spend last year's budget differently; 2) If an increase in dollars came in, how would the incremental dollars be budgeted; 3) if a decrease was the outcome, where would cuts be made. It was apparent very early on in the budgeting process that the newly released property taxes with increases were not being well received by property owners in both the city and throughout Fulton county.

APS' greatest challenge is the budgeting, accounting and auditing of the budget to reflect APS' educational mission and goals. We know APS is a high-

need, high poverty district - over 75% qualify for free and reduced lunch.

We must do a better job of driving dollars into our clusters and schoolhouses to address the unique wants and needs of our schools and communities. When the budget is aligned to the programs and needs of the clusters and schools; when the accounting structure is clear on how dollars are being spent; when an audit determines that funds were used appropriately, we should see a direct correlation between money well spent and great educational outcomes for students.

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## Antoine Trammell

[www.antoineforatlanta.com](http://www.antoineforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** I am a product of public education and have positive recollections of the experience. I was educated in the public-school system of Nashville, TN. I graduated from Martin Luther King Jr Magnet High School with high honors as a distinguished scholar and was well prepared for collegiate academics. I graduated from Fisk University with honors and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. In addition to college preparation, a diverse student body was an integral aspect of my public education experience. I made lasting friendships with people of many cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds that has served as a foundation for meaningful interaction with people of different perspectives as an adult. I remain enthusiastic about public education. My children attend APS and I have been active in various volunteer capacities ranging from room parent to room parent chair. I wholeheartedly believe that world-class education can occur within publicly funded schools.



**Answer 2:** The Grady cluster's greatest asset is the people of the surrounding communities. The cluster is situated in a coveted in-town location with proximity to exceptional institutions (e.g., Georgia Tech, Emory University, and the CDC) that attract highly-educated people of diverse backgrounds. The Grady cluster's greatest challenge is also its coveted location, which can attract business and real estate developers. Unabated growth and development within the cluster can impact education quality for our children by straining resources.

**Answer 3:** The best assurance of accountability to all constituents is to maintaining effective relationships that are rooted in communication, transparency, and availability. Schools can be a source of cohesion within communities. Well-performing schools have positive impacts on housing and land values as well as promote economic stability through business viability. It is important to establish regular communication for all constituents to know that their property tax contributions are funding a leading and innovative curriculum. It is also important to utilize regular meetings to foster ongoing awareness of successes and challenges facing the school elements within their communities. As all constituents are stakeholders, they have a right of participation in matters that impact the stability of their community.

**Answer 4:** Planning and communication are important initial steps for successful civic growth. Overcrowding that results from development requires communication between developers and stakeholders to permit planning

for increased capacity within schools. Aging of buildings within the Grady cluster is a challenge that may be addressed by comparison of long-term maintenance costs against demolition and construction costs. It is also important to consider collateral health effects associated with aging facilities including water contamination from pipes, asbestos for construction, and prior use of lead-based paint. Communication would further permit stakeholders to approach investors and developers about investing in the community by contributing funds to building maintenance. Investors have an interest to secure a return on investment that could be threatened by constructing new buildings in near dilapidated structures. Resulting decreases in property valuation could impact the return on investment and future project financing.

**Answer 5:** Residential impact studies and analyses can be performed to project growth in the area related to housing construction. The availability of this information to Atlanta Public Schools could facilitate planning for changes in school enrollment. This emphasizes the importance of communication between stakeholder and developer. An area with well-performing schools and nearness to higher academic institutions and major hospital centers is likely to attract professionals with developing or established families. Thus, increased school enrollment secondary to more housing availability is nearly certain as well.

In addition to providing growth projections to APS, it is also reasonable that developers financially contribute to the expansion costs for increased enrollment. Well-performing

schools are often packaged by developers to attract potential buyers to construction within a community. Investing in the community that is presented to potential buyers or a potential business lease can be an incentive for developers to encourage the success of their project.

**Answer 6:** My position on the annexation is that regardless of the outcome, whether the areas are served by Atlanta Public Schools, or whether they served by the Grady cluster there is room for improvement within our school system. Regardless of the number of children involved or cluster specifics, our schools must provide quality education to our children. In 2016, our district as a whole received a grade of D from the state despite a budget of more than \$685 million dollars for 50,399 students. The budget translates to \$14,242 per student which is nearly double the average spending per student across the state including districts with better performance.

Approximately 41% of graduates from Atlanta Public Schools are ready for college, thus we seem to get less for more. These educational shortcomings have significant long-term societal and public health effects on our city and region. We face increased health spending, decreased economic productivity from a inadequately trained workforce, a decreased local pool of future educators, and a decreased local pool of future leaders. Cultivating talented and well-educated leadership within our children maintains our investment in our city.

The issue of property taxes is implicit in the discussion of annexation. However, there is an opportunity to lessen the

reliance of education funding on the property tax structure through partnerships with local business and professional entities. A fruit of quality education is the ability to apply knowledge in the discovery of solutions to problems.

**Answer 7:** The impact of events at Piedmont Park on education-related activities can be mitigated by establishing designated hours for set-up. Ideally, set-up times could be limited to hours outside education time including weekends. Events at Piedmont Park may financially benefit the city, but a firm commitment to quality education by us as a city is necessary. It is important to express the importance of this commitment to policy makers beyond the school board to ensure the implementation of measures proscribing set-up during learning time by our students.

**Answer 8:** The label of a school system is secondary to the goal of preparing children for college or career and seamless societal integration as productive members of the workforce. Whether public charter or traditional public, education must be student-focused and student-centered. This objective can be achieved by adapting an evidence-based, cutting-edge, and industry-leading curriculum to the needs of our students.

Both models have advantages and disadvantages. Regarding the underlying issues of accountability and governance, public charter schools are granted waivers aimed at improving accountability but are managed by non-profit boards thus local governance is not promised. Waivers can facilitate flexibility and autonomy for curricular innovations, but a



<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> What is the Grady cluster's greatest asset? What is its greatest challenge? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Grady cluster stakeholders include not only educators, students and parents, but also businesses, community organizations and residents who do not have children in Atlanta Public Schools. If elected, how would you be accountable to all constituents? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 4:</b> How would you address the overcrowding and disrepair/aging of many Grady cluster schools (e.g., Morningside Elementary and Grady)? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 5:</b> As apartment and condominium construction continues in areas served by Grady cluster schools, to what extent do you think increased density will lead to increased enrollment, and how would you suggest Atlanta Public Schools plan for this growth? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe A) that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools, and B) that they should be zoned for Grady cluster schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 7:</b> Major events staged in Piedmont Park during the school year have a significant negative impact on Grady High School. From set-up to strike, the largest events can last up to two weeks, during which time it is often difficult for students and faculty to get to and from school on time and participate in after-hours activities on campus. This affects drivers, walkers, cyclists and those who take transit. What would you do to mitigate the impact of such events? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 8:</b> What is your assessment of public charter schools? What can traditional public schools learn from them? What can they learn from traditional public schools? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 9:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the property deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has withheld deeds, making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 10:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly three fourths of the APS budget, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put APS in a bind. Is there a different school budget procedure you can recommend to protect our school revenues from future actions of this kind by the County? (250 words)</p>
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subtle potential to fail students and communities is present. Prior to the current school year 19 charter schools either closed or gave up charter contracts. In comparison, traditional public schools although not immune to closure offer operational stability, local governance, and less flexibility to implement curricular changes.

In contemplating the more favorable model, the water problem in Flint, MI offers a poignant lesson on local governance. The unanimous decision by the Flint City Council to return to Detroit water was overturned by an appointed city manager that resulted in the exposure of many residents including children to lead poisoning. Constituents have an investment in their schools and local governance affords stakeholders greater participation in processes impacting their children and community.

**Answer 9:** The City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Independent School System (APS) have the common functioning of serving the people of Atlanta. The presence of different perspectives on vacant APS

properties may reflect a divergence of goals and perspectives between the two entities. This divergence may be driven by differences in need considering the current budget for APS (\$777 million) is greater than the budget for the City of Atlanta (\$605 million). It is therefore important to establish and codify a framework of shared operational goals that includes fiscal matters such as property deeds. Prudent fiscal management of any system requires balancing short-term needs without compromising long-term growth. The creation of separate and independent entities may prevent mismanagement through autonomy but cohesive action remains a necessity. Whether property deeds are held by APS or the City of Atlanta should never subtract from the larger goal of serving the people of Atlanta. Ultimately, what benefits the City of Atlanta should benefit Atlanta Public Schools and vice versa.

**Answer 10:** Education funding should have less dependence on the property tax structure. A community or county may have differing viewpoints on property taxes as not all members have

an immediate interest in the school system. It is therefore crucial to creatively supplement education funding to lessen reliance on property taxes. I have consistently stated that our city is affluent with resources of major corporations and a prospering entertainment industry that can be leveraged to invest in the education of our children. These resources include Fortune 500 companies, professional sporting franchises, the music industry, and professional film and television enterprises. These entities must exist in an economically thriving market and have access to a qualified workforce to maintain viability. Investing in the education of our children is an investment in Atlanta to continue as a thriving market that safeguards long-term business productivity.

**Rashida Winfrey**  
[www.winfreyforaps.com](http://www.winfreyforaps.com)

**Answer 1:** I am a both a graduate of Atlanta Public Schools and a current APS parent. I attended school in the Grady Cluster and served as Inman Middle School SGA president, many moons ago. I

am pleased to have the support of many former classmates and teachers.

I've served on several non-profit boards that directly impact APS students, such as Cool Girls Inc. which supports APS and DeKalb Title One schools, including the Grady Cluster. I also serve on the board for Center For Puppetry Arts, which opens it's doors to students across the district to experience learning through the wonder of puppetry and arts. I've been personally responsible for directing individual and corporate dollars in excess of \$200,000 to programs that support education and early childhood success and touch APS students. This year, my firm created a public-private partnership between City of Atlanta and SunTrust and Citizens Trust bank to bring local students into bank branches across the city to teach banking habits and financial responsibility. (Note: remainder of response exceeded word limit)

**Answer 2:** The Grady Cluster's greatest asset is the involvement and dedication of its families and also the physical



proximity to major multi-national corporations and top-tier university systems. The greatest challenge of the cluster is the exponential growth that comes with such proximity. Without proactive planning and oversight, overcrowding and inadequate funding will remain a challenge. In addition, the correlation between our desirable location and lack of affordable housing may lead us down the road of a cluster that is increasingly less diverse.

**Answer 3:** I see a greater opportunity for communication targeting all stakeholders. Again one of the great characteristics of the cluster is the community of residents, schools, corporations and small businesses that exist together in one geographic area. Enhanced community engagement is necessary system-wide and must exist in a way that reaches out and invites in business, education, faith, non-profit and community leaders. Our current system is already structured to lend itself to greater accountability, but we should consider a few adjustments. I think GoTeams should be expanded to include 1-2 more leaders from outside the parent community. This helps to foster a both a sense of accountability to all constituents AND a sense of responsibility around education for non-parents. In addition, we should increase our effort to invite and welcome all stakeholders into the Superintendent's Cluster and Town Hall meetings. As member of the Board of Education, just as I do as a candidate... (Note: remainder of response exceeds word limit)

**Answer 4:** (Did not respond.)

**Answer 5:** Increased density will absolutely lead to increased enrollment within the Grady

cluster. There is no anticipated slow down in metro-area growth, and APS has to respond proactively and accordingly. If we say small apartment and condo units don't bring families with school aged children, we are kidding ourselves. APS needs greater connectivity to planned growth projections 5-7 years down the line, so that such data is used to inform decisions around closings, building acquisition/expansion and general capital improvement projects. For this reason, my campaign has worked to create a development council that ensures a symbiotic relationship between local developers and the education process. As such, we will end up with developers that are more engaged in APS and search for ways to support both their neighboring schools and also their student residents. The most important outcome of such a relationship is that developers inform APS during the pre-development process and not after breaking ground. This process ensures that resource planning occurs based on density projections not density actuals....once it's a bit too late.

**Answer 6:** I anxiously await a set date for Atlanta City Council to vote on this matter. I have been in consistent conversation with city leaders in order to better understand updates and changes to the unveiled plan. Before Council makes a decision to move forward with annexation, a solution around the currently estimated 9-10 students must be determined. I have not seen a comprehensive plan that includes final residential demographics, residential and commercial tax impact, transportation plans nor defined infrastructure challenges and needs. As such,

it remains difficult to determine what a solution that best works for Atlanta Public Schools looks like. It is my hope that all parties will keep in mind the power of partnership and the education needs of these actual students. I firmly believe that a final solution should take into account overcrowding within the Grady Cluster.

**Answer 7:** Set up and breakdown for events should occur outside of school hours and on weekends whenever possible. Each organization desiring a park permit is required to apply with the City of Atlanta Office of Special Events. That team goes through a detailed plan that explores event needs such as fire, safety, traffic and sanitation. Leaders from each group are brought to the table to discuss each Piedmont Park event. Cluster or APS representatives should be included in the team, permit approval process so that impact to Grady can be considered and concerns can be voiced. In addition, APS should explore receiving a percentage of the permitting fees to cover the cost of transit contingency plans.

**Answer 8:** I believe there continues to be a place for a system that includes both charter and traditional schools. APS charter schools have succeeded in a few areas where APS traditional schools continue to struggle. Even within the Grady cluster, CINS reporting shows the disparity in performance when you examine Milestone subsets. Milestone data and parent feedback indicate that many of our local charters have seen great success in educating students from disadvantaged communities. I see no reason to stop any program that we can mark as successful.

I would, however, like to ensure that our traditional schools are increasingly amazing. I want to see traditional schools with increased student performance, parent participation, focus on teachers and community engagement. As a Grady Cluster parent, it's hard even for me to imagine that this doesn't exist across the system, but I've visited may schools where this is just not the case. I believe traditional schools in underserved communities thrive with wrap-around services (former Whiteford model), direct connection to early childhood centers and greater parent and community engagement. Through public-private partnerships we must create more of the aforementioned traditional school models that increase success for students across our city.

Cross pollination of ideas between charter and traditional schools should increase with more opportunities to create greater alignment and sharing of information between leaders in both co-existing APS communities. I believe one outcome of this will be greater student success resulting from innovation and creativity pushed through all APS schools.

**Answer 9:** APS and City of Atlanta must have greater partnership and connectivity. For this reason, I've taken the opportunity to speak with 7 of the leading 8 candidates for Mayor about the importance of this partnership and their stance on education. I plan to speak with the 8<sup>th</sup> next month. I've asked each to strongly consider a written position on education and APS and how they will work to improve the current relationship. Handling of deeds should be part of the APS position each mayoral candidate is openly speaking about.



**Answer 10:** APS must find innovative sources of new revenue streams. The current process, with primary focus only on cutting expenses, is not sustainable. Increasing revenue, while actively managing out budget overages and system inefficiencies, decreases risk of a budget that can't weather the storm of a tax system that we don't fully control.

## At-Large Seat 7

### Patricia Crayton

[www.newmenu.org/electpatricia](http://www.newmenu.org/electpatricia)

(Did not respond.)

### Nathaniel B. Dyer

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**Answer 1:** For the last 12 years, I have worn many hats within public schools. I am an advocate which supports student issues in regards to academics and discipline. I have supported parents in parent teacher conferences to bring resolution to problems involving their children. I have also been a Boy scout master and a PTSA Vice President. I have volunteered as a hall monitor and mentor. I have served as a judge for the Georgia PTA's Reflection program.

**Answer 2:** Grady's greatest asset is the location of its schools. They are nestled tightly into the fabric of the community. However, this will be catalyst to its greatest challenge. As the city continues to develop, it will bring good growth with some bad side effects. The population trend in Metro Atlanta's is rapidly approaching 5.8 million. The politics in Atlanta seem to overlook the probability of immobility that comes with this growth. Using the interstate as

an example, we must get ahead of the curve when it comes to the transport and safety of our children. We must also be prepared to accommodate our expanding student population.

**Answer 3:** I know and understand that the position is not about me but how we, the board, can improve the Atlanta Public Schools (APS) for all children. I have been heavily involved with the system for the last 12 years and I have witnessed what a lack of accountability looks like. It creates instability and division within the system which results in a lack of equity and transparency. My approach has always been solutions oriented and building consensus. I have never been one to dodge the tough issues. I thrive on working with people especially when it is about bringing the best solutions to our children's needs.

**Answer 4:** This is a great question! It's truly amazing that we have overcrowding and disrepair/aging of schools within APS while the city of Atlanta is in pursuit of world-class status with developments in the billions. There has been a complete lack of vision to the overall structure of APS. They close schools because they are not full and have no solution for schools that are bursting at the seams. I believe that board should implement a short-term plan to bring balance within the system as it relates to these issues. We must get the business sector involved as a true partner. If companies are willing to come to the City of Atlanta and get tax breaks, the financial benefits to APS must be a priority of discussion. This will allow us to effectively plan our projects and aide in our development of a world-class

educational system for our children.

**Answer 5:** With no doubt, the Grady cluster schools will be bursting at the seams. It will also create a situation that could impact how children get to and from school in a timely fashion. The school board must communicate closely with the city council and the business sector to be alerted of all projects coming into Atlanta. These strategy sessions would focus mainly on residential construction. We must stay ahead of the curve as to how development can negatively impact our children and communities.

**Answer 6:** I do not support the annexation at this time. I will be blunt in saying that APS has no stability to support this measure which would bring a successful outcome. With the crisis involving the budget, private organizations running schools and of course overcrowding, the surrounding communities would reject the thought of being tied to APS. This was proven with the proposed annexation of South Fulton where the topic of schools was the deal breaker. Although, Grady cluster schools do not suffer from this sort of backlash academically, it would be a tough hill to climb while equity is lacking throughout the district. I am committed to working with the board to implement policies that will take our school system to a world-class level in which our currently served communities are proud and see the results.

**Answer 7:** The Atlanta Public Schools must make it clear that our children's quality of life must come front and center. Any activity around our schools should be vetted and organized as if it were the evacuation from a hurricane. When we practice

this approach as a district, event planners will be sensitive to our process and present our schools with a respectable and effective plan for around their functions. This will make the event more of a pleasurable situation as opposed to a heartache for our community schools.

**Answer 8:** I believe that public charter schools have an advantage over traditional public schools in the sense that they are not educating the general population of children. Most of the children are taking through a lottery. Traditional public schools have the ability to do the same thing as public charter schools. They just refuse to do it. Under this new construct of a charter system, we supposedly have flexibility but there is too much instability to truly make it advantageous for the students.

The current board has not effectively implemented strategies for traditional public school success. In comparison to most public charter schools, APS is in a unique situation which still reels from the cheating scandal. A large majority of children are behind in upper grades because they were not taught the basics. It will take some time and a sense of urgency to stabilize our schools and make the children whole.

**Answer 9:** Coming from a family of educators and being an artist, I believe we can find innovative ways to use the buildings for educational purposes. We should be expanding educational opportunities as opposed to closing or selling them. It creates a very bad perception when you sell schools and claim that children are not reading on level. A great example of school reuse is in San Antonio,



Texas where they created a College Cafe. However we utilize the properties, It should produce a successful outcome which would be beneficial to our children.

