



Candidate Questionnaire for Atlanta's 2025 Citywide Elections

Section I: Personal Background and Motivation

- Full Name: Courtney Smith
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Brief Biography (max 250 words):

I grew up in a large working class family of farmers, firefighters, teachers, veterans and healthcare workers. I learned from them the value of hard work and service. At Georgia Tech, we quickly learn that success is achieved together and the solution - not the trophy - is always the goal. These core tenants are central to who I am and a commitment to honest progress and service is what we need. I want to help Atlanta solve our longstanding inequities while we modernize for the future.

For over 12 years, I have served the Atlanta community. Through non-profit board service, I've supported education expansion, homeless outreach services, and the vital work of preservation. As NPU-E Chairperson and Midtown Neighbors' Association President, I advocated for the community in decisions related to housing supply, safer streets, expanded transit options, public safety strategies, and forward-thinking development. For a long time, I've been at the table, with our community, rolling up my sleeves to find the best outcome together.

Right now, our city needs to make transformative decisions about transit, housing, the environment, and financing structures that will inform the next 20-30 years of our momentum. District 2, Atlanta's highest density district, needs an advocate with the earned trust of our community and long record of expertise to navigate these highly complex opportunities. We have important work to do together and I'm ready on day one.

Section II: Priorities

1. What are your top three priorities if elected?

Public Safety - The first job of local government is to ensure that our city is safe. Public safety programs regularly equate to a significant portion of our general fund budget because maintaining a safe city is not only the expectation of voters but it is also necessary in supporting a healthy and strong business economy. I support the Public Safety Training

Center. I have been supportive of pay raises and additional resource enhancements for our public safety employees. I am behind measures to improve community policing and de-escalation training while also calling for greater investment in innovative programs like pre-arrest diversion services for nonviolent criminals. It is both morally the right thing to do and also a strategic efficiency model which reallocates officer bandwidth to focus on the necessary emergency response for crime.

Transportation & Infrastructure - As a city, leadership is being called upon to have an intentional and committed conversation around actionable, fundable, and innovative transportation solutions ranging from the expansion of our public transit network to establishing safe bike and pedestrian options. More and more everyday, Atlantans want a great quality of life that does not require owning a car - particularly in our dense urban core neighborhoods where a wide spectrum of users are calling for a new chapter in Atlanta's transit growth.

Housing Supply and Homelessness – Everyone in Atlanta is concerned about housing affordability at all levels. Ownership and renting are both becoming out of reach for far too many and I share a vision for Atlanta where everyone has the choice to live in one of many neighborhoods with access to the elements we all need to live a great life - access to great schools, sustainable work, fresh food, green space, transit options, and a strong community. For the unhoused, we must do a better job of working with our community partners and county offices to provide relief for acute crisis circumstances - behavioral health programs are not the primary responsibility of city government. However, establishing policy and code that encourages mixed income housing solutions is within the power of city government. Mixed income housing - and supply in general of all types - will drive down prices and make it affordable to live in communities throughout our city. Where it makes sense and where it is desired, we must all rise to the challenge and find ways to increase density so that Atlanta grows with intention and strategic planning. This should include an emphasis on areas near transit and along our busy commercial corridors in Midtown, Old Fourth Ward, Downtown and Buckhead.

Section III: Public Safety

2. The Atlanta Public Safety Training Center has sparked both support and opposition throughout our city. How do you view the Public Safety Training Center's role in shaping the future of public safety, and how would you ensure it serves the needs of both first responders and the broader community?

Public safety is a collaborative effort. We all have a part to play in ensuring Atlanta is safe and feels safe to residents, workers and visitors. The Public Safety Training Center is a critical tool in ensuring we are creating a safe foundation for the incredible growth we are anticipating. I am pleased that the facilities were developed not only for Atlanta's emergency response professionals but also for regional departments to also benefit from the collaborative facilities and for the local community. I've had the pleasure of touring the facilities and have seen first hand the community meeting rooms, sports facilities, and park spaces established for the community. I was also pleased to see the amount of space dedicated to multi-departmental use, de-escalation training, wellness support and leadership collaboration.

