

Candidate Pre-Interview Questionnaire

The Committee for a Better Atlanta (CBA) is a coalition of business organizations concerned about Atlanta. In 2009, CBA is interviewing candidates for mayor, City Council president and City Council with the intent of publishing a voter's guide of candidate evaluations. The evaluations will be based on the answers to the questions in this document, plus in-person interviews to be held this summer.

Your answers to these questions are very important to the CBA interview and evaluation process. ***Candidates who do not complete this questionnaire will not be scheduled for an interview with CBA.***

Please complete this questionnaire and deliver it to the Committee for a Better Atlanta so it arrives **no later than 5 p.m.**, July 31, 2009. Questionnaires can be filled out electronically and emailed to cwatkins@macoc.com, or mailed to:

**Committee for a Better Atlanta
235 International Blvd., NW
Atlanta, GA 30303
Attn: Che Watkins**

If you have any questions about completing the questionnaire – or about the CBA process – please contact Che Watkins at (404) 586-8468.

Candidate Information:

Name: LaShawn M. Hoffman

Position Sought: Atlanta City Council, District 4

Address: 1094 Welch Street

City, State, ZIP: Atlanta, GA 30310

Telephone: 678-949-8747 Cell phone: 404-668-4868

E-mail address: info@hoffmanforatlanta.com

Campaign Web site address: www.hoffmanforatlanta.com

Secondary contact information: (If you prefer that CBA direct scheduling inquiries to someone other than the candidate, check here. ✓)

Name: Lauren E Williams

Relationship to candidate: Campaign Manager

(e.g. Administrative assistant, campaign manager, etc.)

Address: 2285 Peachtree Rd, Unit 405

City, State, ZIP: Atlanta, GA 30309

Telephone: 678-949-8747 Cell phone: 404-695-8911

E-mail address: Lauren@hoffmanforatlanta.com

Please answer the questions in the space provided on this questionnaire.

1. In your opinion, what are the three greatest issues (problems or opportunities) facing Atlanta?

Opportunities:

1) To provide leadership on responsive, sustainable development.

Atlanta should adopt land use and zoning policies that put it at the forefront of sustainable urban practices. Some suggestions would be phased-in building codes that require highly energy efficient buildings, water conservation, clean-up and restoration of urban streams, greatly expanded mass transit, and rezoning of some land as 'urban agricultural' to encourage the production of fresh produce and other farm products for immediate sale both commercially and in neighborhood green markets. Also especially in redevelopment areas, there should be provisions for light industrial development to encourage the location of job-producing industry in town. The revamping of land uses and zoning to encourage more sustainable and complimentary uses can at once shape growth to produce more pleasant and enjoyable cityscapes, while also creating innovative opportunities for new business and industry.

2) To create a truly cosmopolitan, diverse urban center in the south connected globally through economics and cultural ties.

Economic development is a perennial challenge. The current economic downturn has devastated many of Atlanta's bedrock industries, including real estate, transportation, conventions and tourism, and retail services. In addition, there are doubts about the future supply of fresh water, as an adverse decision by a federal judge recently put our dependence on Lake Lanier in doubt. Add to all that a national trend toward energy efficiency and resource conservation, and you have the makings of a major economic development dilemma. But all these factors combine to suggest a fairly simple solution: we have to change our economic development model. There has to be an increased emphasis on denser, more compact development with mixed-uses, and reduced dependence on automobile commutes. But this means investing in infrastructure that supports live/work/play communities. Atlanta has to lead the way in sustainable development just as it has historically led the way in civil rights, regional aviation, the sunbelt growth surge, and other economic benchmarks. We have to create 24-hour entertainment districts to remain competitive as a convention destination, and we have to renew our commitment to mass transit by expediting projects such as the Belt Line and a multi-modal transportation center in the heart of downtown. The medical complex including Grady, Crawford Long, Piedmont, and Atlanta Medical Center along with our cluster of colleges and universities position the city to compete for 21st century bio-tech opportunities. In short, the city will have to be daring, innovative, and smart. It will have to compete. And city council will need leaders who are capable of making the appropriate economic development decisions that are cheaper, better, and faster. I am one such person.

Issue/Opportunity:

3) To address effectively its (the City's) resource management issues, especially with regard to water, public safety, and transportation/congestion (addressed later in the questionnaire).

The primary issue in Public Safety is numbers. We have to put more police officers on the street. We have to fully staff our fire and emergency crews. The number one service provided by local government is public safety. If public safety is in doubt, government isn't doing its job. Beyond putting more uniforms on the street, we must emphasize community policing. As a community-based developer working in neighborhoods hit hard by mortgage fraud and foreclosure, I see the potential for rehabilitating homes and offering strong economic incentives for police and fire personnel to live in the city. I think community policing is enhanced by having police living in the communities that they serve. And we have to retain our trained public safety personnel by paying them competitive salaries and offering a clear, merit-based career ladder. Atlanta cannot continue to be the training academy for public safety departments of surrounding jurisdictions simply because we cannot retain the officers we recruit.

2. Describe briefly your qualifications for holding this office. (Please answer in the space below, but you may also attach a resume or other description to provide us with additional detail.)