**Answer 10:** The business sector should take on some of the burden of assisting APS by matching funds to the budget. Billions and billions of dollars are put toward developments around our neighborhood schools. More often than not, these businesses get a tax break in the process. As a board, we must hold the city and state accountable when these deals are made. A plan for supporting our schools should always be rudimental to the conversation. When this occurs, Atlanta can realize its potential as a world-class city.

## Kandis Wood Jackson

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**Answer 1:** My primary experience with public schools is my experience teaching Sixth Grade Social Studies at KIPP WAYS Academy in West Atlanta from 2008-2010. My experience as a teacher in an almost all-Black Title I school, where many of my students received free or reduced lunch, formed my belief that various social, political, and economic factors can often undermine the community-wide goal of providing quality public education to every student. In other words, we cannot educate in a vacuum; we must also account for the issues occurring outside of the classroom that impede a child's ability to learn. My experience as a public school teacher also reinforced in me the importance of hard work, high expectations, dedication, and compassion – particularly for all our children. They're worth it.

**Answer 2:** The Grady cluster's greatest asset is its people – its students, administrators, parents, and community-members. Grady's reputation for fostering active, concerned, participatory, and engaged stakeholders is noteworthy, and certainly an asset worth investing in and leveraging. In this regard, however, consistency is key; the Grady cluster – as do all clusters – deserves to have consistently engaged, active, excellence-driven leaders who are developed and encouraged to remain in the cluster for as long as they want.

The cluster's greatest challenge is addressing capacity and facility issues, while balancing the priority of providing high-quality education, the realities of where people are moving in the city, transportation, traffic and congestion, safety, the historic value of its schools and neighborhoods, the equitable distribution of funding for construction and renovations, and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

**Answer 3:** Accountability to all constituents - no matter their level of activity or personal investment in APS – will be a top priority. I will do this by listening. I will do this by leveraging my unique background and experience to "make the case" for APS. This means making the case for APS to the groups of citizens, including businesses, organizations, and residents, who are not actively invested in our public schools. It will be part of my job to outline for them the social, economic, and moral case for investing in high-quality public education – from cradle to college and career – even if they are not actively involved in the day-to-day operations of

APS (or even if they still believe in the negative stereotypes about APS). This also means making the case for APS to those residents and organizations who, whether or not by choice, are deeply involved with APS, but, for various reasons, have lost faith in the system. I will work to restore and maintain their trust that every decision we make is one with their child's best interest at heart.

**Answer 4:** I would continue APS's outlined plan for renovations and improvements to many Grady cluster schools. This would include expanding Grady High School to help address overcrowding and capacity issues, as well as utilizing as efficiently and equitably as possible the SPLOST 2017 funds to complete major renovation projects for Grady cluster schools. As to renovations at Grady and Morningside, I will be actively involved in the establishment of a neutral, experienced design committee; the selection of a cost-efficient, experienced, and trust-worthy architect; and the legal and fiscal oversight over any contracts entered into by APS as a part of the renovation process. Most importantly, however, I will actively seek-out ideas, opinions, and feedback from Grady cluster stakeholders at every step of the renovation process. To the extent permissible, taskforces and other stakeholder committees must be established.

I will also put into place more-immediate solutions to the capacity and facility issues at schools in the Grady cluster. My experience as a classroom teacher made it very clear that a thoughtful and proportionate student to teacher ratio can be directly linked to instructional

effectiveness and student achievement. When developing a timeline for the completion of projects, we must prioritize student learning above all else. This may mean putting immediate measures into place to ensure that all classrooms are appropriately filled. It could also mean preventing proposed annexations or other proposals that might result in additional students being zoned into the Grady cluster until all renovation projects are completed. Community input in this regard is key.

**Answer 5:** According to recent studies, Atlanta is one of the fastest growing cities in the country, and it is projected that Atlanta will have the sixth largest metro area by 2040. And one drive through the Grady cluster neighborhoods makes clear that much of Atlanta's growth is happening right here. I hope increased density will lead to increased enrollment in all APS schools – and in Grady cluster schools. We should strive to create a city where sending your child to their local public school is the expectation, not the exception; and we should seek to increase enrollment as a means by which to measure our success as a system that attracts most students from most neighborhoods.

Of course APS should plan for this growth. Here's how: by implementing prospective, forward-thinking policies and plans that are not simply reactions to solve past problems but plans to have solutions ready before the problem arises. The Grady cluster renovation and construction projects are a good start in this regard. But, we must also continue to collaborate with the City to consider how transportation, traffic, and safety will play a part



<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> What is the Grady cluster's greatest asset? What is its greatest challenge? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Grady cluster stakeholders include not only educators, students and parents, but also businesses, community organizations and residents who do not have children in Atlanta Public Schools. If elected, how would you be accountable to all constituents? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 4:</b> How would you address the overcrowding and disrepair/aging of many Grady cluster schools (e.g., Morningside Elementary and Grady)? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 5:</b> As apartment and condominium construction continues in areas served by Grady cluster schools, to what extent do you think increased density will lead to increased enrollment, and how would you suggest Atlanta Public Schools plan for this growth? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe A) that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools, and B) that they should be zoned for Grady cluster schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 7:</b> Major events staged in Piedmont Park during the school year have a significant negative impact on Grady High School. From set-up to strike, the largest events can last up to two weeks, during which time it is often difficult for students and faculty to get to and from school on time and participate in after-hours activities on campus. This affects drivers, walkers, cyclists and those who take transit. What would you do to mitigate the impact of such events? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 8:</b> What is your assessment of public charter schools? What can traditional public schools learn from them? What can they learn from traditional public schools? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 9:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the property deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has withheld deeds, making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 10:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly three fourths of the APS budget, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put APS in a bind. Is there a different school budget procedure you can recommend to protect our school revenues from future actions of this kind by the County? (250 words)</p>
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in the analysis, especially as Atlanta grows.

**Answer 6:** While I have followed this story closely, and certainly have opinions about the potential annexation, I have not come to a concrete position on whether or not I support the proposal. I hope to have a concrete position on this issue once the arbitration process is finished.

**Answer 7:** Piedmont Park has a long and rich history of serving as a location for special events in Atlanta. While I would not work to prohibit most of these productive, popular, and appropriate major events at Piedmont Park, I would work with the City to establish policies and protocols to minimize their impact on students and faculty. Some such protocols might include curfews, road blocks, student transportation assistance, and the optional contribution of attendance fees to fund such efforts. They might also include the use of new technology to assist with parking, transportation, and crowd control; as well as experimentation with

transportation and crowd-management algorithms and decongestion models.

**Answer 8:** Under the APS system, public charter schools are public schools. From my experience teaching at charter school, as well as working with other charter and partner schools as a volunteer, the charter and partner schools that APS supports provide innovative, high-quality education to its students. Generally speaking, our charter and partner schools have been effective at: recruitment, retention, and development of effective teachers and leaders; setting high expectations for students and staff; establishing cultures of trust, collaboration, and excellence; making tough decisions when necessary to prioritize student achievement; and putting kids first.

**Answer 9:** This is a complicated issue, involving legal issues of ownership and other dynamics, and I expect to have a concrete position on it soon.

**Answer 10:** (No response)

## Micah Rowland

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**Answer 1:** I currently maintain a STEM/STEAM lab centered around gardening and technology at BAMO E.S. In the past I've volunteered with Project for a Day and engaged students on career path identification at Brown M.S. and financial management at Maynard Jackson H.S. While serving as the chair of NPU-V supported our community leaders in the fight to keep our schools open and supported the Leader In Me program. I assist in read in for children around various APS schools. Since that time I have been working to find how we can improve our schools through engaging the communities around them. In the past I worked in a research lab at a Kennesaw State University and through my experience I have students not prepared for their major course work. As such through a non-profit I founded we provide exposure to Science and Math supplemented by Art. I have created a community revitalization project centered

around safe routes to school and cleaning up the community around the schools called Community Blitz.

**Answer 2:** Grady Cluster's greatest asset is its teachers. Teachers set the tone of the day for the students to learn. If we can invest in our teachers, we can build the greatest educational system in the world to teach our kids. When we have teachers who are dedicated to teaching, engaging the parents and working with the community, the schools flourish. Crowding and the congested community that the feeder schools currently reside are its greatest challenge. Enrollment in the Grady cluster will continue to rise, we must find higher capacity facilities and the partnerships to sustain this growth. I've read the concerns from the Grady High School Local School Council submitted by Sharon Bray and understand the concerns of patchwork solutions that don't promote a holistic approach to resolving this challenge. A holistic solution will need cooperation from the Atlanta City Council and our communities.



**Answer 3:** I've founded a community organization and I do not traditionally have children, I like to think that I have 54,946 children who all attend the great schools of APS. I want to build an APS that engages the community and build partnerships with businesses to help leverage the cost of teaching youth through after school programs or vocational training to get children career or work ready. For those who want to go to college identify educational support to have them prepared for life and assuring they are contributing citizens to our great society. I want to open the doors to our stakeholders, these facilities are public property. At the same time maintain safety and accountability to our students who these external stakeholders will engage. By continuously monitoring how public dollars are being spent, maintain APS assets and ensuring youth are receiving a quality education we can provide better fiscal responsibility.

**Answer 4:** The immediate area where the Grady Cluster schools reside are prime real estate for businesses in retail, entertainment and food services. These areas are seeing significant growth and along with population increase comes sales. A SPLOST particularly for the repair of these facilities can make these repairs and creation of newer higher capacity schools are a possibility. We don't have to build out, we can build up. Creation of virtual schooling is also a possibility. In those cases, where the option can be provided, a sense of "home-schooling" can be implemented, through the creation of the virtual classroom. That experience also lends to the

modern workforce where employees like those at Amazon or Dell are working from home. Another opportunity arises out of the fact that these are Atlanta Beltline areas. A SPLOST can provide the needed financial resources to meet the needs of overcrowding. Similarly, like the tax fund used to finance Mercedes Benz Stadium, much of the revenue will come from people who visit the park, beltline or sanctioned events. These newly generated revenues can then be used to acquire new land or facilities then used to build a higher capacity technology driven school. These funds could be used throughout the entire cluster where the SPLOST is created. This should be looked at as an investment into the future of Atlanta and APS.

**Answer 5:** A review of the APS capacity and utilization study shows that APS will experience an enrollment growth that will bubble around 2021-22, in particularly in areas where there is no current capacity for accepting new students. One way of resolving this issue would be looking at building or obtaining larger facility higher capacity schools. One way of this acquisition could be looking at SPLOST's to fund these critical projects. Build schools in the center of boundaries like major highways to center the population of the schools in their created man-made geographic areas. If areas are beyond capacity split the difference in the geographic area and create an additional facility that feeds into the cluster that support the population need again from a mechanism like a SPLOST. Another method could be an endowment fund model that can be created focusing on business that need human capital as a critical part of their business

operations, this fund is tax deductible. Build a cradle-to-career pipeline where business join the model and invest in their futures by investing in the educational platform that trains their future employees. Utilize alumni and have them invest into the schools that started their futures. Schools could also be built near transportation centers. Families could take advantage of this close proximity to skip the bus and use rapid transit walking to and from the rail lines, then taking a bus or pickup to get home. This could give families access to lower capacity high performing schools.

**Answer 6:** Yes, I believe that it is critical to Atlanta becoming a world class city with residents who are among the most affluent in the Metro-Atlanta region. Yes, I believe the area should be served by Atlanta Public Schools. Regarding zoning them to the Grady cluster that would require more research. We need to look at the impact of zoning children to the Grady cluster knowing the current issues of overcrowding and disrepair of current facilities. This would be one of the scenarios where is the population dictates redrawing the zoning maps to align with highways and build around the cluster with the school in the center. If you look at the cluster now it is split by I-75/85. If we currently look at Centennial Place (CP) we see it is the only school in the cluster that is across the highway. Rezoning CP and zoning the newly annexed area, then building a higher capacity school could lead to relief. In addition, an endowment and even a commitment from Emory could also lead to opportunities that could also include a potential new program track like medicine

and nursing that are in high demand in today's workforce, on a vocational track type of career readiness again supported by Emory University. We should look at the opportunities and challenges optimistically. Emory has a commitment to the global perspective on the human condition. Again another opportunity for the creation of a cradle-to-career pipeline.

**Answer 7:** Community benefits agreement. Let's not limit the use of community benefits agreement with just those regarding the building of stadium's. This concept has many different potential ways to supplant the resources that the events Piedmont Park allows. Again, never should leisure activities receive priority over education. The cost for entertainment should be higher than the cost of education. If entities want to work in that space, we should work with City Council to draft legislation that requires these entities to compensate the disruption of the schools and local community. Whether it be by providing additional transportation resources, funding that build new forms of accessibility like a light rail to the area similarly to the street car, restricting vehicle traffic or primary methods of crowd control that directs the event promoters away from critical areas used by the school and local communities. Other methods include restricting Piedmont Park events scheduled around the APS calendar. The City of Atlanta has many different venues that these events can take advantage of, maybe the cost to hold the events are just too low. A special fee can be added in these areas where they are in close proximity of the schools to offset the disruption. We can



look at other cities like New Orleans during carnival season to see how they have mitigated the large events and still provide access to daily operating entities like Public Schools.

**Answer 8:** I believe that charter schools are a great option for parents and their children. They allow for more innovation that isn't bogged down by red tape. When the charter is created with the community in mind and to progress the educational growth of children. They work well. I don't think that traditional schools should be closed to create charter schools because these traditional schools often have support of strong parent networks. Replacing those traditional schools with charters affectively disrupts parent engagement when present. Traditional schools can learn the opportunities of innovation. Stepping outside the confines of older learning models, traditional schools can learn new ways of teaching youth that can be fun and exciting. In addition, they can learn by the adherence to a more confined budget created to reduce waste and meet the needs of its scholars. Charter schools can learn about the focus on special needs children and children who may need the "extra help" that don't necessarily fall in the guidelines of the charter school's focus. All children need access to equitable and equal quality education enjoyed by their peers and funding shouldn't be a detriment on how the school engages children who need sensitive educational support. Charters have to look at schools like a need of society as traditional schools do, not just a mission of its charter.

**Answer 9:** There are still some legal concerns around this

activity. It is possible that the school's properties must be used for education and that if the facilities aren't being used for the purpose of APS that the deeds would rightfully remain in the control of city. However, even if this is true, my concerns have been in regards to the payments that the Atlanta Beltline owed to APS. Even if the previous is true, APS should be provided the deeds to these properties to offset the loss in funding that the Atlanta Beltline has failed to pay, it is not meeting its promise. It seems only a good faith swap. APS should receive all the deeds of all the vacant or surplus properties as a result of the defaulted repayment of tax funds. APS will basically lose approximately \$90 million of what should have been tax funding for the growth of APS. Any other business would basically be bankrupt after losing such critical funding sources. I served as the Chair of the Atlanta Beltline Tax Allocation During this period and felt that the promise of the Beltline did not outweigh the responsibility we have in educating our children. Never should children be a bargaining chip for greed and wealth. Buildings can be replaced our children's future cannot. Our children must be ready for the global city we want to build for them. It is their's to inherit. This can only be done through education.

**Answer 10:** Two methods I can think of currently are SPLOST and/or Endowment. Through a SPLOST/E-SPLOST during a period like this, the financial support of APS would be shared by all those spending their disposable income in the county. The county commission will be able to find a way to provide relief to property owners

who feel they are being "taxed" out of the community and the schools can continue to mitigate the issues of the lack of funding including paying back the resent necessary loan acquired by APS. Extension and creation of additional SPLOST doesn't add a burden to the property taxes of Atlanta property owners and Atlanta's economic growth can lead the growth of APS. Through an endowment, APS can take advantage of its alumni, business partners and philanthropist who believe in education as the source of the improvement of citizen's socio-economic status to provide the needed financial resources for APS. We believe in investing in our future's what other perfect way than for the hundreds of thousands of APS alumni to donate back to the educational system that brought them success. It will also give business a way of investing into their future capital with a nice and neat tax write off. An endowment fund will also keep graduates of APS engaged through their life, as they will be financially contributing members of a newer stronger Atlanta Public Schools with the financial stability to make dreams a reality!

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## John Wright

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**Answer 1:** My wife and I APS Grads (North Fulton and BE Mays High School). I also attended Continental Colony ES and King MS. My children, Leah and Jack, both attended ANCS and currently attend Maynard H. Jackson HS. I am also the son of a public school educator.

**Answer 2:** The Grady Cluster's greatest assets are its schools and all of the amenities that community provides.

The Grady Clusters greatest challenge is managing current and future growth in the area. In short, it is a victim of its own success which supports my premise that good schools are essential to thriving and vibrant communities which become the bedrock for all the great things a city can become.

**Answer 3:** I bring practical knowhow as a former as a former board president of a local neighborhood charter school. In that role, I was able to inspire trust, and at the same time, recognize that the pace of change required a new level of fiduciary engagement. In an environment of constant challenges, I practiced strategic governance-which means forming far more robust partnerships with institutional leaders. Lastly in my current role at DCSD, I regularly interface with parents, teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders as we address issues regarding design and construction of school facilities in the various neighborhoods in the District.

**Answer 4:** Overcrowding issues almost always come down to the amount of space needed and what the budget can accommodate. The Grady Cluster has/is evaluating the 3 options: New Construction, Major Addition; and Temporary Classrooms. And there are sound arguments for and against each one of these options. However, I would be more comfortable if there was a greater evaluation of the growth trends for the area so a comprehensive informed long-term solution can be implemented that's right for the entire cluster community. This would include the engagement of a city planner that really looks at the census data, new



construction (Condos, Renters, New Homes, etc.) and industry trends happening in the region.

**Answer 5:** This is definitely a determining factor contributing to the overcrowding issues that are currently affecting the Grady Cluster. As I mentioned in the previous question, I would be more comfortable if there was a greater evaluation of the growth trends for the area so a comprehensive informed long-term solution can be implemented that's right for the entire cluster community. This would include the engagement of a city planner that really looks at the census data, new construction (Condos, Renters, New Homes, etc.) and industry trends happening in the region.

While there are plenty of short-term options available, I think as leaders, it is incumbent upon us to look for long-term solutions that integrate stakeholders needs and wants (understanding space and budget constraints) while making the best use of taxpayer dollars.

**Answer 6:** This is an uber complicated topic that includes issues around the annexation processes itself, equity, MARTA, City Hall, taxes, and schools. Before I can fully support the annexation I would like to know the financial impact to incorporate all the non-profit organizations that make up Emory Health System that do not pay taxes.

However, if annexed and the residents and schools are part of the annexation it could provide a significant piece of the long-term strategy to alleviate cluster overcrowding. It should be noted that it would take the full collaboration of Mayor, City Council, and APS to complete the annexation.

**Answer 7:** I live in a park community and one of the reasons we are drawn to these areas to live, work and play is the access to eclectic experiences only these types of environment can provide. With that said, there needs to be more careful consideration given to the residents of these popular communities and their venues. The Mayor, City Council, NPOs and APS all have to work together to understand the communities concerns and then implement more equitable use of venues across the city. This approach would lessen the impact on the schools and students and a safer environment for all.

**Answer 8:** I believe charter schools are just another public school option parents have when it comes to choosing the right learning environment for their child. Charter by their design are learning laboratories for trying new innovative teaching and learning techniques while being held to the same high achievement standards as district schools. Innovative approaches that prove to be successful can be used at other schools as an alternative or new means of teaching.

Successful charter schools learn to be successful by utilizing the resources and affiliations that an established district already has.