The Public Safety Training Center is a state of the art facility that is delivering community-centered training for multiple first responder departments. Since opening, it has already resulted in consistent full capacity graduate classes helping us address our recruitment challenges and keep pace with our population growth. The continued professional development programs and benefit options like take home cars, wellness resources, and housing programs are helping to retain officers. Investing in high quality, state of the art training prepares them with the tools they need for the response we want to see in our community. I will continue to support the essential, life saving emergency services of AFRD and APD for the success of our city and as a resource and partner to regional departments so that we are delivering incredible service to citizens across our country.

Section IV: Transportation and Infrastructure

3. Traffic congestion, caused by delivery trucks and rideshare vehicles, physically blocks travel lanes on major roads like Peachtree and Piedmont. How can we ensure that this dangerous practice stops?

Curbside management has been a challenge plaguing our neighborhood and commercial corridors for years. Everyone agrees we have to do better. The art of the solution is both considering a new citywide program for indicating restrictions and consistent, accurate enforcement. Right now, too much of the management responsibility for our curb lies with an overstretched APD and too little of our curb management is handled by our contracted partner, currently ATLPlus. One of my big priorities will be to pilot a bold new curbside management program that will reveal roadway over capacity, create consistent enforcement, and generate a new revenue stream for public right of way improvements to alleviate these strains and find our way to less roadway frustration and chaos.

4. What is your vision for revitalizing the Lindbergh area and addressing the visible blight along Piedmont Road, a key gateway into Buckhead? How would you work with city agencies and law enforcement to improve safety and aesthetics in this high-priority corridor?

Addressing blight requires a multifaceted approach that blends proactive planning, strong enforcement, and active community involvement. While this area of the city is not in District 2, I will support the efforts of my colleagues to improve this corridor. If asked for suggestions, I would mention focused code enforcement for graffiti, overgrowth, and illegal access to abandoned properties. Redevelopment and activation of some of the larger parcels that are underutilized along Sidney Marcus could also help drive momentum in the area. It would be useful in this part of our city to consider converting portions of some of the larger empty surface lots into parks, gardens, or third spaces to nurture a sense of place in this node which currently tends toward the transient resident and transactional activities (auto repairs, fast food, gas stations, etc). At the heart of lasting change is community pride which fuels momentum and ensures that revitalization efforts reflect the voices and needs of locals.

5. Buckhead lacks sufficient sidewalk infrastructure, particularly in some residential neighborhoods and near schools, making walking uncomfortable and unsafe for many residents. While progress has been made in the commercial core, large portions of the community remain disconnected. What specific policies or funding strategies would you support to accelerate and incentivize sidewalk construction throughout Buckhead?

If elected, I will call for an immediate audit of the Moving Atlanta Forward program. If we can solve the inefficiencies in this program's project delivery, then we can expedite planned construction and maintenance of sidewalks in cases where the funding has already been earmarked. This is part of a larger effort I am planning to improve city services across the board on everything from permitting to service delivery to capital projects.

Section V: Education - Atlanta Public Schools (APS)

6. Many schools throughout Atlanta are currently facing significant under-enrollment. As part of the ongoing Facilities Master Plan, the APS Board is considering recommendations for school consolidations and redistricting by late 2025. Specifically, APS has circulated a recent plan under community review that outlines

various scenarios that could repurpose and consolidate existing facilities. What is your position on potential school closures or consolidations within APS? How do you believe these changes could impact schools in Buckhead, which currently experience some of the highest enrollment levels in the district?

