

Candidate Questionnaire for Atlanta's 2025 Citywide Elections

Section I: Personal Background and Motivation

- Full Name: **Matt Rinker**
- Office Sought: **Atlanta City Council Post 1 At-Large**
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- Brief Biography (max 250 words):

I'm Matt Rinker, a neighborhood leader, housing professional, and advocate for a more transparent and connected Atlanta. I currently serve as President of the Peopletown Neighborhood and a former member of the Mayor's Advisory Board, where I've worked directly with city officials to deliver infrastructure improvements and ensure residents' voices are heard at City Hall. My professional career has been in real estate and property management, where I've served as a Regional Director for leading firms and earned my real estate license with Chapman Hall Premier Realtors. This work has given me a deep understanding of housing affordability, growth management, and how policy decisions impact families and neighborhoods. I've dedicated myself to building communities rooted in accountability, trust, and connection. Whether it's pushing for Beltline rail, advocating for affordable housing, or supporting safe, walkable streets, I believe in showing up, listening, and working together to create solutions. I'm running for the Post 1 At-Large seat because Atlanta deserves leaders who are present, honest, and committed to the entire city—including Buckhead. My campaign theme, "Atlanta Belongs to Us," reflects my belief that the future of our city should be shaped by the people who live here, not by entrenched insiders.

Section II: Priorities

1. What are your top three priorities if elected?

My top three priorities are expanding transit throughout the city, building transparency and ethics at City Hall and increasing public safety.

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?

Now that the Public Safety Training Center is built, we must make sure that we're providing the absolute best training for our first responders. That training must include robust racial and cultural sensitivity training, advanced de-escalation tactics, and training on how to spot mental illness. We must also train our officers how to use arrest diversion programs like PAD as well – which currently is drastically underutilized. At the same time, the Center should serve as a bridge to the broader community. Transparency is critical. I support opening the facility to public oversight, ensuring that curricula reflect community priorities, and providing opportunities for residents to engage with training programs so they understand how officers are being prepared and have confidence in our police.

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?

When delivery trucks and rideshare vehicles block travel lanes on corridors like Peachtree and Piedmont, they endanger pedestrians, delay emergency vehicles, and frustrate commuters. First, we need stricter enforcement of existing no-stopping laws, including fines and dedicated enforcement officers in high-traffic corridors. Technology such as curb management sensors and cameras can help identify violations in real time. Second, we must create designated loading and rideshare zones so that drivers have safe, legal places to stop without disrupting traffic. Many cities have successfully implemented “smart curb” policies that use signage, striping, and time-limited zones to balance business needs with traffic flow. As a Councilmember, I will work with APD, DOT, and the business community to implement practical, enforceable solutions that keep Atlanta moving safely.

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?

Having worked and lived at the Lindbergh MARTA station, I know first hand the pitfalls that have come with the project and throughout the greater area. First, we need to leverage MARTA's presence by attracting new housing, retail, and office projects that are walkable and connected to transit. That means working with MARTA, Invest Atlanta, and private developers to encourage investment that revitalizes vacant or underperforming properties. Second, I would support targeted public safety strategies - from increased patrols to better lighting and cameras - that make Lindbergh welcoming for residents, commuters, and visitors. This is a key gateway into Buckhead, and it must send a message of growth and opportunity, not neglect. Third, we must rebuild Piedmont Road to make it more inviting and safe for pedestrian traffic. By combining smart redevelopment with consistent enforcement and community partnership, we can reimagine Lindbergh as a thriving, safe, and attractive district that strengthens all of Buckhead and Atlanta.

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?

Safe, connected sidewalks are not just a convenience – they are an essential transit infrastructure. We must do better. First, I would push for dedicated funding streams to address the backlog of sidewalk work that needs to be completed. Our residents deserve sidewalks that can be easily traversed. Second, I support using impact fees and development requirements to accelerate sidewalk construction. New development projects should not just add sidewalks, but make improvements to the greater area. Finally, I would require the Department of Transportation to publish a citywide master plan for sidewalk repairs/installations with timelines so the process is transparent for residents and they can hold us accountable if projects are started on time.

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?
Sadly, the current plan presented by APS is a band-aid on a larger problem. The reality is that under-enrollment in some parts of Atlanta has left APS with more buildings than needed for the number of students. While not popular, APS must look at revising boundary lines for clusters to ensure that some areas are not overcrowded while others are under-enrolled. As a citywide Councilmember, I will work with APS to make sure that all neighborhoods are treated fairly throughout this process and in future

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?
As President of Peoplestown Neighborhood, which has a long history of flooding, I know firsthand the devastation that flooding events cause. These experiences taught me that we must be proactive in getting ahead of these events. First, we must modernize our stormwater infrastructure by investing in larger capacity culverts, upgraded drainage systems and green infrastructure so that runoff does not overwhelm our creeks. We must also adopt smarter land-use policies which include stricter requirements for onsite stormwater management in our new construction. Adopting incentives for green roofs and rain gardens are another avenue that the City can pursue. To fund these projects, I support expanding the stormwater fee on a fair, tiered basis so that properties that create the most runoff

contribute more to the fund. Unfortunately, our current councilmember (who sits on the Council Utility Committee) has attended less than 10% of Utility meetings where Watershed Management is held accountable for these such events.

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?

First, we must be proactive in investment and replacement by creating a capital improvement plan that identifies the most vulnerable water and sewer lines and creates a schedule for replacement before they fail. Second, I support creating a citizen and engineering advisory board that reviews Watershed Management plans, spending and timelines. Lastly, DWM must invest in smart technology with sensors and predictive technology that detect leaks and pressure changes in real time before they turn in ruptures.

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?

Our tree canopy is our greatest asset. It cools our neighborhoods, improves air quality, reduces flooding, and defines the character of our communities. I support three approaches: 1) The Arborist Division must be fully funded and staffed so that violations are caught, and penalties are meaningful. I support a public, online dashboard where residents can track tree removal permits, enforcement actions, and mitigation efforts in real time. 2) We should encourage development that integrates trees into site design using incentives for clustering buildings, preserving mature trees, and incorporating green buffers. Additionally, developers should know upfront what tree removal will cost their project. Therefore, arborist permitting should be at the start of the permitting process versus at the end as is with the current system. 3) When trees are removed and fees are collected, they

should be reinvested directly into the neighborhoods most impacted by the loss of canopy. That means replanting where trees were lost, not miles away in other parts of the city.

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?

Buckhead is one of Atlanta's strongest assets serving as an economic engine, a cultural hub, and community that continually steps up. Buckhead has had a history of cultivating public-private partnerships that improve infrastructure which can be used a guide for other areas of the city. Buckhead's prosperity should be paired with support for affordable housing and workforce initiatives, ensuring that the people who work in Buckhead can afford to live in Buckhead. Our current councilmember has taken Buckhead's support for granted. When I am in office, the Buckhead community will have a seat at the table and serve as a guide to how to get things done across the city.