**Answer 9:** This issue is at heart of my platform which includes Governance, Pre-K and K-5 Education, and Blight. This is the reason why this election cycle is so critical. The APS BOEs ability to work with the Mayor and City Council is critical to addressing the overarching issues that affect all three entities. However, I am encouraged by this slate of candidates and their

understanding the level of dysfunction and the need for all three entities to work collaboratively to solve these most complicated issues. I hope to bring my skill set to the board to help right some of these situations.

**Answer 10:** APS like most major school district should have the ability to float bonds to account for projected budget shortfalls. Often times, tax receipts lag and depending of the budget cycle might need to be augmented.

I think this is management and messaging issue and that the board should utilize a more robust software tool to help demonstrate the District's fiscal health.

## At-Large Seat 8

### Cynthia Briscoe-Brown

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Incumbent

**Answer 1:** I've been privileged to serve in ABOE Seat 8 At Large since 2014. I have 30 years experience as an APS volunteer, parent & community leader. I was a member of the PTA Executive Boards at all my children's schools. I served three years as co-President of NAPPS, providing leadership in the community and citywide during the cheating scandal, accreditation crisis, and redistricting. I've served since the 1980s on boards of numerous organizations which positively impact APS. I provided legal assistance to found over a dozen school-based foundations, and I frequently help students with college and scholarship legal issues. I helped design and implement an arts-in-education program to improve reading

outcomes among at-risk APS kindergarteners. On the ABOE, I have supported the cluster model, Social Emotional Learning, signature programs, and career education. I helped create a career exchange with Toulouse, France schools, opening a world of possibilities to our kids.

**Answer 2:** The Grady cluster's greatest asset is its strong, committed base of parents and community members who work not just for their kids but for ALL kids in the cluster. I have worked for so many years with these dedicated men and women who raise money, tutor, hold office, plan events, host town halls, and make sure all our kids have what they need to be successful in school and in life. As the neighborhoods in the Grady cluster continue to grow and change, the cluster's greatest challenge will be to maintain that commitment to the whole community. Capacity issues, achievement gaps, changing demographics, and transportation all affect the way we feel about our neighbors. It is essential that the cluster continue to live the high school's motto: "Individually, we are different. Together, we are Grady." On the ABOE, I will continue to support all those who support all our kids.

**Answer 3:** As an At Large ABOE member, I represent every student and every citizen of Atlanta. I am sworn to act in the best interests of every child in APS, and I take that very seriously. I meet with every stakeholder who reaches out to me. In addition, I actively seek out opportunities to engage with civic associations, small groups, nonprofits, businesses, retirees, and young professionals to educate them about our triumphs and challenges in



APS. I have spent many years involving stakeholders (including several in the Grady cluster in the past four years) in our APS schools and programs so they have firsthand knowledge of how APS benefits our city. My accountability comes from my willingness to actively engage, my following through on every commitment I make, and my belief that strong schools make strong communities.

**Answer 4:** The Board on which I serve has committed well over \$100 million to address capacity and facilities issues in the Grady cluster. The \$52 million renovation/expansion of the Howard building for a new middle school is currently in the design phase. The \$33 million Grady High renovation/expansion will begin in early 2018. We did systems renovations at Morningside ES over the summer which provided reliable HVAC and corrected other facilities issues. The \$20 million Morningside renovation/expansion project will begin in 2019, and we are actively seeking options to relieve overcrowding there in the meantime. All these plans were developed, revised, and finalized through an extremely extensive community engagement process over several years, including dramatic changes to the plan based on input from parents, teachers, students, and community members. While the meetings were sometimes contentious, I was pleased to see the Grady community work together to develop a comprehensive plan for world-class facilities for all our kids.

**Answer 5:** As a member of the BOE, I am committed to providing each and every child with a world-class education. Increased density, especially

vertical density, is bound to increase enrollment in the Grady cluster schools as well as other schools throughout the city. APS is already planning for growth in the Grady cluster by: adding 18 classrooms, 3 labs, and a new office suite to Grady HS; building an entirely new middle school at Howard with a capacity of at least 1450 students; and significant renovation/expansion of Morningside ES. The new Howard MS will also free up the Inman campus to use as additional capacity which best meets the cluster's needs. We have a new APS data team which has dramatically improved our ability to track and anticipate enrollment trends, and we are also doing a much better job of consulting principals such as Audrey Sofianos at Morningside and Betsy Bockman at Grady, who have proved their knowledge of their communities and ability to predict future growth. As I have for years, I will closely monitor all capacity issues in the Grady cluster and ensure APS responds quickly and appropriately as conditions change.

**Answer 6:** By law, APS has no say in whether any property is annexed into the City of Atlanta. That said, my colleagues and I are committed to the principle that APS will educate every child who enters our schools. If Emory and environs are annexed into the City, I believe strongly they should be served by APS. We create a dangerous precedent if a single elected official, or a few residents, get to pick and choose which services they want to access. Decisions like that affect not only current residents but future families, who may feel very differently. In addition, such a system effectively creates taxation

without representation for the annexed residents, which is against the core values of our city and our nation. Further, allowing annexation as proposed could have severe negative repercussions on the ability of other parts of DeKalb County (such as Druid Hills) to annex into Atlanta and join APS, since the required contiguity would not be present. Under a policy enacted by the Board on which I serve, the Superintendent assigns and redistricts all students according to guidance we provided. I am confident she will make appropriate decisions, taking into account the current capacity issues at Grady cluster and the needs of current students as well as possible future students.

**Answer 7:** APS has no authority to control the use of Piedmont Park, and limited ability to mitigate the effects of events on individual schools and students. We have continuously advocated for Grady and other schools with City officials and have achieved some small successes in both minimizing disruption and receiving compensation for the affected campuses. The best way to mitigate the impact of events such as Music Midtown is improved relations with City officials, especially City Council. I hope and expect that the significant changes at the City as a result of this year's elections will allow APS to become a true partner in planning for minimal disruption to our schools. Further, I would like to see our students become involved in appropriate events, as interns with school credit, to enhance their career skills and opportunities. Such a program would benefit our kids while raising awareness at both government and sponsor levels,

creating a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

**Answer 8:** I support great schools which provide opportunities for all our kids to succeed. There are good and bad charter schools, just as there are good and bad traditional schools. Charter schools as a group do not outperform traditional schools, however, and charter schools are not the answer to every ill of education. This BOE has not approved a single new stand-alone charter application in the past four years. We actually have one fewer charter school than we did when I took office. We have made great progress in strengthening both charter and traditional schools by cooperating, sharing and integrating best practices. Finally, our partnerships allow us to take advantage of the innovativeness of proven providers while keeping the traditional structure of schools which meet the needs of every child in the community. Our first year of results demonstrates the success of the partnership model in our schools of greatest need.

**Answer 9:** We have achieved some success in obtaining those deeds, so the current number is actually closer to 36. This should never have been an issue, however, and had never been an issue from 1973 until 2014 when the deeds were improperly inserted into another dispute between APS and the City of Atlanta. APS has prevailed on every single point raised so far in the dispute, and I am confident that our record of success will continue. I also hope and expect that changes in City government from this year's elections will result in a speedy resolution of all issues and prompt transfer of all deeds.



Once we have the deeds, I look forward to benefitting communities across Atlanta by using surplus property to support safe, secure housing for our students, their families, and APS employees.

**Answer 10:** First, I believe that public education is a public good, which every citizen should support for the benefit of all citizens. In the past the county has been responsible for setting assessed values, billing property owners, collecting taxes, and distributing funds to receiving entities. Having the individual entities take on this responsibility has been tried in other municipalities, but has proved to be extremely complex and met with limited success. Since APS has plenty to do without taking on the Tax Commissioner's job, the current system is probably the best one for our purposes. It is important that tax assessment and collection not become subservient to personal political agendas or used as a weapon against political opponents. It is also important that elected officials, who have a duty to act in the best interest of their constituents, not simply "kick the can down the road" on difficult issues. Doing so creates problems not only for APS but also for future public servants who will have even larger issues to deal with in the future.

## Charlie Stadtlander

[www.charlieforeducation.com](http://www.charlieforeducation.com)

**Answer 1:** Elementary Teacher (3rd Grade) Dekalb County Schools (2007-2009) 9th and 10th Grade English Teacher-Dekalb County Schools (2009-2012) Lakeside High School Bullying Awareness Coordinator (2009-2012) Lakeside High School Founding Faculty Sponsor of the Hispanic

Organization Promoting Education (2011-2012) Lakeside High School Debate Coach (2010-2012) Teacher Member of the Henderson Mill Elementary School PTA (2007-2009) Teacher Member of the Lakeside High School PTA (2009-2012) Member of P.A.G.E. (Professional Association of Georgia Educators) Bullying Awareness Coordinator (Lakeside High School)

**Answer 2:** For too long, the Grady Cluster has been neglected in the allocation of infrastructure and other capital improvement monies distributed by the Board of Education. This should be rectified immediately.

**Answer 3:** We must recognize that all students, parents, teachers, and schools have unique challenges. The first step will be to end our philosophy of a one size fits all approach. Instead, we will seek input and guidance from all stakeholders. We will no longer push institutionalized policies from Central Office. Instead, we will listen to what our teachers, students, parents, taxpayers, and business leaders tell us that they need. The Board will become responsive to these needs.

**Answer 4:** We must hold the Board and Administration accountable for the appropriate use of school dollars--particularly those appropriated for new infrastructure and building improvements through ESPLOST initiatives. This includes directing ESPLOST funds to the Grady Cluster for the immediate construction of Midtown Middle and any other necessary projects to alleviate overcrowding at Morningside and Grady.

**Answer 5:** The first step is to work to repair the tarnished relationship between the Board of Education and the City of Atlanta. We may then work together to address issues such as proper zoning of new apartments and condominiums. The BOE must also take into account high density population shifts to the Grady Cluster when considering zoning and planning for new school buildings and/or expansion of existing infrastructure.

**Answer 6:** The City of Atlanta will make the decision regarding annexation. If the annexation occurs, the new students should absolutely be served by the Atlanta Public Schools. To allow a subgroup of students to be exempted from certain school districts sets a bad precedent. Once annexation occurs, the Board of Education should zone these new students appropriately, taking into account the overcrowding and lack of funding issues the Grady Cluster already experiences.

**Answer 7:** This issue speaks directly to the lack of a workable relationship between the current Board of Education and the City of Atlanta. With proper coordination related to permitting, public safety personnel, etc., it is likely that many of these conflicts could be resolved. In the instances which a compromise cannot be made between the BOE and the City of Atlanta, the education of students should take priority over entertainment festivals.

**Answer 8:** Since APS is a charter system, we must try to navigate the system in a way which benefits all students in the Atlanta Public Schools equally. Charter schools are a part of the conversation to a larger plan involving many other components for improving the

quality of education in all APS schools. It is imperative that both charter and traditional schools are put on a level playing field and treated equally. Resources should be distributed equitably. The Board must recognize that non-charter schools face unique challenges and consider these challenges when making budgeting, infrastructure, and other resource decisions.

**Answer 9:** Once we have repaired the tarnished relationship between the BOE and the City of Atlanta, we should be able to have an "adult" conversation to reach an appropriate solution. To date, the current BOE members and the City of Atlanta Administration have acted like children fighting on a playground. This irresponsible behavior does nothing more than to punish students, teachers, parents, and taxpayers. It's time for the BOE members and the City of Atlanta to act like the adults in the room and resolve this problem.

**Answer 10:** Property taxes should be based on, and frozen at, the sale price of a house--rather than an arbitrary and ineffective assessment process through Fulton County. Under this proposal, property taxes may only increase annually in an amount which does not exceed the Cost of Living Adjustment provided by the Social Security Administration. We must also accommodate seniors, working middle-class families, and other at-risk members of our community to ensure that our neighbors do not lose their homes due to gentrification. This proposal will end APS' reliance on Fulton County. Taxpayers and APS will be able



to properly budget based on stable revenue.

## Ben Stone

no website

**Answer 1:** I have always attended public schools including schools in North metro Atlanta and the University of Georgia and believe strongly in the value of our public school systems.

**Answer 2:** Grady benefits from a diverse community that provides opportunities to prepare students to compete in a rapidly changing global economy. The greatest challenge is to make the best use of the resources and opportunities to make sure everyone, including the teachers, staff, students, and their families have what they need to make the most of their experience as a Grady cluster stakeholder.

**Answer 3:** I swear that I did not read this question before I wrote that last answer, but this was just on my mind. I would keep these stakeholders interests in mind with every vote I cast. You can't please everyone, but we all deserve to be considered and represented.

**Answer 4:** There are already improvement plans in place and I would support any actions that are in the best interests of supporting these institutions which are some of the strongest in all of APS schools.

**Answer 5:** We must plan ahead because it is too late once the buildings are open. The good thing is that property values (i.e. revenue) is also on the rise. The desirability of this community does not appear to be waning which is a good thing as long as we are smart in how

we deploy the resources that come along with the growth.

**Answer 6:** I do believe welcoming this relatively small area into APS and Grady is a good thing. It could open the door to some partnerships between Grady students and Emory which could put students in a position to succeed after graduation.

**Answer 7:** Proper planning is really all you can do. Piedmont Park is not going anywhere, but the good thing is that it provides many benefits to all of the community that more than makes up for the inconvenience.

**Answer 8:** We have more than quadrupled the number of students in charter schools in APS schools during the last four years for which the current school board has been in place. The most recent annual assessment is that half of these charter schools are performing better than traditional schools and half are performing worse than traditional schools. I would call for a moratorium on any new charters until we see strong evidence that these schools are outperforming our APS traditional schools.

**Answer 9:** We should pursue all possible legal avenues to maximize our interest wherever possible. However, generating more revenue is only helpful if we spend it wisely. We already spend around 17k per student which exceeds the state average of 12k and are under performing the state as a school district. It doesn't appear to be a money problem.

**Answer 10:** It should be taken as a lesson not to count your chickens before they hatch. The good thing is the community is desirable and the home prices are rising. This short term hit does not change the long term

outlook for rising property values and tax revenue. The key, as I said before, is to be smart with the resources. We do not have an issue of a lack of resources, but the harder task is to make the most of what we do have.

## At-Large Seat 9

### Jason Esteves

[www.jasonesteves.com](http://www.jasonesteves.com)

Incumbent

**Answer 1:** I am a product of public schools that provided me with a quality education and opportunities to grow and succeed. A vibrant public schools system is essential to ensuring that Atlanta is the great city that so many people want it to be.

I have also taught in a public school, so I have seen firsthand how bureaucracy and a lack of resources in the classroom can inhibit teachers and learning opportunities for students. As a board member, I have fought to send more money to school sites and classrooms and less to the central office bureaucracy.

Finally, I look forward to sending my son to an Atlanta public school, so that he can be enriched by the diverse experiences and quality learning that public schools should provide.

**Answer 2:** This cluster's greatest asset is its students and engaged parents. Together, parents and their students have made Grady a vibrant cluster that has forced APS and the schools within the cluster to improve over time.

The greatest challenge is capacity. As interest in the cluster grows, space will be

limited, which is why APS created and implemented a plan to ease overcrowding. It is imperative that we continue to implement the plan with fidelity and then adjust as necessary.

**Answer 3:** Businesses, community organizations, and constituents are key to a vibrant schools system. I plan on expanding partnerships with businesses and community organizations to ensure APS has the resources it needs to provide students with wraparound services, which ultimately leads to increased student achievement. I also plan on leveraging businesses for opportunities to provide students with learning experiences. Similarly, residents can potentially provide students with mentorship and other opportunities to learn--we just have to make the school sites more welcoming.

It is vital that we keep all constituents informed with what is going on with APS. I intend on consistently communicating with residents, community members, and businesses through newsletter, townhalls, and industry-specific information sessions.

**Answer 4:** APS has a plan to address this very issue over the next five years and I am hopeful that it will bring relief to capacity issues in the cluster. The plan consists of remodeling and adding to Grady High School, moving the middle school to a larger building, and renovating Morningside. The plan also calls for exploring options for, what will be, the former Inman building.

**Answer 5:** Historically, apartments and condominium construction has yielded fewer students than single family housing, particularly in higher-



income communities. Nevertheless, as density increases, it is inevitable that the Grady cluster will continue to experience capacity issues. I am hopeful that the plan as laid out in community meetings to expand capacity at every level of the cluster will provide the relief the cluster needs.

**Answer 6:** I believe that APS is the City's school system. As such, it should expand concurrently with the City of Atlanta. I therefore believe that APS should be serving all annexed areas. I also believe that the Grady cluster is a natural choice for those students to be zoned. Fortunately, it appears that there are only a dozen students or so that would be added. We must ensure that as the City expands, we monitor the capacity issues and adjust accordingly.

**Answer 7:** APS and the City of Atlanta have to do a better job coordinating on a number of issues, including events at Piedmont Park. The City can also required organizers to coordinate with APS and Grady more than they do to work towards alignment. Finally, APS should do a better job of anticipating events and planning accordingly with our city partners.

**Answer 8:** Generally, APS-approved public charter schools have done a great job at providing a quality education to its students. Traditional public schools can learn a lot around culture, talent recruitment, and rigor. While charter schools can learn how to manage a diverse student population from traditional public schools.

Charter schools are not a silver bullet, but they are a tool that, when combined with high quality

traditional schools, can transform a school system.

**Answer 9:** The City should transfer all deeds that relate to APS properties to the school system. To the extent the City is concerned about any future uses for the property, the City should work with APS and the existing permitting structure to ensure development is in line with the neighborhood and the City's vision. We need a Mayor and Superintendent that can work well together.

**Answer 10:** There are a couple of things that we can do: 1. we can budget more conservatively than we have in the past; 2. we can anticipate issues with Fulton County and start a fund that pay for any fees that are incurred by Fulton's issues; and 3. we can build our reserves to a level that can serve as a stop-gap. More importantly, it is critical that Fulton County address and resolve its issues related to property valuations and assessments.



<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> As a member of City Council, how would you support public education? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 4:</b> When the Trust for Public Land released its 2017 ParkScore Index, Atlanta ranked 50th among the 100 largest U.S. cities. One way to increase the city's score is to partner with schools to open their facilities (gyms, track, football and soccer fields, pools, etc.) to the public outside of school hours. Would you support such partnerships, and if so, how could City Council facilitate these arrangements?</p> <p><b>Question 5:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has withheld property deeds,</p>	<p>making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> Major events staged in Piedmont Park during the school year have a significant negative impact on Grady High School. From set-up to strike, the largest events can last up to two weeks, during which time it is difficult for students and faculty to get to and from school on time and participate in after-hours activities on campus. This affects drivers, walkers, cyclists and those who take transit. What would you do to mitigate the impact of such events? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 7:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly one third of the City's general fund, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put the City in a bind. Did the City of Atlanta make a mistake in stepping away from the tax assessment function in the 1990s? How could the City be involved in preventing this kind of misstep in the future? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 8:</b> How would you address the continued rapid growth of Atlanta's intown neighborhoods and its effects on transportation and affordable housing? (250 words)</p>
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## City Council President

### Henry Anderson

<https://www.facebook.com/VoteHenryAnderson/>

Certified write-in candidate

(Did not respond.)