Changes to our school plans can make a big impact on families and I understand the apprehension about a big step like closing a school. For District 2, our greatest impact of this recent facility plan is the addition of 300 seat capacity to Midtown High School. We are taking a look at that and participating in the public discussion sessions. I do not currently have a detailed answer for the impact or potential solutions for the Buckhead clusters. I trust that my colleagues who represent those district areas are paying close attention as I am in District 2. APS is a significant participant in Fulton County property tax allocations - specifically 50% of each contribution. I want to see, like all taxpayers, our funding contributions maximized for the best educational resources and facilities for our students. Meanwhile, childcare, pre-K, and postsecondary technical and vocational education are more squarely in the purview of Atlanta City Council and represent opportunities for expansion and improvement that I would like to focus on if elected. From expanding access to sustained funding for quality rated early childhood education to building a more comprehensive apprenticeship model in Atlanta - I will be committed to the transformative power of education and equal access to those opportunities for all.

Section VI: Watershed

7. Considering the recurring and increasingly severe flooding events along Peachtree Creek, what specific policies or infrastructure investments would you advocate for to mitigate future flood risks and protect vulnerable neighborhoods? How will we pay for these?

Our aging water infrastructure is a serious challenge. Solving our underground water utility system issues is an expensive and unsexy allocation of funds and departmental attention. However, it is essential for the health of our neighbors and to be able to shoulder our future growth. It begins with identifying, prioritizing, and addressing acute storm water and sewer network improvements using modern predictive failure tools. We need to get more proactive and less reactive when it comes to the condition of our water mains. We must also continue our compliance with the federal consent decree.

This is imperative if we want to better manage stormwater runoff and optimize treatment plant function. I will push to expedite the upgrades of necessary equipment and operations



at the RM Clayton facility to reduce waste violations and the incurrence of associated fines as quickly as possible. All of this requires diligence in our investment of MOST dollars and seeking out state and federal assistance wherever possible.

8. The city has experienced multiple water main breaks and wastewater spills in recent years. What specific policies or oversight mechanisms would you support to prevent future infrastructure failures?

Water main breaks can cause significant disruption to both residential service and business revenue for extended periods of time. As a city, we have to elevate our commitment to providing state of the art service delivery. It begins with identifying, prioritizing, and addressing acute storm water and sewer network improvements using modern predictive failure tools. We need to get more proactive and less reactive when it comes to the condition of our water mains.

Section VII: Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO)

9. Buckhead contains the majority of Atlanta's tree canopy and has seen significant community concern regarding the finalized Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO). How would you balance the need for development with the goal of protecting Atlanta's urban forest, especially in rapidly growing neighborhoods? What new policies or solutions, if any, would you support to strengthen the Tree Protection Ordinance (TPO) code enforcement process, currently managed by the Arborist Division within the Department of City Planning?

As a City Council, it is our job to preserve our status as the "city in a forest". Atlanta is the only major metro region in the country that can technically be classified as a forest because of the extent of our tree canopy. In our oversight capacity via committee work in City Council, we should regularly fine tune the tree ordinance to enhance the positive impact of heat index reduction benefits related to shade, incentivize replenishment, and balance the protection of valuable mature trees with the sometimes necessary removal of old growth trees at maturity. All of this needs to be accomplished while continuing to expand our housing supply.

Section VIII: Final Thoughts – How Buckhead can Help the City of Atlanta

10. In what ways can the Buckhead community actively support the priorities you've set for your district or post within the City of Atlanta? Where do you believe Buckhead



can have the most meaningful impact in advancing Atlanta's overall growth, prosperity, and quality of life?

My ask is that you continue to encourage members of your organization to approach acute issues with an open mind and active dialogue with leadership from across the city. Many of the challenges facing District 2 communities are the same challenges Buckhead is likely struggling with as well. I look forward to collaborating with the Buckhead Coalition and council colleagues to maximize results through scaled, joint solution efforts. If elected, I will serve on council with all of Atlanta in mind and will partner with The Buckhead Coalition as I study challenges, research steps forward and make decisions on legislation.