### C. T. Martin

[www.ctforatlanta.com](http://www.ctforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** Representing District 10 since 1991, I have long advocated for excellence in APS. What is clear is that schools on the southside are in dire need of greater attention and investment. Graduation rates for African-American students is too low. I will continue my advocacy for increasing graduation rates across APS, but with particular emphasis on struggling schools.

**Answer 2:** Building a strong relationship between the Mayor and Council and APS' s superintendent and Board is paramount. We serve the same constituency and must support positive outcomes for our youth. I am committed to building a

strong and productive relationship.

**Answer 3:** I do not believe the APS boundaries need to be expanded if the Emory annexation goes for ward. Less than 10 students are within the expanded area. Importantly, the impact on adjacent APS school clusters and communities has not been adequately assessed.

**Answer 4:** I support increasing access to and the percentage of park/recreation space to City residents. I feel this proposal requires more study to determine how this would work logistically and what the impact would be on the schools.

**Answer 5:** I believe the City should release the deeds. But the future use of the parcels by APS would need meaningful and robust input from the surrounding communities. It is important that Atlanta School Board and the City Council work closely with the residents of neighborhoods where the land sits to ensure the future use is compatible with the surrounding community.

**Answer 6:** The Council has studied and worked to address this issue for many years. Yet it

continues to create hardship for the areas around Piedmont Park. I believe the numbers and types of festivals held in the park need to be re-visited on a more frequent basis. The safety of students and pedestrians is critical.

**Answer 7:** The assessment process needs to be reviewed and adjusted as necessary. I am not convinced that the City taking on that responsibility would mean it will work more efficiently. I do, however, believe the current process is not working well. State law governs the way property is assessed and taxed. As such, I would support examining changes that can be made to the State law to better protect homeowners from a spike in taxes, but also to protect the entities that rely on property taxes (like the City and APS) from being negatively impacted by a freeze.

**Answer 8:** I support the continuation of the T-SPLOST as a reliable way to fund and build out the City's transit options. I also support inclusionary housing laws that attach a required percentage of affordable housing units to be

built by projects receiving public dollars.

### Felicia Moore

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(Did not respond.)

### Alex Wan

[www.alexwanforatlanta.com](http://www.alexwanforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** I am a proud graduate of the DeKalb County Public Schools and Georgia Tech and have always been strong advocate for the public schools system. In my capacity as the Atlanta City Council District 6 representative, I have worked closely with my counterpart on the Atlanta Board of Education to ensure that our actions (rezonings, infrastructure, etc.) on each respective body is coordinated and communicated as best as possible. I have also been engaged with the elementary, middle, and high schools in my district with educational programs and transportation safety concerns. Finally, I have participated in numerous joint meetings between City Council and the School Board to discuss issues of mutual concern



(legislation, attendance rezoning, etc.), and I have attended many Atlanta Public School community meetings both district-wide and Grady cluster specific.

**Answer 2:** One of my priorities as City Council President will be to convene regularly (not only in times of crisis) the City Council and the School Board to establish a continuing forum for exploring opportunities for collaboration and addressing challenges between our two entities. This effort is simply an extrapolation of what I am already doing at the district level with my counterpart on the School Board, Matt Westmoreland. There are many ways City Council can support our school system – improved transportation infrastructure for students to get to and from school safely, evaluation of the impact proposed developments and rezonings have on schools, coordination of after school programming and Atlanta Recreation Centers/Centers of Hope offerings – but we first must establish a reliable forum to discuss and develop ideas. We must foster culture between the two systems that is collaborative, not adversarial, and we can start that at the Council/School Board level.

**Answer 3:** I am an employee of Emory University and have recused myself from City Council's deliberations and votes on this matter as I have a potential personal and financial interest in the outcome. I have consulted with the Ethics Officer regarding this question on this questionnaire, and she has advised me not to respond so as not to create a conflict of interest for having expressed an opinion on this matter (Even though I'd be answering as a candidate, I still cannot prevent that answer

being construed as a position as a council member.).

**Answer 4:** I absolutely support partnership between the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta School System to coordinate access of facilities for recreational use. In fact, this should go both ways, where the City could explore opening up our parks facilities to the school system for use (much like the arrangement we currently have with the city's Morningside Recreation Center, and my unsuccessful attempts to get access to parks for the Grady High School baseball team).

**Answer 5:** The key to these arrangement is first identifying the opportunity and then facilitating the appropriate City/School System departments to activate. The joint City Council / School Board forums would provide the forum in which this could happen. I would also charge the Community Development/Human Services Committee Chair that I appoint to aggressively pursue this idea.

I remain befuddled as to why the Reed Administration has withheld the property deeds, aside from it being simply an unfortunate and bad political decision. While many City Council members (including me) have been ready to transfer them, we are not mobilized in an effective way to push the matter harder against the administration and, more importantly, to override a mayoral veto were we able to legislatively mandate the transfer.

As City Council President, one of my first objectives is to better organize City Council and our deliberative process so that we are better prepared to take strong positions when needed. I also will work closely with the School Board Chair to apply

pressure on both the Mayor's office and the departments (particularly the City Attorney, as he/she is a dual report to City Council as well) to resolve similar situations should they remain unresolved in the next administration.

**Answer 6:** The extended inconveniences that large events like Music Midtown create continue to frustrate me, not only because of how they negatively impact Grady High School, but also the residents in the neighborhoods adjacent to the park. While I have worked on these challenges along with the District 2 Council member, the fact is that permitting these events and the logistics around them are operational decisions by the current administration. City Council currently is not part of that process and can do little more than merely putting pressure on event organizers to accommodate community concerns.

As City Council President, I would like to mobilize all of Council, not just the impacted district council members, in a conversation about our City's special events operations. As we continue to add greenspace throughout the city that often can serve as event sites, it is a topic that will begin impacting more districts. Among the tactics we can take to better control events large and small are: (1) adjusting our special event permitting fee structure to more accurately reflect processing costs and impact mitigation; (2) adjusting fees for lane and sidewalk closures with an escalating scale for longer durations; and (3) mandating a public input mechanism for permitting recurring events so that prior year issues (access, attendance, trash, noise, etc.) must be corrected beforehand. The key will be organizing Council to

exercise this political will, particularly if we need to overcome a Mayor that is more supportive/sympathetic to the event organizers than the community.

**Answer 7:** I believe that tax collections and property tax assessment functions should fall within the Fulton and DeKalb counties' purview, as these responsibilities mostly rest under county jurisdictions across the state. This year's challenge was created by assessment methodology, as Fulton County's Assessor's office tried to quickly catch up from years of undervalued assessments and their use of broad stroke extrapolations of valuation methodology across large swaths of parcels. For accuracy, assessments should be individualized to the specific lot, which is obviously a time and resource consuming endeavor. But reverting back to the previous year's valuations was a poor political decision on the part of the Fulton County Commission, as it put the jurisdictions that base their tax collections on these values in financial limbo.

With the assessment function outside its jurisdiction, there are limits to what the City can do to mitigate. That said, at a minimum, the City should pressure Fulton County to devote adequate resources to this function, including possibly engaging additional third party entities to conduct a full valuation of the parcels. We can also more directly connect our Buildings Department with their office with regard to building and renovation permit work. Finally, we should engage with the State Legislature to enact protections like tax exemptions, property tax increase caps, tax credit, and payment assistance for long-term, low- and middle-income,



and senior residents to reduce the county's political urge to take similar freeze actions in the future.

**Answer 8:** The City's most effective tools to influence community development are through zoning code and through Buildings Department operations. Council District 6, which I represent, continues to experience much of the recent development activities, and I have been working closely with the community in attempts to address these pressures.

With zoning, our community has been pushing back against rezonings that increase density – a common temptation for developers, as more units translate to more profit for the project – or limiting increasing density to where the transportation infrastructure, especially transit, can support the additional volume. We must also value input from our neighborhood associations and NPIUs when evaluating such rezonings, as they often know what's appropriate for their community.

With Buildings Department operations, it is time for us to revisit impact fees so that the city is charging developers appropriate amounts that adequately address the increased strain their projects create on the transportation infrastructure. This could also serve as somewhat of a disincentive for larger projects, or at least make them stop and think a bit.

The City also needs to continue investing in our transportation infrastructure, including expanding transit and adding pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. And with affordability, the City must continue committing resources

to the tools we have put in place like buyer and renter assistance and land acquisitions to mitigate rising intown land values, while also exploring other tools like inclusionary zoning and non-financial incentives like expedited permitting to encourage developers to include affordable units in projects.

## At-Large Post 1

### Michael Julian Bond

[www.michaeljulianbondpost1.com](http://www.michaeljulianbondpost1.com)

Incumbent

**Answer 1:** I am a proud graduate of the Atlanta Public School system, as are my children. I have long been an advocate and cheerleader for APS, and strongly believe in the mission of public education. I served on the School Council for Frederick Douglass High School for more than a decade, and a lifelong member of its PTA. I attend the joint City Council - APS Board Member committee member as often as I can.

**Answer 2:** As previously stated, I participate in the joint City Council-APS Board committee to develop a stronger partnership between the two governmental bodies on behalf of Atlanta's children and their families. I have financially sponsored numerous educational trips and activities to augment programs for APS. I plan to continue my lifelong support of public education including teachers, employees, PTA and the children in every way that I can.

**Answer 3:** Yes, I am the co-author of the annexation legislation and see no problem with APS serving the seven or so students who have been identified as being eligible to come into APS. It is a

governance benefit to the city of Atlanta to include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Emory University, two important institutions--major employers in the region--with whom we work on regional public safety/emergency issues.

**Answer 4:** I am generally supportive of a partnership that would allow the citizens of Atlanta access to the exterior of the school buildings such as the facilities as those mentioned above. Such a partnership existed the former John F. Kennedy Middle School. This access affords greater services to citizens, who provide tax dollars to both the City and APS.

**Answer 5:** APS and the City of Atlanta have only been separate since 2003, when APS received its independent charter. The 50 properties in question are City of Atlanta properties and are under the management of APS so long as the property is used for official educational purposes. The deeds to the properties dictate that all control and management of the properties return to the City when educational purposes cease on the properties. APS properties obtained since 2003 are the only properties legally "free and clear" for APS to determine its uses. To remedy non-use of the properties, I introduced legislation to create parks and greenspace on the suitable sites, which will readily remedy Atlanta's deficit of greenspaces and park spaces.

**Answer 6:** Piedmont Park holds several Class A events, which I believe the City should limit and rotate among eligible park venues. I have worked with the District 6 Councilmember, Alex Wan, on Class A & B events policy revisions to rotate such events to limit impact on

any one community. Further, the permit for each Class A/B event should include a mandatory, comprehensive traffic plan to be executed by the City, such as those required for Atlanta Falcons games. Having heard from citizens and to address the technical aspects of implementing the "mass entry and exodus" traffic plan for often day-long events, I created a commission on parking and traffic solutions for the Piedmont Park area. The commission is currently being populated by traffic management experts and citizens. Last year, I passed legislation that designated limited areas where taxis, Uber and related rideshares can pick-up passengers to lessen the impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

**Answer 7:** Prior to the Fulton County Board of Commissioners adopting the 2016 assessment levels, the Atlanta City Council unanimously voted to request that Fulton County use the 2016 property assessments. As a matter of best and streamlined (efficiency) governance practice, assessments should be a County function. Rules governing County Board of Assessors are authorized under State law, and counties answer for any discrepancies to the GA Department of Revenue and GA General Assembly. The City of Atlanta should not duplicate these services and incur additional costs for taxpayers. To prevent similar instances in the future, I authored and passed legislation requesting the GA General Assembly to adopt an annual three-percent assessment cap during its 2018 session.

**Answer 8:** With economic growth comes the necessity to address the challenges such development brings. These



include maintaining the quality of life for all residents and ensuring effective mobility. In some instances, broad protections such as inclusionary zoning and related measures like the ones I have introduced must be secured. I have championed affordable housing and community development initiatives including the Summerhill Community Trust Fund (capitalized at \$5 million), Affordable Housing Impact Statements, and the Westside Tax Abatement for indigenous residents—a 20 year property tax abatement program, for example. Going forward, we must seek to maintain balanced growth through similar policies.

## Courtney English

[www.courtneyenglish.com](http://www.courtneyenglish.com)

**Answer 1:** First, I am a proud graduate of the Atlanta Public Schools (APS). I am a former teacher in APS and the first full-time teacher elected to the APS board of education. For the last 8 years, I have served on the board and have been chairman for the last four and have helped to lead APS' turnaround efforts.

**Answer 2:** First, I would ensure the city is a good partner with APS including releasing all property deeds, making all Beltline payments on time and including APS in all annexations. Next, I would invest in universal early education, after-school programs, increase transit options and eliminate food deserts to remove barriers to learning.

**Answer 3:** Yes. APS' boundaries have always grown with the city—this should be no different. Not including APS disenfranchises voters in the newly annexed area and interrupts 145 years of precedent. Moreover, none of

the 6 petitioners have an objection to APS being included in the annexation. Finally, this annexation only includes an estimated 12 students and will not create a significant increase in enrollment in the Grady cluster.

**Answer 4:** Yes. In fact, APS is already working with Park Pride to explore the possibility of joint use agreements and I recently appointed the ED, Michale Halicki, to serve on the APS Affordable Housing Task-Force. This group is charged with exploring potential uses for APS' vacant land—including increasing greenspace throughout the city. When on council, I will continue to support this partnership and will ensure that the city is a good partner with the school system.

**Answer 5:** This is unacceptable. For over 40 years, the city routinely turned over the property deeds so that APS can dispose of its property and generate additional revenue for students. APs has adopted the city's affordable housing policy, launched a task-force to explore the disposition of APS properties in a way that benefits communities and the city's position is intransigent. This is a classic example of politics negatively impacting our students. The money generated from property sales could be used for student programming, increasing wrap-around services, raising pay, or reducing class size. There's simply no logical explanation for the city to withhold the deeds and incur thousands of dollars in legal fees at the expense of taxpayers and children.

**Answer 6:** I would look for alternative sites to host major events.

**Answer 7:** The city should make it a legislative priority to

increase the accountability and oversight of the tax assessors office. Currently, the county is free to issue incorrect assessments and send tax bills late without any recourse for taxpayers. This must change.

**Answer 8:** First, I would urgently work to increase transit options to ease congestion. Next, we must ensure that future development in intown neighborhoods is done so with community support and does not disrupt the aesthetic, walkability, or create disruption to well neighborhoods. Moreover, I would work to bring development and amenities to other parts of the city that have gone too long without these opportunities which in turn, will relieve the pressure to further develop in our intown neighborhoods. Finally, the city should deploy a number of strategies including; housing bonds, tax incentives, utilize community land trusts, to preserve and increase the available stock of affordable housing.

## At-Large Post 2

### Cory Ruth

[www.coryruth.com](http://www.coryruth.com)

(Did not respond.)

### Matt Westmoreland

[www.mattwestmoreland.com](http://www.mattwestmoreland.com)

**Answer 1:** I attended Morningside Elementary and Inman Middle before graduating from Grady High in 2006. After college, I spent 3.5 years as a History teacher at Carver Early College High School in Southeast Atlanta. And for the last four years I've served as a member of the Atlanta Board of Education.

**Answer 2:** As an APS grad, former APS teacher, and current APS Board Member, I will be an ardent advocate and dependable partner to the school system, our students, and our families. I believe City government has an important role to play in expanding Early Childhood Education opportunities and Workforce Development initiatives that directly impact our incoming and graduating students.

**Answer 3:** I do support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the CDC and CHOA into the City of Atlanta. I also believe those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools. The boundaries of the City and school system been coterminous for 175 years, and that shouldn't change now.

**Answer 4:** I would support such partnerships. I would work with the new mayor, their Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, and my Council colleagues to facilitate such an arrangement.

**Answer 5:** The City should turn over all remaining deeds to APS. I'll work with the new mayor to make this happen as soon after taking office as possible, introducing legislation if necessary.

**Answer 6:** I'd ensure the City is working in direct connection with the Grady principal and their staff to arrange disruptive practices around the school day as much as possible.

**Answer 7:** I don't think the City made a mistake in stepping away from the tax assessment function in the 1990s. The County has shown itself to be better at collecting tax revenue than the City had been. I do think we need a functioning Board of Assessors and Tax



Assessor who don't cause the situation that happened in May and June.

**Answer 8:** On Transportation, the next Mayor and Council will be responsible for overseeing implementation of projects funded by the 2015 Renew Atlanta Bonds and the 2016 T-SPLOST. They will also be an important partner to MARTA as it implements expansion plans with funding from the 2016 half-penny.

On Housing, the City has a number of tools at its disposal, including ramping up construction of affordable units on AHA property, using surplus city buildings and property for affordable units, expanding the use of community land trusts and affordable housing trust funds, and working with developments (those building projects with AND without public dollars) to provide incentives for affordable unit set-asides.

## Brett Williams

[www.brwforatl.com](http://www.brwforatl.com)

(Did not respond.)

## At-Large Post 3

### Leon H. Bennett

No campaign website found.  
Certified write-in candidate

(Did not respond.)

## Andre Dickens

[www.andredickens.com](http://www.andredickens.com)

Incumbent

**Answer 1:** Attended APS K-12. My 7th-grade daughter is APS student. I created the first ever joint committee of APS and Atlanta City Council. 3 CMs and 3 Board members meeting bi-

monthly regarding collaborative efforts. I fought for APS deeds on multiple occasions. I helped to negotiate APS/BeltLine dispute resolution.

**Answer 2:** I'll do more of what I did in question #1. For 4 years, I have been the biggest supporter of APS on the city council. I will continue to advocate for APS students and parents. I will continue to host the Scholarship Fair. I will do more as needed.

**Answer 3:** APS should grow as the city grows. Wherever the city goes, APS should go also. I support the annexation of Emory, CDC, etc and any other area adjacent to the city that wants to be a part of Atlanta. But APS must go with the annexation.

**Answer 4:** Yes. We talked about this on a case by case basis during 2 of our Joint Committee meetings that I created between APS and the City Council. I'd need to look at this on a case by case basis. I wouldn't want duplication of services or an imbalance across the city. But the Council can facilitate discussions around a joint maintenance agreement to offset costs.

**Answer 5:** The city should not withhold property deeds. I've sponsored legislation to give over deeds to APS. The city could give all of the deeds over to APS all at one time. If there are concerns regarding APS and future purpose of the structures, I believe general fair usage restrictions and recommendations can be agreed upon.

**Answer 6:** These events happen the same time and in the same way each year. Grady is always affected. Calls come in from a few parents and a few teachers here and there. Rarely is the concern organized, vocal,

and suggestive of solutions in my opinion. Perhaps we could get a formal statement from Grady, the PTA, the SGA, etc. A petition or a statement.

Something for us to respond to prior to the events. I don't believe any event or event promoter is above the education of our students. Sound checks must not happen until after 3:30. Period. The organizers should be fined under the noise ordinance. Lastly, Grady should push and advocate for Bellwood Quarry to get finished. That will be the likely place for MM, AJF, and DWF, etc since it's twice the size of Piedmont.

**Answer 7:** I can't say the tax assessment function is a mistake by being in the County's purview. The city leadership needs to have a collegial relationship with the county tax collector and assessor. We should have real dialogue and a request that they do assessment every year or biannually at the latest with a maximum increase of say 10%.

**Answer 8:** Push for mandatory inclusionary zoning that requires every new residential development (private or publically funded) to include 10-20% affordable workforce units. New developments and conversions as well. We should also put in property tax circuit breakers for low-income, seniors, and disabled households so their tax assessments are capped. We should also help to preserve existing affordable properties through public investment or low-cost loans for mission-driven developers. These are all things I've authored policies for and/or advocated for. APS should sell surplus properties to affordable housing developers like AHA, ANDP, Invest Atlanta, etc. MARTA should create a Living

Transit Fund to set funds aside for affordable housing. MARTA also needs to expand rapid transit or rapid bus service to the SW, SE, and NW corridors.

## District 2

### Amir Farokhi

[www.amirforatlanta.com](http://www.amirforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** For the last ten years, I have served on the Board of the Charles R. Drew Charter School in East Lake. The school has transformed the East Lake Community and, a few years ago, expanded from pre-K-8 to include a high school. During this time, the Board has worked strategically to support high standards, a robust STEAM curriculum, partnerships with local universities, and top-flight administration and faculty, all while remaining committed to serving low-income students, even as surrounding neighborhoods have become more affluent.

Moreover, for two and half years, I served as COO of a \$32 million national education non-profit, College Advising Corps, that worked to increase the number of low-income students who apply and matriculate to college. Through this work, I worked with public universities and public high school districts across the country, including Atlanta Public Schools, where we helped staff and launch the Achieve Atlanta initiative with college advisers. The result: dramatic increase in APS students who apply and matriculate to college.

**Answer 2:** Any elected official who is not fully engaged in the public education conversation is doing our City a disservice. We must work collaboratively to strengthen APS. As a Councilmember, I will:

# Atlanta City Council

<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> As a member of City Council, how would you support public education? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 4:</b> When the Trust for Public Land released its 2017 ParkScore Index, Atlanta ranked 50th among the 100 largest U.S. cities. One way to increase the city's score is to partner with schools to open their facilities (gyms, track, football and soccer fields, pools, etc.) to the public outside of school hours. Would you support such partnerships, and if so, how could City Council facilitate these arrangements?</p> <p><b>Question 5:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has withheld property deeds,</p>	<p>making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> Major events staged in Piedmont Park during the school year have a significant negative impact on Grady High School. From set-up to strike, the largest events can last up to two weeks, during which time it is difficult for students and faculty to get to and from school on time and participate in after-hours activities on campus. This affects drivers, walkers, cyclists and those who take transit. What would you do to mitigate the impact of such events? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 7:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly one third of the City's general fund, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put the City in a bind. Did the City of Atlanta make a mistake in stepping away from the tax assessment function in the 1990s? How could the City be involved in preventing this kind of misstep in the future? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 8:</b> How would you address the continued rapid growth of Atlanta's intown neighborhoods and its effects on transportation and affordable housing? (250 words)</p>
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1. Hold weekly meetings/calls with overlapping school board representative (Leslie Grant, whose support I am honored to have);
2. Work to support collaborative resolution to property deed disputes;
3. Ensure safe routes to schools: clean, safe sidewalks and cross walks, bike lanes, APD support for crossings. Work with the non-profit, corporate, and philanthropic community to expand and improve access to early childhood education in neighborhoods that feed into Hope-Hill Elementary. This is a top priority of mine;
4. Engage with CINS regularly to bring City resources and energy to making the educational experience a better one; and
5. Work to ensure that City property that can be used by APS for student enrichment, athletic or academic.

**Answer 3:** Yes, I support the proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta. I also believe that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools. To not do so makes the annexation more politically acceptable for

DeKalb County leadership but it also creates "hybrid" residents who live in the City but don't pay public school taxes. This could be a slippery slope that others may use to approach annexation and creates more-complicated-than-necessary categories of residents and exceptions. Even if the number of affected children involved in the annexation is small, residents of the City of Atlanta should be served by Atlanta Public Schools. That said, the proposed annexation would be a huge asset for the City and allow MARTA expansion to Emory to move forward. The benefits of annexation are massive and important for the City's future.

**Answer 4:** Yes. APS and the City need to work in a more collaborative manner. Schools and their assets are public assets that could be used to address our "under-parked" situation as well as issues of equity in access to active and green spaces.

As a City Councilmember, I will (1) identify City-owned assets that can be used for schools' benefits in exchange for after-school public access to school facilities; and (2) work with Parks, Planning, and Public Works to determine demand for types of services that can be

provided and shared across APS and the City. I will also work regularly with parents and the school board member to identify opportunities and needs that can be met through resource and facility sharing.

**Answer 5:** The City should turn over the deeds to APS without stipulation. The fact that APS passed affordable housing rules for their properties that mirror the City's is terrific but the City can promote and incentivize affordable housing in a myriad of ways without holding the deeds hostage.

Ultimately, the next Mayor will need to decide how to handle this situation but I will be a voice for turning over the deeds to APS immediately. Of course, there could be a trade of some sort to bring this division to an end but, in my mind, the deeds belong in the hands of APS and the City needs to turn them over. The City and APS can do great things together, as partners, including building more affordable housing, and relinquishing the deeds would be a great first step in rebuilding a healthy relationship.

**Answer 6:** First, we need to revisit how many events can be staged at Piedmont Park each year. While it is our premier

public park, it is also surrounded by neighborhoods and Grady, who deserve higher quality of life and better access to the park. I'd like to see us host fewer events at the park, ensuring it is open for public use in its entirety more often, and reducing the strain on neighbors and Grady.

Second, even if we reduce the permits given for festivals and events at the park, we need to prioritize those that have minimal impact on residents and the schools. Some of that can be through timing; some of that can be through carefully thought out logistical guidelines and guardrails. Some of our marquee events, like the Peachtree Road Race and Gay Pride weekend, should be given priority but we can do more to ensure a better experience for all affected.

Ultimately, the Mayor will need to lead this effort but as the District 2 Councilmember, I will work with the District 6 Councilmember, neighbors, and Grady to articulate and advocate for framework that is fair and allows for an improved situation. Noise, traffic, safety, and cleanliness, all need to be addressed better than they are today.

**Answer 7:** The burden here lies largely with Fulton County,



which needs to revamp its assessment process and accuracy and not wait years before adjusting assessments.

The City, however, should be active in lobbying the State for a cap in the percentage that property taxes can rise each year and for an increase in the homestead exemption for seniors. Moreover, while the City can adjust the millage rate to try to mitigate severe swings in property tax assessments, the City does not need to raise property taxes to generate new revenue. Rather, we can do a better job collecting online sales tax revenue, explore introducing a parking tax to fund key transportation infrastructure needs (and to reduce the tax burden for services on residents by asking non-residents to pay for services they also receive), and better prioritize its spending to account for key needs: public safety, planning, and infrastructure.

I am not convinced that the City needs to be involved in property tax assessments though I'm open to this conversation. I'd rather see the City use our existing revenue better, reduce operating costs through technology use, and look for new revenue streams that reduce the burden on Atlanta homeowners.

**Answer 8:** How we manage our growth and remain livable and affordable is the most important challenge we face over the next 5 years.

Transportation: We cannot achieve our full potential if we do not provide more transportation options for our residents. Building out our transit infrastructure and creating nodes of dense, mixed-use development accessible by transit will help manage growth, improve quality of life, and

increase affordability. To do so, we must commit TSPLOST funds to projects that will enhance access to jobs and housing and work closely with MARTA to ensure their system growth is equitable and connects job and residential centers. I will advocate for expanding transit in District 2 (e.g., streetcar extension on North Ave) and for development that is not as car-centric. Affordable Housing: It is a fact that it's becoming harder and harder for low and middle income Atlantans to find a place to live in District 2. This challenge requires increasing the supply of affordable housing stock, protecting senior homeowners, increasing access to transportation and jobs.

We need to prioritize affordable housing in several ways: - more housing density in areas with access to transit (including reducing parking requirements for developments near MARTA train stations), - inclusionary zoning for 20-80% AMI in the Beltline overlay & where there has been significant public investment, - protecting and boosting the "missing middle" housing stock, - density bonuses along major corridors, - expedited permitting for affordable housing construction; and - selling vacant city-owned land to affordable housing developers.

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## Stephon Ferguson

[www.fergusonforatlanta.com](http://www.fergusonforatlanta.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Zelda Jackson

<https://zeldajackson.com/>

**Answer 1:** I worked very closely with the Atlanta Public School Board Member of District 1 when Kwanza Hall held the seat for 2 terms

**Answer 2:** I plan to hold monthly Town Hall meetings, and invite the School Board Member, Fulton County Commissioners, State Representatives, and US Representatives along with several city representatives to meet with our constituents discuss their issues, formulate a plan, follow up with the conclusion, and lastly execute the solution. I will be a bridge/partner to public education, and assist our youth in achieving the best public education the City can provide.

**Answer 3:** Yes! I support the annexation of Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control, and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta. And Yes again, those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools. If the annex areas are in the Atlanta it is simple, they should pay property taxes, and be a true functioning member of the City of Atlanta.

**Answer 4:** Yes! I am a former high school athlete who played volleyball, basketball, softball, and ran track so I definitely support partnerships to keep the schools facilities open after school hours. I can see a partnerships with the neighborhoods, corporations, and the City of Atlanta to use these facilities for health fairs, neighborhood fairs, and local tournaments. The Atlanta City Council can administer help by writing legislation, and I will be happy to author such legislation.

**Answer 5:** I have reviewed the legislation as a former Chief of Staff for District 2, and as a Contractor for the Municipal Clerk, and see both side of the land exchange. My take is the main truth which is God is not making anymore land. The City of Atlanta was holding onto the land for purposes in gaining

prospective suitors from potential developers. Now, was this act fair to the Atlanta Public Schools? Of course not, but the new administration who will come in office can see the land exchange can benefit both municipalities by setting a time frame, and turnover period of when the deeds with exchange ownership back to the Atlanta Public Schools. As a council member, I will help administer and mediate this process.

**Answer 6:** First, we as a Council must do a better job on finding out what the impact certain festivals will have on a community, and have instituted in the contracts of said festivals impact fees. These impact fees will cover any repairs, clean up, and give proceeds to neighborhood, businesses, or schools that maybe effected. As far as traffic, the Atlanta Police & the Department of Transportation can work together as a team to make sure these neighborhoods and schools can go about their daily routines by use of Marta, patrolling the areas, and traffic signals timings can be altered for such large crowds during said festivals. We may in fact as a City need to administer some form of study before and after every festival to make sure we are treating each neighborhood the most efficient way possible.

**Answer 7:** Yes, the City of Atlanta made a huge mistake in stepping away from the tax assessment function in the 1990s. The City of Atlanta must identify what tools the Board of Assessors are using to calculate property taxes, and should not pass the buck in saying "We pay Fulton County to take of property taxes call Fulton County." This is a horrible way to do business, and the City of Atlanta needs a panel to re evaluate the process



of assessing our property taxes. As a council member, I would like to author legislation for this process in having a panel from the City of Atlanta to administer a check, and balance system of calculating our property taxes this will be our new way of doing business in assessing our property taxes.

**Answer 8:** First, invite the Department of Transportation to attend the Neighborhood and NPU meetings to inform the community on alternate ways to commute to/from home/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, we must give our current residents logistic aide.

In addition, I would revamp the boards for the Atlanta Beltline and Invest Atlanta asking to have affordable housing on the each be mandated. I would ask Marta to have a one shop process where you may buy one pass to ride the Marta, Atlanta Streetcar, and Relay Bicycle. Marta should give discounts to the elderly, disable, students, and lower income households. As councilmember, I would author legislation to make the Atlanta Streetcar to do what is was supposed to do in the initial planning sessions be managed by Marta have connectivity to the government offices, Downtown, Midtown, and Buckhead. Later, with Federal mandated monies, have the Atlanta Streetcar circulate all over Atlanta. Again, I would author legislation where there is a Marta Rail line, Atlanta Streetcar, and Beltline affordable housing for its constituents. Legislation can be written to require every developer to have a percentage of their dwellings solely for affordable housing. And if the developer fails to do

so they are fine, and not allowed to develop in the City again.

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## Nicholas Mulkey

[www.nickmulkey.com](http://www.nickmulkey.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Lauren Welsh

[www.laurenforatlanta.com](http://www.laurenforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** I was born and raised in Metro Atlanta and graduated from Dunwoody High School, a public school, and went on to attend two public universities. I'm a former public school teacher, earned an undergraduate degree in English and Education, and earned a Masters in Education from University of Virginia. I became a public school teacher because I believe a strong education system is essential to opportunity and access for future generations. As a mom, my husband and I are unwavering in our commitment to send our daughters to APS schools. As our next member of Council, I will be the strongest ally our parents, teachers, and kids have ever had on Council. I'm incredibly proud to bring my full-spectrum experience with public schools to this race: as a public school student, a former public school teacher, the parent of public school kids, and as a volunteer with our public schools.

**Answer 2:** With the upcoming leadership changes, APS and the City of Atlanta have an opportunity to fix their broken relationship. When we strengthen our schools, we strengthen our neighborhoods and vice versa. While Atlanta City Council does not directly oversee any APS schools, working as collaborative partners is essential to the overall success of Atlanta. With my

extensive experience in the nonprofit sector, I'd work with APS to ensure we have access to the most appropriate wraparound services each school needs. The partnership between Thomasville Heights Elementary and AVLF is an excellent example. I'd also work directly with our Commissioner of Planning to support APS with any future building needs. With the huge increase in population for our city ahead, we have to support APS to think long-term about growth options to serve all Atlanta's children. I will also be a strong ally for our schools on any statewide legislative issues.

**Answer 3:** I believe that the proposal to annex Emory, the CDC and the surrounding areas into the City of Atlanta has not been reviewed thoroughly enough, and I don't believe it's a simple yes or no answer. The City of Atlanta needs to spend much more time reviewing the implications of bringing this property into the city borders and needs to communicate much more effectively with citizens about its potential impact. Since Emory and the CDC are nonprofit organizations, the City is bringing in properties that will not pay taxes but will require infrastructure support. How will that be managed? If the main reason to do this is because of the potential for the City of Atlanta to pay for the entire Clifton Corridor project when DeKalb County may not be willing/able, that is not an appropriate reason to annex property. If the main reason to do this is because residents are frustrated with DeKalb County services, that also is not a strong enough reason. What is the potential damage to DeKalb County if small areas continue to break off? And what will the true impact be to our Atlanta Public School Systems? These

answers still remain unclear, and as our next city Council member I cannot support the annexation without a clear and strong rationale for doing so.

**Answer 4:** I absolutely support the partnership of City of Atlanta parks and Atlanta Public Schools. There is no reason these facilities should be operated in silos, and there's a clear benefit to making sure APS has access. I would look at models from other cities as to how to make this partnership clear, collaborative, and successful for both parties and make sure both groups agreed to an MOU. The City of San Diego built 32 new joint-use parks on public school campuses that would also be open to the public when schools aren't in session. The City of Hammond opened their park facilities to the city's schools as well as Purdue University. We should review how these other collaborations have worked previously to create our own here in Atlanta. As our next city Council member, it would be my intention to help move our city up on that list by helping facilitate public park and public school partnerships.

**Answer 5:** I believe that the City of Atlanta needs to stop withholding property deeds from APS so we can work together to create active sites from these vacant properties that are creating an unsafe situation in our neighborhoods. APS has already negotiated with the Mayor of Atlanta regarding BeltLine funds that the City failed to pay. The City then started demanding affordable housing units prior to APS taking on any of the deeds. Affordable housing isn't the reason these properties are being held up. It's a matter of an unhealthy relationship focused on control instead of the



needs of our children. The City of Atlanta and the APS board need to sit down with a mediator to come to an agreement about what the needs are of both the City and the school system so we can move past a debate that is costing taxpayers money in a legal battle. As the product of Atlanta public schools, a former public school teacher, and currently a Mary Lin mom, I hope to bring some much-needed insight and understanding to the Atlanta City Council/APS relationship, so we can get the property deeds back into the hands of APS.

**Answer 6:** First and foremost, I would prioritize the needs of our APS students. No festival or event is more important than the education of our kids. Second, I would bring together both neighborhood organizations and event promoters to have a collaborative conversation about challenges and opportunities created by these gatherings. Cultural events are an asset to our city, so we should still create the opportunity for them to occur in City of Atlanta parks. However, we must be much more cognizant of the impact these events have. Shutting down Piedmont Park for more than 2 weeks for all public access is absolutely unacceptable. The City should also stop allowing event promoters to take over the 10th street bike lane for event set-up. Removing transportation options for the convenience of a promoter isn't appropriate. The City needs to work directly with these promoters to determine how to make adjustments. The City also needs to consider how to bring these event and film applications under one roof so there is a consistent and clear approach instead of having events under the Department of Parks and Rec, the Mayor's

Office of Special Events, and the Film Office.

**Answer 7:** The City of Atlanta should not have frozen the 2017 assessments by asking Fulton County to return to 2016 assessment levels. That made it very challenging for APS given the system had already set its budget based on a moderate (and expected) increase. Freezing assessments seemed to be more of a short-term campaign stunt than it was thinking long-term about potential property tax reform. The City needs to work directly with Fulton County and the state on property tax reform options. It's never appropriate for a homeowner's tax bill to go up 50% or 100%, so clearly this kind of reform is needed. Whether the City of Atlanta takes back the tax assessment function is something that will need longer examination as one of several potential options.

**Answer 8:** The City of Atlanta is expected to double in population in the next 20 years. We must make sure that instead of providing significant tax incentives to big developers we expect more for our neighborhoods. Community-based, incremental development woven into the urban fabric of our neighborhood is essential. Too often we've allowed projects to be dropped into the middle of our communities with no connection to what's already there. And the impact fees collected for these projects must be spent directly in the area where they're collected. I believe it's time to update the NPU system to serve as a true voice for residents and strengthen its connection to the Department of City Planning. It hasn't been touched since it was created in 1979, and we need to strengthen it as an effective model of civic

engagement. I will support the work of our Commission of Planning to update zoning codes to allow a mixture of housing that allows for a variety of people at all stages in life – not just single family or large multi-family, but "missing middle" housing. And I will focus on affordable housing at the 0% to 30% AMI levels - not just 80%. I also support developing a Department of Transportation at the City to allow for strategic and comprehensive thinking about how we move around the city. I'd put requirements in place so that all new transportation options be directly linked to land use so modes of transit are not developed in isolation.

## District 3

### Ricky Brown

[www.electrickybrown.us](http://www.electrickybrown.us)

(Did not respond.)

### Greg Clay

[www.gregclay.com](http://www.gregclay.com)

**Answer 1:** I am a K-12 alumnus of APS that has served in many roles in public schools. I am a 6-year member, and immediate past chairman (2 year term) of the CTAE District-wide Advisory Board for Atlanta Public Schools. Through this board I have worked with industry partners to provide better opportunities for students and teachers associated with our college and career pathways and CTSOs in APS. I also founded an initiative in 2010, Atlanta Speaks, which has recruited 900+ young professionals, impacting thousands of public school students on topics of career exploration and employability skills. I currently serve as an Assistant Scout Master for a Boy

Scout Troop serving council district 3 students. I am a former member of the APS Homeless Education Advisory Board. Lastly, I serve as the Vice Chair of a public charter school in South Fulton County, in which I am also a member of the founding board.

**Answer 2:** I will continue to support public education through advocacy of student and parent needs within our neighborhoods by being a philanthropist for good education, and by being a great partner as a city council member. So many of our schools serving City Council District 3 need resourced, reliable partners that are willing to become vested to short, mid and long-term plans and outcomes that impact our youth and their families. As a city council member, our school system will have my full support in helping students and families overcome some everyday obstacles to education. I am a supporter of opportunities similar to the Atlanta Board of Education-Atlanta City Council Joint Committee meetings, providing opportunities for intergovernmental dialogue and shared resources. I am also a supporter of great community engagement which helps us continue to build strong relationships across stakeholder lines with the business, non-profit, and faith-based communities.

**Answer 3:** While the Atlanta region is made up of several cities and unincorporated areas, when considering opportunities to grow the Atlanta-proper boundaries, I am in support of annexation. For the city of Atlanta to have global resources such as Emory University, the CDC, and other great communities and assets within our city limits is a great



opportunity. Being in support of incorporation, I am also in support of the designated area becoming a part of the Atlanta Public School System based on it being an incorporated part of the city. With the expanded scope of public services to be provide to the residential and commercial constituents, I believe that our public education system should play a role as well. An effective annexation plan for education services and the specific needs for the communities must be well thought out and scaled to necessity to succeed. If the area is to be incorporated, public sector leaders must find the appropriate balance to receive the public trust going forward.

**Answer 4:** I am in total agreement that this should happen. Our public spaces and facilities are underutilized based on the need in communities. In starting with memorandums of understanding, I also want to bring the community to the table in these types of dynamic partnerships. There are many local organizations that can help fill the gap from managing these types of new relationships, to providing in-depth programming. I would also be willing to introduce legislation to this effect, in addition to allocating some seed resources to piloting this type of program with private partners within district 3.

**Answer 5:** By having a separate school board and city council, the respective systems of governance should have the full authority to act on the assets within their respective control and responsibility. While the city does hold the deeds, I think by having the two separate entities, the public has expectations that both entities can operate with autonomy. While the autonomy comes with separate

responsibilities, for the overall good, all public officials of the school board, city council, and even county and state officials, should be working together. There has been a very public debate on this matter, and in the spirit of moving forward, I would like to see the school board, as elected officials, have control of their properties. Additionally, If the ultimate, public concern is the assurance that the properties will be repurposed in the best manner once fully controlled by the school board, I am not opposed to working with my colleagues to establish a blue-ribbon council of multiple stakeholders to help define the best use of these properties. These recommendations would become a part of the overall plan when the Board of Education is making decisions based on the transferred properties.

**Answer 6:** I think we must address these concerns fully at the permitting process to ensure that the school and its stakeholders are always informed and a part of the process. I have attended events at the park, and paid for parking in some of the Grady lots and have seen first hand the good, bad, and ugly associated with this issue. The diversion of traffic and options for access would help mitigate some of the proximity issues, but we must also look at the number of events, type of events, and the scale and scope of events, when there is a more negative impact than positive, when it comes to being a good neighbor. Additionally, I believe that more options for large in-town events would help with moving some of these events to other areas.

**Answer 7:** I think we must take a further look at the sticker shock of assessments, and how it impacted families. While some

families were able to pay for the increased assessments, I believe the outcry was real—but we could have been more proactive in how we communicate steep increases to constituents. For all of the public engagement that was done on the back-end, we should have done double that amount on the front end—when considering a model of servant leadership. I understand fully that there is a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that we can pay for services through taxation, but I think we can enhance our communication going forward, and define pathways and programs that help increases not be a burden to constituents, but a true benefit to the asset(s) they own.

**Answer 8:** As a part of my Great 8 priorities, which can be found at [GregClay.com](http://GregClay.com), mobility is one of my focus areas. The more diverse and efficient options we have to get around our city, the more efficient and sustainable our community can be. I would address these needs by consolidating all of the current plans that we have for our neighborhoods and engaging the neighborhoods to inform them of where things are. Secondly, I will work with our neighborhoods, understanding that these plans are living documents that should have flexibility and resources associated with them, to define our short, mid and long-term options for communities. Third, I will set goals, benchmarks, and milestones associated with the work that needs to be done to increase mobility within our neighborhoods, communicating with constituents and stakeholders along the way.

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## Darrion Fletcher

[www.facebook.com/fletcherfordisRICT3](https://www.facebook.com/fletcherfordisRICT3)

(Did not respond.)

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## Ivory Lee Young

[www.ivoryworks.net](http://www.ivoryworks.net)

(Did not respond.)

## District 4

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## Mr. Adassa

[www.voteforadassa.com](http://www.voteforadassa.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Christopher Brown

[www.chrisbrownforatlanta.com](http://www.chrisbrownforatlanta.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Dan Burroughs

[www.danburroughs.com](http://www.danburroughs.com)

**Answer 1:** I attended public schools throughout my entire education, and I experienced a number of them throughout those years. Knowing the sheer number of people who have graduated from public school systems to become prolific and profitable contributors to society, my experience with the public school system has me fully convinced of the ability of public schools to be highly successful if the student, parental, administrative and societal components are all properly in tune.

**Answer 2:** The best thing I can do for public education citywide, over the long term, is to:

- 1) Introduce ordinances and rally support to address the systemic inequalities and outright neglect which



create sustained pockets of poverty and stagnation, which have an enormous impact on a student's ability to learn long before reaching the classroom. This means addressing the availability of affordable housing, safe neighborhoods, job opportunities, public transportation, and all of the tools which allow families to elevate themselves from poverty and desperation.

- 2) Creative critical thinking will be the most important skill in a future economy dominated by automation, and to that end, I will support APS by providing funding for arts education, while also providing guidance and funding to rectify systemic inequalities so that all APS students can benefit from best practices and ample equipment and supplies.
- 3) I can expedite improvements to public education and ensure citizen voices are being considered by cultivating a greater level of community involvement with the schools and the school board.

**Answer 3:** I support the annex, and by virtue of those areas being included in the city, I do believe they should be served by APS. I have faith that APS has the potential to provide all Atlanta students with a quality, self-empowering education given proper administration, therefore I see no reason that APS shouldn't ultimately service every student within the city limits. That said, I believe that transition should begin with incoming students at each level (kindergarten, 6th and 9th grades).

**Answer 4:** I do support those partnerships. In an ideal situation, the public school facility would serve as a last bastion for safe places for children (because sadly, home is not always a safe or positive space for every child). To that end, I believe that school facilities should serve as defacto community centers after school hours, and those hours should be as late as possible.

This is a great potential point of partnership between the city and the school board. City Council can provide some or all of the funding necessary to pay for the costs of keeping the schools open after hours, while facilitating the related programs and services.

**Answer 5:** I think there needs to be a lot of long, hard consideration before relinquishing perfectly good or refurbishable property, pure to the end that the buildings will be sold to provide temporary cash infusions which will not accomplish fiscal stability over the long term. The buildings could be used for everything from shelters, community centers, even business incubators (in the form of affordable work space/offices) in the present, to extra space for APS as the student population grows.

Property, especially of the scale of many of these buildings, is not likely to become cheaper, and the student population will grow. There is too much that can be done with all that space to allow it all to be sold off.

**Answer 6:** I would bring both Grady High and the park conservatory to the table and mediate them negotiating an event schedule that minimizes inconveniences to students. Piedmont Park is a major asset

to the city, especially because it can host major events. That does create uniwue inconveniences for the high school next to it, but we must all strike compromises in dense urban environments. It seems to me that none of the issues mentioned are insurmountable so long as both parties have a thorough understanding of each other's schedule.

**Answer 7:** The city made a mistake in relinquishing power to determine its own property taxes, and should the opportunity ever present itself, I will move to reclaim that power. Until that can be accomplished, it is incumbent on City Hall to develop a tax assessment formula that is beneficial to the long-term growth of the city, while protective of low-income homeowners, and then lean on the Fulton County commissioners to bring their own assessment formulas as much in line with our needs as possible.

**Answer 8:** By being present I would keep citizens educated on development proposals and rally communities along each level of approval processes to demand affordable housing options from would-be developers. Additionally, I would seek to hold developers accountable to their promomises of affordable housing to the greatest possible extent.

In terms of transportation, MARTA needs to develop into a 24/7 regional transportation system that seamlessly and quickly connects every neighborhood in the region. Seamless 24/7 public transportation will be essential to the economic opportunities available to our citizens, present and future, as well as providing opportunities for businesses.

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## Jason Dozier

[www.votedozier.com](http://www.votedozier.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Nicholas Hess

[www.hess4th.org](http://www.hess4th.org)

**Answer 1:** Graduated from Northside High.

(Candidate did not complete remaining questions.)

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## Kimberly Parmer

[www.kimparmerdistrict4.com](http://www.kimparmerdistrict4.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Shawn Walton

[www.shawnwalton.com](http://www.shawnwalton.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Jonathan Whitfield

[www.facebook.com/WhitfieldForAtlantaCityCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/WhitfieldForAtlantaCityCouncil)

(Did not respond.)

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## Elizabeth Whitmore

[www.elizabethwhitmore.com](http://www.elizabethwhitmore.com)

**Answer 1:** I became a homeowner in 2013, and during that time I was working full time as an IT Consultant working to open charter schools in Memphis, Chicago, and Atlanta. I later transitioned into a technical specialist role as I began implementing, training, and designing online portals for local school districts in Atlanta. Essentially, as districts were headed paperless I was ensuring the online tools mirrored properly.

**Answer 2:** There must be a collaborative effort at the city level to support education and

# Atlanta City Council

<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> As a member of City Council, how would you support public education? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 4:</b> When the Trust for Public Land released its 2017 ParkScore Index, Atlanta ranked 50th among the 100 largest U.S. cities. One way to increase the city's score is to partner with schools to open their facilities (gyms, track, football and soccer fields, pools, etc.) to the public outside of school hours. Would you support such partnerships, and if so, how could City Council facilitate these arrangements?</p> <p><b>Question 5:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has withheld property deeds,</p>	<p>making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> Major events staged in Piedmont Park during the school year have a significant negative impact on Grady High School. From set-up to strike, the largest events can last up to two weeks, during which time it is difficult for students and faculty to get to and from school on time and participate in after-hours activities on campus. This affects drivers, walkers, cyclists and those who take transit. What would you do to mitigate the impact of such events? (250 words)</p>	<p><b>Question 7:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly one third of the City's general fund, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put the City in a bind. Did the City of Atlanta make a mistake in stepping away from the tax assessment function in the 1990s? How could the City be involved in preventing this kind of misstep in the future? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 8:</b> How would you address the continued rapid growth of Atlanta's intown neighborhoods and its effects on transportation and affordable housing? (250 words)</p>
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most importantly fund advancing technology in local school districts. Fulton County School District applied for grants that resulted in their ability to afford Google Chrome Books and iPads for all students. Atlanta Public Schools must move towards the same technology focus. We are facing many challenges connected to education specifically in low income areas and that ties into crime as well. The state must also come to the table as laws that allow youth to drop out at 16 are truly harming communities. We need all officials at the table working toward solutions. City Council has never included education and now we are reaping the negative impacts of that. I will always standby the support of education and find ways to keep the city door open to continued education conversations.

**Answer 3:** The annexation of such entities shows the strong brand of Atlanta at the same time I believe the vote of residents is key in making the right decision on next steps. Now, the beauty of this annexation will expand MARTA rail into more high income areas, which will produce more jobs as well as the ability to travel to them for residents without transportation. Everyone talks

about affordable housing, but people need jobs in order to make that a reality.

**Answer 4:** This goes back to the importance of the city collaborating, communicating, and connecting with the school districts. If this will create more jobs by hiring facility management staff then with further information I am likely on board. Atlanta is a city expanding at a rapid rate, but the main need are more jobs. We have to find creative. Of course, there is standard protocol surrounding background checks and

**Answer 5:** The conversation has included that the City of Atlanta request affordable housing as a contingency to the releasing of deeds. I understand the reason for that component seeing that Atlanta's home prices are increasing rapidly and we should all be thinking of affordable housing. However, as a property owner myself putting contingencies on a property defeats the purpose of owning it. The deeds are in the name of APS just in the possession of the City of Atlanta. I do believe APS should commit to a certain percentage of affordable housing similar to the Beltline. Most importantly affordable housing will benefit APS by providing

affordable housing to faculty and staff of APS. Ultimately, we must follow the law in this situation.

**Answer 6:** I can empathize with the chaos that can be caused for Grady High School students and faculty during major events. I have witnessed the high traffic volumes as well. We should work towards supporting Grady High School by developing a cap level for the amount of events that may take place at Piedmont Park during the school year. Disrupting an educational setting should not be taken lightly. Ultimately, we need to work with Grady High School at the city level and encourage that major events take place elsewhere so as not to disrupt the educational environment.

**Answer 7:** I believe we should have worked towards producing a proper tax assessment for 2017. Anything that you do not face you cannot fix. Next year, we could see an even larger tax increase because we did not work towards a solution and simply took it off the table. I do not agree that it was the right thing to do. We should've worked towards figuring out why it was so high and remedied it.

**Answer 8:** As previously stated, the number one solution to address rapid growth,

transportation, and housing is jobs. Ironically, economic development and the word "jobs" means the same thing. Unfortunately, people have gotten so blinded by the term gentrification that they are not paying attention to the fact that a demand in the area will drive development. Affordable housing is the next component that follows jobs. I do believe had I not become a homeowner so early in my life I would not have the understanding that I do so jobs/economic development coupled with affordable housing while we ensure transportation remains funded will assist the City of Atlanta in addressing the rapid growth.

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**DeBorah Williams**  
No campaign website found

(Did not respond.)

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**Cleta Winslow**  
No campaign website found

(Did not respond.)



## District 5

### Natalyn Archibong

[www.natalynmarchibong.com](http://www.natalynmarchibong.com)

Incumbent

**Answer 1:** I am a graduate of the Atlanta Public Schools. My daughter attended Mary Lin, Inman and Grady High School. My mother is a retired educator. She taught all of her professional life at Burgess Elementary (k/n/a Burgess-Peterson Academy). I currently serve on the joint committee between APS and the City Council. This committee is working to improve the relationship between APS and our council, and to develop joint initiatives. For example, we selected the issue of truancy as our first major joint initiative.

**Answer 2:** I fully support public education. The health of our city is very dependent upon having a strong public education system. I will continue my efforts to foster better communication between the city and our school system. I would encourage our new mayor to resolve the pending litigation regarding the quit claim deeds to abandoned school buildings, and to affirm our commitment to include APS as a critical component to the approval of all annexations.

**Answer 3:** I do not believe that the City should actively pursue and encourage communities to annex into the City. In this instance, I understand that Emory University made an independent decision to pursue annexation. I that proposed annexation meets the minimum state requirements, then I believe the role of the city is limited to the development of a service delivery strategy and to address the land use and zoning changes. As I stated previously, APS must be a critical part of

every annexation, and should serve the students who live in the newly annexed area(s).

**Answer 4:** Yes, I would support such a partnership with APS. The City Council could facilitate these arrangements by making sure that resources are allocated to share in the maintenance of these facilities. Additionally, the City could provide staffing from our Parks and Recreation department to supplement and to provide extended day services at facilities opened to the public after traditional school hours.

**Answer 5:** We need to release the deeds to APS. Although I think the release of the deeds should be unconditional, I do support the idea of APS working with the City's City Planning Department to maximize the future use of the land and facilities of these properties. On September 5, 2017, I introduced legislation authorizing the release of the deed to the former Tech High on Memorial Drive. This is a step in the right directions.

**Answer 6:** As the parent of a former Grady High School student, I have personally experienced the congestion and difficulties presented in this question. The City and APS should develop a master calendar so that the issuance of event permits are considerate of the traditional school schedule and any planned special events. The city should work to minimize the impact on the nearby school, as well as MARTA riders. We should also require the permit applicants to demonstrate that they have met with school officials and to provide a plan for addressing the concerns raised by the school officials. The approval of the permit should be conditioned upon the applicant implementing that plan.

**Answer 7:** I do not believe the position taken by the City in response to the public outcry over the 2017 Fulton County property tax assessments. And, I do not believe that the position taken by the City Council put the City in a bind. We have approximately 200 million dollars in reserve, and can responsibility continue our city functions despite any delay in tax revenue receipts. The city should not take on the tax assessment function. Instead, all citizens should hold the County accountable for the accuracy and the timeliness of the tax assessments.

**Answer 8:** The city recently authorized the issuance of 40 million dollars for a housing opportunity bond. The proceeds from this bond will be used as an incentive for developers to include affordable housing units in proposed developments, and a portion of the bond proceeds will be used to assist seniors and low income residents maintain and repair their homes. On a larger scale, we must implement mandatory inclusionary zoning and create a housing trust fund to ensure that there will be a capital source for financing new affordable housing units. As we increase our affordably housing inventory, we must make sure those units are maintained as affordable for a minimum of 50 years. The recent approval of the T-Splot will help MARTA improve its services and upgrade its fleet. I support Transit Oriented Development near MARTA stations, and the inclusion of mandatory affordable units within those proposed developments. As a city, we must look at national best practices, and work aggressively to incorporate strategies that will address equity in housing, and provide

strong support for public transportation.

### Liliana Bakhtiari

[www.lilianaforatlanta.com](http://www.lilianaforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** I am a proud product metro-Atlanta public schools. Since graduating, I have also worked with different public schools in Atlanta, like Toomer Elementary, to implement farming curriculums. In addition, I have worked with different public schools abroad teaching English, serving in early education, assisting with after school programming.

**Answer 2:** I think there are two important ways that I can support our Atlanta Public Schools as a City Council member. One way is to form a more positive working relationship with both APS and the Board of Education, so that we can work together to tackle the issues facing some of our most vulnerable students. City Council has the ability to really tackle quality of life issues that impact a child's ability to learn, such as access to food and housing, as well as their propensity to graduate and succeed. For example, I would love to work with APS and BOE to introduce vocational training at a middle school level, allowing students the opportunity to pursue more direct career paths that can help them succeed and stay and invest in the City of Atlanta.

**Answer 3:** I cannot say that I am for or against the Emory annexation because my questions have still not been answered. I still do not know how much revenue the annexation would generate for the city, versus how many millions the city would need to provide in servicing the CDC, Emory, and Emory village. From



my understanding, the only taxable entity would be Emory Village, and the cost of servicing the annexed area would be in the millions. I do not believe the tax money provided needs to be profitable in order for the city to annex an area in, but they should be able to provide the numbers in cost vs. profit. But it is true that the annexation could provide access to thousands of jobs between the CDC and Emory University, but the question still is how many of those taxpayers would live in our city? How many of them would be paying taxes to support our schools? Should these areas be annexed in, I of course understand the need for Atlanta Public Schools to serve the children who live in this area, but if the larger part of this area is not taxable, I do have reservations about spreading APS's budget so broadly and the consequences we may see for our existing schools. If we move forward with annexation, I would like to pursue a public-private partnership with Emory University in order to ensure that we meet the needs of the families in the surrounding area.

**Answer 4:** I would absolutely support these partnerships. I grew up playing sports in and outside of school, and I know that there are huge benefits for children you engage in regular physical activity. Atlanta is the city in a forest, but surprisingly most of that greenspace is private property and inaccessible to the public, leading our city to be one of the most under-parked in the country. As a City Council member, particularly in District 5, I would support partnerships with public schools to provide extended hours for access to sports facilities, as well as work with our City Parks and Recreation Department to increase our investment in green

spaces, providing new facilities and much needed updates to our older facilities. In my district, I would do everything I could to support efforts like the Memorial Greenway project, to provide larger parks with a wider array of facilities for everyone to enjoy, and to make sure that we were partnering with parks and recreation to provide educational programming for our green spaces.

**Answer 5:** As land becomes more scarce in the City of Atlanta, and it is imperative that these now vacant spaces be utilized for the good of our communities. I understand that some reservations include fielding the need for future public schools, or APS involving itself in the real estate game rather than focusing on education, but I think this is a time when the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools need to work together to best service our residents. I think the deeds to the APS properties need to be released for sale, with smart development in mind. Whitefoord Elementary is a great example of a successful turnover in District 5, where we implemented an Early Learning Facility, a much needed service for the surrounding neighborhood. As we move forward with re-purposing these properties, there must be collaboration between City Council and APS and Board of Education in order to access the needs of each neighborhood, and provide smart development. One of my primary focuses is to make sure the city is building with APS.

**Answer 6:** Many of the major events staged in Piedmont Park are permitted and organized through the Mayor's Office. As our next City Council Member, I will ensure that the surrounding neighborhoods voices are heard,

and will not be afraid to stand up to the Mayor's Office. I think a great compromise would be to limit set-up and strike time to non-school hours, and to require more specific plans for how event planners will help mitigate traffic issues surrounding their event. Most importantly, I will work with my fellow council members to be sure that the neighborhood, including the surrounding schools, are a part of the planning process.

**Answer 7:** The City needs to be conducting regular assessments on property, and working with our Fulton County Departments to better serve our city. We have the largest wealth gap in the country and the highest child poverty rates in the nation. Our city is full of hard working families and small businesses that cannot afford increases like the ones that occurred earlier this year. We must work to provide incremental increases to ensure that our residents can adapt and plan for changing prices. That being said, as our next City Council Member, I would like to explore with the community what percentage of increase in property taxes is manageable in a single year, and see if there is an opportunity to cap how much property taxes can be raised in a single fiscal year. I would also work with tax assessors to tackled the millage rate in order to curb our climbing property tax values. I want to grow with our community, and make sure that we are not displacing the hard working families and small businesses that have made it such a beautiful place to live.

**Answer 8:** I am all for the growth and development of our city, however, I want to be sure we are implementing smart development that allows our community to grow together,

instead of displacing our long-time residents. As a city council member, I would push for smart, inclusive development along major transportation corridors, including affordable housing units at 30% AMI as well as adjusted zoning requirements to incentivize development along public transit lines. Our outdated transportation infrastructure also must be addressed as we look to bring in 1 million new residents in the next 50 years. A huge step would be to establish a long needed Atlanta Department of Transportation, placing more accountability and expertise on addressing our transportation issues in the city. Furthermore, as we look to a comprehensive Transportation network, we must include bikers and pedestrians in the conversation, to create a navigable network for walking and biking. The City of Atlanta should make it a priority to work with its metro and state partners to ensure needed expansions come to pass. The state's recent MARTA funding and TSPLOST allocation will be extremely useful to reaching that goal, but we must ensure that improvements are based on needs and facts, not politics. Expanding mass transit including light rail, bus rapid transit, sidewalk, and bicycle networks issues hand in hand with our housing issues as our city and metro region continue to grow, especially when it comes to the Beltline and it's surrounding development.

## District 6

**Tracey Austin**

[www.votetraceyAustin.com](http://www.votetraceyAustin.com)  
Certified write-in candidate

**Answer 1:** I am the only District 6 City Council Member candidate with a child currently in the public school system and



the only candidate in my race that has personally matriculated through public schools. My son is a 5th grader and has only attended public school. My sister is an Atlanta Public Schools teacher for over 20 years. I have been an Atlanta Public Schools PTA member and volunteer consistently for six years and served on a committee for three of those six years, two of which I served as Chairperson of the Community Partnerships Committee. Our school is one of the strongest performing elementary schools in the state.

**Answer 2:** It is important that the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools maintain a close and healthy working relationship. I plan on attending the Local School Council meetings regularly and maintaining open lines of communication with the PTA presidents. Also, I will advocate for more programs that support the schools through afterschool programs at City recreation centers providing athletic programs and academic enrichment in line with the APS curriculum. Atlanta Public Schools should integrate more career-oriented academics at the secondary level. The City could support such a program through workforce development measures. Industries such as technology, construction/engineering, and film/entertainment are ideal options. At the High School level students should be required to attain personal financial management training and the City of Atlanta can also reinforce this skill through programs at its recreation centers.

**Answer 3:** I support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the CDC and surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta. I believe the decision to be served by Atlanta

Public Schools is one of the residents. Residents who will be impacted should have the option to be surveyed and give input on the matter.

**Answer 4:** I support the partnership to open school's outdoor facilities to public not indoor facilities. As a child, I was a student-athlete, as an adult I continue to participate in sports regularly. I am also a volunteer basketball coach, and I coach my son privately to play tennis and basketball. I rely solely on public facilities for my sporting activities. As a child in New York, where I grew up, the public school's outdoor facilities remained open to the public. As a result, as a child, my downtime was spent playing and training on public school tennis courts, basketball courts, running around the track and riding my bike on school property before and after hours. It led to me earning a full athletic scholarship to college. Without this option, my working-class family would not have never been able to afford the amount of private coaching or training I received by my father or participated in on my own. This kept me and many other children physically active, athletically competitive, and out of trouble. The City of Atlanta youth will benefit greatly from this option as will the city. It will lead to more youth adopting healthier lifestyles, reduce gang membership (a growing problem in many parts of the city outside of District 6), develop more competitive athletes and build community relations.

**Answer 5:** I am proud of the long-awaited resolution over the tax allocation district and Beltline dispute reached early last year as I believe much of the withholding of deeds dispute was part of the Mayor's negotiation tactic. The City

Council should work closely with APS to release property deeds when plans demonstrate it is in the best interest of the City of Atlanta, its faculty and youth, and the school district to do so. A full commitment to involvement and relationship building by the Council Members with the community is needed. Furthermore, the forming of the City of Atlanta Public Schools Joint Committee this past July was a sensible step in improving the CoA and APS relationship and should remain in place.

**Answer 6:** A balance must be drawn between the community, City of Atlanta event permitting process and festival producers. With the temporary closing of Centennial Park this issue may grow. The City of Atlanta should identify and promote to potential applicants other parts of the city that can be attractive for these events. CoA should also have in place solutions around transportation, boarding and other services for other potential venues in order to incentivize the use of other parts of the City.

**Answer 7:** In City Council District 6 where average homes are \$600,000 the issue of property taxes is exacerbated and can potentially present severe financial consequences to our residents. Although the millage rate has consistently decreased since 2014, fair market value of homes is rising at a rate that is not at pace with the decrease. Under my proposal for an Atlanta Center for Economic Policy, which is independent body that services city residents, the Council, and Mayor with data, projections, analysis of budget proposals, this entity will also release regular updates on fair market value rates, the rate of inflation of homes, and project further out the tax assessments but also the

level of impact those assessments will have on property owners, all residents, and Atlanta Public Schools. Economic policy is important and decisions from the assessor should not solely be based on a technological calculation. Atlanta residents were not properly prepared for the sudden tax increase and this could have had severe negative consequence on the housing market. The city should provide property tax advice and assistance to residents through its constituent services office; also, the recently formed City of Atlanta - Atlanta Public Schools Joint Committee should address the issue in each meeting.

**Answer 8:** Many of those living in Atlanta are paying more than 30% of their income to household costs, over 16% percent to transportation costs - these numbers may be even greater for lower-income households. The expense of housing is severely impacting socioeconomic mobility and is worsened by other implications related to gender and race. The City of Atlanta should work with MARTA to improve the attractiveness of the public transportation option. Improvements with public and sustainable transportation such as timeliness, frequency, and coverage of the options presented are important for our residents. Intown residents need to be better educated on public transportation options. We need to also focus on connectivity in our infrastructure improvements such as bike lanes to, and bike racks at, major bus stops. It is important to design transit stops to be safe (e.g. well-lit), comfortable (e.g. shaded benches), inviting (e.g. featuring local artists' work) and, when possible, a center of activity (e.g. offering other amenities).



MARTA should also design simple fare structures and systems that make it easy for riders to calculate the cost of a trip and submit payment. MARTA should be encouraged to work with local employers to set up payroll deductions, subsidized transport, or find other ways to support residents' use of public transit. I also support public transit subsidies for low-income residents to make Atlanta more affordable. By also addressing the issue of property tax assessments as noted in question 10 housing affordability can be eased.

## Jennifer Ide

[www.jenniferforatlanta.com](http://www.jenniferforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** I have four children who attended Morningside Elementary School from 2007-2017. I served on the MES Local School Council (Go Team) for three years and chaired it for two years. During my leadership, Principal Pruitt and I worked with APS on security concerns, which resulted in the construction of the current office and entryway system. I also worked with APS to ensure the consistent presence of a traffic officer for MES carpool and traffic direction on East Rock Springs. Finally, I served as the liaison for the school in the implementation of the Safe Routes to School grant street work. I served as a MES representative on the Grady cluster planning committee, as we developed the mission, vision, and priorities for the cluster. At MES, I also served as a room parent and volunteered with the Sustainability, Wellness and Garden (SWAG) committee.

**Answer 2:** It is essential that the City support public education both to bolster the prosperity and

economic mobility of our citizens, and to strengthen and support the City's economy. The City can do this by supporting teachers, students, and their families. Atlanta needs to do more on providing affordable workforce housing so that APS teachers can live closer to their schools, and in expanding our public transportation to reduce teacher commute times. For students, the City needs to be a real partner to APS in providing safe routes to school and safe, healthy neighborhoods, and in providing quality aftercare programs. City Council must ensure that efforts are coordinated among the city, APS, and Atlanta Workforce Development. The City must also support and encourage pre-K programs. Finally, the City should help provide programming such as adult literacy for parents in coordination with APS so that the school are a resource for the entire family.

**Answer 3:** I support the City's practice of welcoming new areas into the City where the legal requirements have been met. I attended the NPU-F meeting in July 2017 where the NPU considered matters relating to zoning and land use, to ensure that these matters were handled consistently post-annexation as they had been by DeKalb County and that adjoining landowners don't suffer any adverse effects.

I believe that the City and property owners had agreed upon an annexation into the City only and not APS in order to disrupt the status quo as little as possible, and that less than 10 K-12 students reside in the annexation area. Overall, however, I believe that it is better to have co-extensive boundaries for the City and APS.

Annexing additional property and students into District 6 obviously creates issues with our schools that are already beyond enrollment capacities. Morningside has been over-enrolled for many years and is still many years off from even starting a much needed renovation/expansion). Likewise, Inman has been overcapacity, and the completion deadline for the new Howard Middle School is July 2020. Until enrollment concerns are addressed within the Grady Cluster schools, APS may need to direct students in newly annexed areas to different attendance zones. The City and APS should create an annexation committee to discuss impact on schools for each proposed annexation so that concerns can be addressed before making the annexation final. Also, the City Council should require the City's Service Delivery Plan to include a section on schools.

**Answer 4:** I hear from neighbors a fair amount that they wish that APS fields and athletic facilities could be open to the community. The Morningside "Field of Dreams" has been a great resource to the neighborhood, as it has been made available on an unofficial basis in the evenings and weekends for pickup soccer and neighborhood play space. Health and wellness are often negatively impacted by a lack of access to resources, and anywhere the City and APS can partner to provide additional resources to the community and support wellness initiatives, they should. The City and APS should look at entering into a joint use agreement with the goal of making these facilities available outside of school hours.

The joint use agreement, of course, would need to address issues of maintenance, supervision, and liability for the usage, but none of these are insurmountable. It would be much more cost-effective for the City to contract for the use of APS space than have to acquire additional park and rec space. These arrangements have been implemented in cities across the country, and there are not-for-profit groups, such as [allincities.org](http://allincities.org), that can provide resources for structuring the relationship.

I support the approach and would offer to spearhead the policy work and legislation required to make it possible.

**Answer 5:** The City continuing to hold the titles of APS properties is a remnant of the creation of the independent school system in 1973. For most of the history of APS, the City has been cooperative in producing the deeds when requested and executing quit claim deeds to allow the properties to be sold. While APS should be thoughtful about when it is appropriate to sell school buildings, this decision is within the scope and authority of the APS Board and Superintendent, and they should not be barred from doing so by the City refusing to transfer the deeds. APS has cooperated in agreeing that any school property redevelopment include affordable housing, to help address the City's affordable housing needs. Of course I would want to consult with the City attorney, but I would recommend that the City proactively transfer the remaining deeds for APS properties to APS.

**Answer 6:** Piedmont Park is a wonderful asset to the City and District 6. Since its beginning



with the Piedmont Exposition of 1887 and the Cotton States and International Exposition of 1895, this space has been used for events, large and small, and it is a great place for city residents to come together. That being said, the largest events are a significant imposition on not only people using the park in the days of the event, and the days before and after, but also to those who live and go to school near the park. I think the City needs to revisit the use of Piedmont Park for these types of events, and look into the permitting required when the park and neighboring areas are impacted for several days, particularly when the event is a for profit venture. For events with an expected turnout over a certain threshold, organizers should be required to make arrangements for parking services with shuttles, and should approach MARTA about special event services. With its hardscape design, Centennial Olympic Park should be encouraged for events with heavy foot traffic, and I would encourage the use of the new Westside Bellwood Quarry Park, which will be significantly larger than Piedmont Park, for some of the larger events.

**Answer 7:** The 2017 Fulton County tax assessments have reopened a conversation about property taxes in the City and whether the process as a whole needs to be revisited. Regardless of the entity that conducts the valuation process, citizens must feel that the process is fair and accurate and that they have a voice. From the many constituents I spoke to this summer, it is clear that the process isn't working well—some people feel their valuations are well above market value, others feel their valuations are at market value, but much higher

than neighbors who have been undervalued for years, and others who acknowledge that their valuations may be below market value, but say they cannot afford to stay in their homes if their taxes increase significantly. Valuations should reflect fair market value, and they should be comparable to similar properties. The City and APS need reassurance from Fulton County that the county is equipped to perform this function. Then, we need to consider what relief may be necessitated to allow seniors to age in place, and to provide relief to residents in areas of high growth who may be facing significant increases in property taxes. This will require working with the Atlanta delegation of the Georgia General Assembly to determine a fair and appropriate approach to any further exemptions.

**Answer 8:** Protecting and preserving Atlanta's historic intown neighborhoods is essential as the City grows and changes. As noted in the recently-release Atlanta City Design Plan, "As we try to manage that change, however, we see our city threatened. Our neighbors, history, and other things that we love are at risk of being destroyed by rising costs and pressures driven by bottom line more than our civic integrity." We must be thoughtful and plan for growth to make sure that it enhances our quality of life. This means (1) expanding transportation options with additional MARTA capacity; smart roadways, with technology solutions like synchronized traffic signals and electric vehicle shuttles that are being piloted in the North Avenue smart corridor; and additional safe bike and pedestrian ways; (2) putting residential and commercial density in areas served by public

transportation and amenities; (3) passing additional inclusionary zoning legislation that will drive the creation of additional affordable housing; and (4) ensuring that rezoning requests within/abutting historic intown neighborhoods are assessed to ensure that the proposed development is in keeping with the neighborhood plan, enhances the neighborhood, and does not increase traffic.

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## Kirk Rich

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**Answer 1:** I have been involved with Public Schools through service with Jerusalem House. I served on the Board for more than 10 years and during that time helped more than 100 children navigate into and through APS as well as DeKalb County Schools. I also dealt with school issues while serving on the Invest Atlanta Board.

**Answer 2:** I would make sure that we are partnering in every way possible. I would want to have a close relationship with my School Board members and find ways to work together rather than the current adversarial tone. I would support funding of 0-3 education and also after school/supportive services. I would also be much more careful with annexation, making sure not to exacerbate capacity issues within APS and especially the Grady Cluster. I would also want to study internal school security and public safety to better understand if APS should allow the City to be more involved. Additionally, I would support development on the south and west sides of the city while partnering to significantly improve the schools in those areas to better spread capacity. This would help alleviate District 6 school capacity strain.

**Answer 3:** Yes, I support the annexation but wished the city had negotiated some contract fee system to cover services costs. I am satisfied that DeKalb County keeps the school services for now. APS and District 6 cannot absorb this area under current facility/faculty load. My hope is the new Council and Mayor will be able to augment some agreements to make the annexation work better and more fairly for all involved.

**Answer 4:** Yes, this could be a great partnership for all parties. The City could provide significant funding to improve and add facilities which would then benefit APS; alleviating deficient APS dollars for those issues. Council could also look for ways to add specific types of recreation areas between schools to allow for multiple schools to use the best parks/facilities. Other cities are doing this and it has broadened types of recreation and skillsets for the children in those school systems.

**Answer 5:** This has been a ridiculous but very serious issue. The deeds should be released so these properties can be utilized for best and highest purposes. Many of these vacant properties have significant negative effects on the communities that surround them. This entire issue was primarily spawned by ego driven relationship issues while costing communities countless missed opportunities. Once the deeds are released, there should be a very strategic and well thought out plan on how to expedite sales or new uses for these properties. This is where a joint effort with Council and APS could be extremely beneficial.

**Answer 6:** This issue affects everyone, especially Grady. Piedmont Park has become to



much of a special events venue. As I type this, the park is basically closed while they set up Music Midtown. While we need to recognize this is currently the largest City public space, we must also recognize the neighbors around the park have rights to access and uninterrupted quality of life. These events also put our kids at greater risk of injury while getting to and from school. As a Council member, I would want to see the use of Piedmont Park for large scale events lessened. I also would limit the number of events. We seem to allow every walk and charity run unfettered access with little thought to road closures, clean up and conflict with neighborhood events/issues.

**Answer 7:** Yes! This is more complicated so my answer is without internal access and experience that I will have once on Council. At a minimum, the City should have a closer relationship to the assessors office and Fulton County. There seems to be a lack of logic on how the government assesses properties. It also seems we are playing "catch up" to real values because of the assessors not doing a good job over the last decade. While we need an accurate taxation, we also need to be respectful to the taxpayers. Better communication and explanation is key. Overall though, for the health of APS and the City, we must study this and put in place a much better system to adjust the way assessments are currently completed.

**Answer 8:** The new government must rethink our zoning. We must expedite the completion of the Beltline with light rail as well as the "spokes" connecting the ring. While doing this, we must incentivize smart

development mandating inclusionary zoning for 15-20% affordability. Transportation Oriented Developments must be a priority creating truly mixed use communities/nodes to alleviate the need to use cars. We must also put limits on property tax for Seniors so people can age in place and not be forced out due to taxation. Gentrification on the south and west sides will also be a continuing tug of war. While we encourage appropriate development, we must be aggressive in providing funding and programs to allow long time residents to remain a valued resident. Atlanta's biggest challenge for the next decade is how to maintain affordability and improve EQUITY among our citizens. Council must be the inventive leader on these issues.



<p><b>Question 1:</b> Please describe your experience with public schools. (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> As the Mayor of Atlanta, how would you support public education? (150 words)</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Do you support the current proposal to annex Emory University, the Centers for Disease Control and</p>	<p>surrounding properties into the City of Atlanta? If so, do you believe that those annexed areas should be served by Atlanta Public Schools? Please explain your reasoning. (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 4:</b> Though the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools have long been separate entities, the City still holds the deeds to approximately 50 APS properties. In recent years, the City has</p>	<p>withheld property deeds, making it impossible for APS to sell vacant properties. What is your take on this situation, and what are your thoughts on remedying it? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 5:</b> Property taxes collected by Fulton County account for nearly one third of the City's general fund, so when the County reacted to the outcry over 2017 assessments by returning to 2016 assessment levels, this put the City in a</p>	<p>bind. Did the City of Atlanta make a mistake in stepping away from the tax assessment function in the 1990s? How could the City be involved in preventing this kind of misstep in the future? (250 words)</p> <p><b>Question 6:</b> How would you address the continued rapid growth of Atlanta's intown neighborhoods and its effects on transportation and affordable housing? (250 words)</p>
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## Peter Aman

[www.peteraman.com](http://www.peteraman.com)

**Answer 1:** I am a proud graduate of the public-school system near my hometown in Philadelphia. My mother was also on the school board, so I grew up with a first-hand appreciation for everything that goes into the oversight and administration of a quality public K-12 system. As a product of the public-school system, and partner in supporting APS in various ways, I place public school education, its teachers and administrators in high esteem. They prepared me for life, for public service, and I'm very proud of my foundation.

Early in my career, I was part of the consulting team that supported Wendy Kopp in her early days getting Teach for America off the ground. Here in Atlanta, I helped found the Atlanta Police Foundation, which funds the At-Promise Youth and Community Center on English Avenue. YPC is an excellent wraparound service to APS and that community.

**Answer 2:** Most candidates will say they want to better partner with APS. I will go further than that and make tangible strides. Supporting public education is about more than

just K-12. We don't do enough in this city to support early childhood education. I will use the mayor's office as a "pulpit of hope" to work with the philanthropic and private sector and the state to fund early childhood development – particularly for children under the age of four. I believe by proving support to families of young children, we set those students up to succeed when it is time for Kindergarten. Is ambitious, but I believe it can be done and I will work to make it happen. The moral imperative is too great to ignore. I will stake my second term on my ability to help improve APS.

**Answer 3:** Yes. Through annexation and, ultimately, the completion of light rail connectivity, we can better link employers like the CDC and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta to the local labor pool. We can also send talent the other way by making it easier for students coming out of Emory to find job opportunities in town. These institutions offer some of the best jobs and careers in this region. This boosts the local economy and stops some of brightest minds – educated right here – from relocating.

Everyone paying taxes in Atlanta is paying into the Atlanta Public School system. Logic follows

that the children of these taxpayers should have access to APS. I want to hear from multiple stakeholders first, including APS, before providing a final response.

**Answer 4:** As mayor, I will turn over the deeds to APS. It is imperative for the mayor and the school superintendent to work in concert to advance Atlanta. Trust and collaboration will be key.

Far too often, we are a city that exists in siloes. We are much stronger together, different members of the same body. Regardless of who holds the deeds, the city's Planning department should weigh in as a valued resource. Likewise, Invest Atlanta and others should have a seat at the table, as they have a great deal of expertise to offer. Together, we can find the best ways to improve livability and inclusion and achieve balanced growth. Together, we can identify the best financial offerings for APS which they can then re-invest in our schools.

**Answer 5:** I want to be the city and the region's convener-in-chief. That's because the public, private and philanthropic sectors must come together with the communities to get things done in Atlanta. That has always been the case. And that is in large part

why I think I am the best candidate. I have a resume touching on all of these areas that no other candidate possesses.

Tax assessments present a challenge which in turn offer an opportunity to grow the city's trust relationship with Fulton County. The mayor, the county commissioners, the tax assessors' office, and the state must work together. This isn't just about the city's coffers. The shortfall from the tax freeze had a negative impact on our schools. And the entire episode de-stabilized the lives everyone in the city. No one, rich or poor, should open an envelope to find that their property taxes have gone up 100 percent year-over-year. That's a clear failing of government and it cannot happen again.

If we convene the best minds and confront the hard choices, we can address this problem in a real way that does more than kick the can on an issue that only becomes more difficult the longer we wait to address it.

**Answer 6:** The key is to ensure that we not lose sight of inclusion and livability as we grow. The people that built this city should not be forced out by rising costs. Development should not come at the cost of a



neighborhood's identity or anyone's quality of life. Transportation and affordable housing help us meet both of these goals.

A well-conceived transportation infrastructure makes it more desirable and cheaper to live intown as well as making it less of a burden to move from one place to another. It includes taking better care of our sidewalk infrastructure as well as adding to it. It means a single traffic grid, more buses and bus routes, and construction of both light and heavy rail.

On housing, we need place-based and income-based housing. We should cover everyone on the wealth scale in some form, from the homeless to those closer to Area Median Incomes. We should also think about geography, so that we can prioritize projects near transit.

But a lot of this is repetitive. We've discussed this problem and these potential solutions as a city for some time. What we have not done is devise and act on a concrete, comprehensive strategy. As mayor, I will bring AHA, the Beltline, MARTA, and numerous others to the table to finally deliver on what has been an unfulfilled promise for far too long.

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## Rohit Ammanamanchi

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**Answer 1:** I have been enrolled in a public school system for 20 of my 24 years. I've attended public grade school in NYC, NJ, and Charlotte, and then went to Georgia Tech. Most significantly, I attended public school when smartphones and internet technology started to come into play, and I experienced the entire transition

from traditional education to digital education.

**Answer 2:** While I don't have power over what gets taught, I can still help prepare students for the future by providing a grant for each student to have access to a laptop or tablet. I also want to build about 30% more schools, along with more libraries and community centers, being deliberate about their placement in the neighborhood so that students have better and safer access to education and tutoring.

**Answer 3:** I fully support annexing Emory, but certain logistics have to be straightened out, such as a new tax to cover the provision of services, and including the area in APS. Despite only about a dozen students living in the annexed area, it would be a terrible precedent for any part of Atlanta to not also be a part of APS. Having Emory in Atlanta but outside of APS would cause a disconnect much like how the parts of Atlanta in Dekalb county are served differently than the parts in Fulton. If it were possible, I would recommend that Fulton County annex all of Atlanta. As a sister city example, Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have great synergy with providing municipal services due to the boundary of Charlotte lying completely within the County. Charlotte: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mecklenburg\\_County\\_North\\_Carolina\\_Incorporated\\_and\\_Unincorporated\\_areas\\_Charlotte\\_highlighted.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mecklenburg_County_North_Carolina_Incorporated_and_Unincorporated_areas_Charlotte_highlighted.svg) Atlanta: [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fulton\\_County\\_Georgia\\_Incorporated\\_and\\_Unincorporated\\_areas\\_Atlanta\\_Highlighted.svg](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fulton_County_Georgia_Incorporated_and_Unincorporated_areas_Atlanta_Highlighted.svg)

**Answer 4:** I don't know too much about the specifics, but it sounds like the City leadership

needs to stop acting like children. Perhaps this is an opportunity for Atlanta to build schools on vacant land, then sell the land to APS to operate the school.

**Answer 5:** Although Commissioner Eaves frequently boasts about making the decision to revert to 2016 values, this move was obviously a band-aid to the bigger problem, which is that property values were not assessed for several years, and then unfairly assessed higher due to speculation of neighboring growth, while having little to do with the quality of the property itself. I don't believe that it is relevant who assesses the property value, but it is much more important how it is assessed. I would recommend a gradual increase in values, giving a greater weight on the property condition than the expected growth, and then I would have a proactive renovation program so that an increase in property value can be associated with a better quality house.

**Answer 6:** Urgently, I would have the City catch up and keep up in delivering the public transportation and housing that is desperately lacking. I have plans to rapidly construct streetcar/trolleybus lines and dedicate lanes to connect the city like never before, and make mass transit reliable. As for housing, I plan to invest at least \$250M in housing and other neighborhood amenities, where that amount can stretch farther by building on land owned by AHA and other land trusts, and building more cost-effective units such as multiplexes and tiny houses.

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## Keisha Lance Bottoms

[www.keishalancebottoms.com](http://www.keishalancebottoms.com)

**Answer 1:** I am a graduate of Frederick Douglass High School. I've also volunteered and partnered with several schools in APS, including serving as a mentor, speaker and facilitating donations and resources.

**Answer 2:** I will appoint a Director of Education to serve as a proactive liaison between APS and our community partners.

**Answer 3:** Yes, I support the annexation. I believe that the decision to best determine how to service students in the area should be made after careful examination and input from the impacted stakeholders.

**Answer 4:** I believe that it is important for APS and the City of Atlanta to work together to resolve these issues in the most prudent way to serve all those involved.

**Answer 5:** Given the debacle of this year's tax assessments, I think it would be wise to determine what role, if any, the city should play in any future tax assessments.

**Answer 6:** The city needs to work to balance growth throughout the city and a way to do that is to work to improve the quality of communities throughout the city so that families have options and look forward to living in many parts of our great City.

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## John Eaves

[www.eavesforatlanta.com](http://www.eavesforatlanta.com)

(Did not respond.)

# Mayor of Atlanta



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## Vincent Fort

[www.vincentfort.com](http://www.vincentfort.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Kwanza Hall

[www.kwanzahall.com](http://www.kwanzahall.com)

**Answer 1:** I was elected to the Atlanta School Board in 2002 and I served until I was motivated to do more for our kids by running for City Council District 2 in 2005. My Year of Boulevard initiative expanded after school and summer camp programming for kids in the Bedford Pine community. I believe that the hours outside of the school day and Saturdays are most key to the development of our children. Showing our young people futures that they can achieve are critically important.

**Answer 2:** The Mayor of Atlanta should focus energy on having a strong relationship with APS leadership and making sure there is structure outside of the school day for every child in Atlanta. 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.

**Answer 3:** I support the exploration of the annexation and I am hopeful that the arbitration with DeKalb County will lead to a win-win for both entities. I don't like the precedent that not being served by APS would set, but I believe that with so few students living in the area, it is not an insurmountable problem.

**Answer 4:** I think that the partnership between APS and the City of Atlanta should be strengthened and that a plan for disposing of properties should be developed with community input that would consider Atlanta's need for affordable housing, access to transit, access to grocery and retail, and parks and recreation. Properties should be prioritized for redevelopment based on this plan.

**Answer 5:** 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.

**Answer 6:** 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.

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.

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## Carl Jackson

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(Did not respond.)

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## Laban King

[www.labanking.org](http://www.labanking.org)

**Answer 1:** I have no experience with public schools. I personally attended private schools and contributes that I have made have been towards private institutions

**Answer 2:** I believe that public education is the backbone of the community. Because I do not have experience in this area, I would look for the guidance of teachers and administrators to see how the city of Atlanta can be the best support the APS system. I would begin to create partnerships with the private sector to secure funding to APS so the school system would have to rely on State funding.

**Answer 3:** I am 100% against this proposal. While in theory it sounds good, it is an accelerator for gentrification. Sadly, this proposal was not designed to benefit APS, but rather to change the voters base of Atlanta.

**Answer 4:** I support the City of Atlanta withholding the deeds. I believe the mayor so make an extra effort to get the city to have control of the schools. APS has showed no significant signs of improvement therefore the system is not in the right place now.

**Answer 5:** I believe the City of Atlanta, Fulton County and Dekalb County most collective come up with a special tax code for Atlanta residents. This plan would help create a fair account that the city, county, and Atlanta residents can benefit from.

**Answer 6:** The growth of Atlanta is great however the problem is that this growth is happening way faster than we



are addressing the mass transportation and affordable housing issue. We must put policy in place to reflect housing availability for entry level incomes in local jobs. Because Atlanta is experiencing rapid growth due to the rise in multi-family housing, I believe we must make developers assist with the cost of creating mass transit

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## Cesar Mitchell

[www.ceasarformayor.com](http://www.ceasarformayor.com)

(Did not respond.)

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## Mary Norwood

[www.marynorwood.com](http://www.marynorwood.com)

**Answer 1:** Throughout her career, Mary Norwood has been a strong supporter of the Atlanta Public School's mission to provide all our children with the best possible education to prepare them for the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

**Answer 2:** As mayor Mary Norwood will support the Atlanta School Board in its mission to provide quality education. Mary will collaborate with and support the APS, working with the Atlanta Police Department, Parks and Recreation Department and other city and county departments and non-profits. Renovating and reconfiguring city recreation centers in targeted neighborhoods to serve as a safe and secure haven after school, weekend and on school breaks for after school mentoring/tutoring by APS, SAT prep, college and technical school counseling, proving a location for personal counseling and health and wellness programs supported by the Fulton County Department of

Health, serving as the space for a range of athletic and creative activities.

**Answer 3:** Mary Norwood supports the Emory University, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and CDC annexation as a positive addition to a long list of institutions that further enhance and enrich our city and its ability to attract relocating corporations, national NGO headquarters, additions to the city's arts and culture and university community, and more of the people who may choose to settle in Atlanta because of all it can offer them and their families.

**Answer 4:** As mayor Mary Norwood will review this question and make a recommendation to city council. It is not possible to provide the best response to this question until you are in city hall and have all of the relevant stakeholders and facts before you.

**Answer 5:** Mary Norwood supports a legislative solution to the property appraisal and assessment question brought to the forefront by this year's property tax crisis. She will work with other city officials and county, APS and state officials to find the best long term solution that will provide a steady and predictable stream of tax revenue for local government and peace of mind for city taxpayers.

**Answer 6:** Mary Norwood realizes that Atlanta will continue to grow and the best solution to the transportation challenges we all of confronted with every day and will face into the future require the collaboration of all relevant local governments and state and regions departments and agencies including Marta. A synchronization of traffic signals, installation of light rail Marta lines, reconfigured bus routes

and other solutions together can bring some relief but so long as so many of us continue to rely on automobiles to commute to and from work congestion will require new innovative solutions be considered and adopted.

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## Michael Sterling

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(Did not respond.)

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## Cathy Woolard

[www.cathyforatlanta.com](http://www.cathyforatlanta.com)

**Answer 1:** I'm a product of K-12 public schools and public university, so public school is important to me on a very personal level. 70% of APS students are still considered underserved or underrepresented, so we have some work to do as a community to assure services to better support and complement public education. Improving housing options, wrap-around youth services through public programs to assure community safety, consistent supplemental transportation for students who use MARTA; planning for basic neighborhood amenities like access to healthy food, reliable daycare and after-school offerings, welcoming public spaces to assure a family's sense of neighborhood and civic belonging - these are just some of the discussions we Atlantans need to have in earnest to help elevate and educate all of our children on the levelest, most enriching playing field possible.

**Answer 2:** This is about relationship-building. As City Council President, one of my most indelible learning experiences was sitting down with Shirley Franklin on a weekly basis to coordinate efforts and establish a working relationship based on mutual trust. Franklin

made it her business to do the same thing with Atlanta Public Schools. When I decided to run for Mayor, I borrowed from that inspiring experience by immediately calling Meria Carstarphen to introduce myself. I said, "You don't know me, but I'd like you to because when I'm elected, I want to be sure we can meet weekly to talk schools!" Meria was generous enough to spend valuable time with me, which I really appreciate. It's so important to our students and community partners to have real communication and planning between our city and its schools.

**Answer 3:** As the current proposal stands, we need to take the time to consider what annexing Emory University will really mean for the city. We have not heard how much it will cost Atlanta taxpayers annually to provide services like police, fire, and sanitation services to a large institution that pays nothing in taxes. Until we have exact cost estimates, it is impossible for taxpayers to fully understand whether annexation of Emory University would be a net positive or negative for our budget. Regarding Atlanta Public schools serving Emory's annexed properties, it's my understanding that the most recent proposal represents about 10 students. We need more information to determine whether the annexation would ultimately be limited to Emory University and the CDC only - or expanded to include more surrounding residential properties - before coming to a real decision.

**Answer 4:** I believe this is largely about relationships and personalities. Trust is absolutely vital between these two entities, which is why I would focus on building, maintaining, and strengthening the Mayor's



relationship with APS. The repertoire between Kasim Reed and Meria Carstarphen was less than optimal when dealing with property sales along the Beltline and the school system suffered because of it. APS separated itself from the City decades ago for a reason and it deserves to have its own autonomy in making decisions regarding their budget and the land that they own the deeds to.

**Answer 5:** What happened in the 1990s is frankly water under the bridge and we can't change the steps that the City made at that time. Moving forward, it is important that the City interacts closely with Fulton County to ensure that when assessments have to increase, they are done so incrementally and realistically. The reaction following the 2017 assessments was an immediate and panicked response that caused teacher furlough at the beginning of the year and dampened student morale. The hiring freeze that followed directly impacted our students and our communities. Reverting back to past assessments merely defers the problem to the future, but it takes no steps to fix it. Better communication needs to be established between the County and the City to ensure that budgets and taxes are balanced and that both bodies have a long-term focus.

**Answer 6:** As Mayor, I will quickly align these key players and resources to address this issue head-on: City of Atlanta, county officials, APS, MARTA, Invest Atlanta, Atlanta Housing Authority, businesses that need employees to live close to work, the development community, issues experts, and related nonprofits.

I will work to increase housing density aligned with transit lines. We can grow Atlanta while

maintaining the unique character of our neighborhoods and schools when we focus density along transit. I have proposed a strategic plan to complete a 40-mile streetcar grid along already-approved routes to be built in eight years.

I will dedicate a revenue stream to affordable housing, exploring all available funding mechanisms from tax allocation districts to development impact fees to a parking tax, and create an affordable housing trust fund. I will propose a comprehensive public policy package of incentives and requirements for developers to ensure inclusionary housing development citywide.

To protect long term residents from being priced out of their homes through rising property values, I will ensure existing homestead exemptions are targeted and relevant, and that low-income and senior homeowners are given solid relief while protecting the Atlanta Public School system's future budget. I also will evaluate the entire Atlanta tax digest to ensure that non-resident investment property owners pay a minimum property tax after adjustments for exemptions.

Finally, I will work to update legislation when the General Assembly convenes in January to give Atlanta the authority necessary to take action on property tax and gentrification related issues.

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## Glenn Wrightson

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**Answer 1:** Attended public schools grades 1 thru 12 - Attended Spring St Elem. and Henry Grady High School

**Answer 2:** Would encourage students to study and respect their teachers - would encourage City Council Members to visit schools - and address the student meetings on the importance of education.

**Answer 3:** Not fully educated on this issue - whether the cost of providing services would be paid by the annexed property - if much is taxed exempt - I would seek advice before rendering an opinion - yet on the surface - it seems a plausible and beneficial option.

**Answer 4:** If they are, without question, separate entities. I would suggest the deeds be transferred to the Schools - I certainly would want to know why they were withheld and not part of the separation agreement -

**Answer 5:** First, the current City "leadership" made a huge mistake be not strongly recommending a 2 - 3 % across the board increase this year - to soften future assessment increases. The City, as a payee of taxes, clearly should have input into the assessment mechanism - The Board of assessors should be comprised of members representing the County and the City -

**Answer 6:** I would slow the acceptance of or deny construction permits for high density projects that over-impact the roadways - we are on a path of potential lock down gridlock - we need to slow the growth or move the growth to less dense areas.