I have been a resident of Atlanta for more than 10 years and a resident of southwest Atlanta for more than 7 years. During my entire residency in the city I have been actively engaged in public service. Currently I serve as CEO of the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association, Inc. (PCIA), a non-profit, community-based, development organization. Under my leadership PCIA has been instrumental in the building of new, mixed-income housing (Heritage Square Apartments), tackling the dual problems of mortgage fraud and foreclosure, building a safer community through improved neighborhood/police cooperation, and creation of a strong neighborhood watch program. My background includes 3 terms as chair of Neighborhood Planning Unit-V, which reviews land use, zoning, and regulatory policy impacting the Pittsburgh, Mechanicsville and Adair Park neighborhoods in Council District 4, along with the Summerhill, Peoplestown and Capitol Gateway communities. Augmenting that is my participation in the Atlanta Planning and Advisory Board, which considers similar issues across the city as a whole. Consequently my knowledge of housing, economic development, and public policy issues in the District and throughout the city is extensive. Among my many community service activities I am a former member of the City of Atlanta Citizens Review Board, a Steering Committee member and Grants Development Co-Chair of the Atlanta Weed and Seed Program, and serve on the local school councils of two neighborhood schools in the Pittsburgh Community. My background as a business manager in the corporate as well as non-profit sectors, plus hands-on experience in building public/private development partnerships in the housing market make me uniquely qualified to step onto the city council as a productive, fully capable contributor from day one. Although I am specifically a candidate for Council District 4, my broad community activism and involvement have made me aware that many issues of my district are shared by other council districts and neighborhoods across the city. As council representative from District 4 I will have a responsibility to the constituents in my jurisdiction, but also to the city as a whole. My judgments and decisions will always be guided by a broad vision of what is best for the future of the City of Atlanta and what will make it become a national leader in business, commerce, economic development, and more.

3. What events or experiences caused you to decide to run for this office?

Three main experiences have given me the impetus to run for office: (1) lack of support from current elected officials, (2) the recognition of our changing composition of the city of Atlanta (and needing that reflected in office), and (3) the need for progressive economic development.

(1) As the CEO of a thriving community organization in District 4, I constantly found myself looking for support on city government initiatives often authored by our current elected officials. Whenever there was a strong need from community leaders and organizations around current issues our current elected officials were never to be found to bring these issues to the forefront.

(2) The recognition of the changing composition of our great City is another experience that has led me to run for office. News article after news article calls us one of the fastest growing cities in the world in terms of population, size, and economy. With this rapid growth comes a need for rapid response and transformation. Being attentive to these patterns and changes is essential to the success of our City. The current administration doesn't reflect that. Council leaders must be able to craft legislation that anticipates the impact of changes and rapid growth while also harnessing the momentum to move this City forward.

(3) Realizing the need for progressive economic development is the third experience that has prompted me to run for office. The need for progressive and positive economic development is imperative to the success of our district and our City. The current leadership has not done much in this area. With a total vision for revitalization and development, I feel I am equipped to bring this aspect to our City and District. My economic development plan has 4 basic components, including:

repopulating the District, attracting large-scale investment, continuing to improve our local School, and building merchant capacity and collaboration.

4. Please identify up to five organizations or individuals who are actively supporting your candidacy.

- 1. Mr. Armstead Salters, Principal, Gideons Elementary School**
- 2. Rev. Dennis A. Meredith, Pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Church**
- 3. Ms. Suna Om, Business Owner, West End**
- 4. Mtamanika Youngblood**
- 5. Nathaniel Smith**

5. The city government faces a \$50 million budget shortfall this fiscal year. How would you close the budget gap?

I would close the budget gap in a few ways:

- 1. Emphasize cost-cutting and greater efficiency**
- 2. Closely examine the budget to eliminate waste and optimize spending**
- 3. Outsourcing some government functions that can be done more efficiently through private industry**
- 4. Charge the actual cost of providing services to surrounding government jurisdictions (such as sewage)**
- 4. Optimize business opportunities for the city and bring in fresh revenue.**

6. Since 2004, the city's official goal has been to have 2,000 police officers. The Police Department is now at 1,615 officers. Do you support the goal? If so, how would you pay for the additional officers given the city's budget problems?

I do support this goal. As stated before, the primary issue in public safety is numbers. We have to put more police officers on the street. In order to do this, I would reduce contributions to the retirement fund and shift that money to increase new hiring and increase salaries. I would also revisit the budget as stated before through close examination to ensure that we are using every appropriate channel to fund our police department and ensure our safety.

7. Mayor Franklin has used tax-allocation districts and tax abatements to support redevelopment projects. What would you have the city government do to support desirable redevelopment projects in the years ahead?

TADS are great for encouraging longer-term, large-scale development of defined districts and tax abatements may be an appropriate for specific, smaller scaled problems.

In addition to these options, the City could also consider waiving or reducing licensing fees in targeted areas, such as vacant, dilapidated storefronts in struggling neighborhood commercial districts. The loss in short-term revenue from these actions will be more than made up from the increase in property valuation, sales tax streams, and other economic activity that successful business activity will spawn.

The City should also consider the responsible use of neighborhood stabilization funds and other federal grants. Through my work at PCIA, a \$2 million grant (the largest allocated to a community organization) from the city intended to promote redevelopment and reduce the effect of foreclosure was awarded to the historic Pittsburgh neighborhood. The stabilization program and award money will focus on purchasing abandoned and dilapidated properties and returning them to the market as affordable housing choices for those of all income levels, focusing on working families.

The City must actively consider out of the box strategies that don't only tax our citizens, but also yield real results for our residents.

8. Traffic congestion is a major problem in Atlanta. If you could implement only one initiative, enhancement or management change to reduce congestion in Atlanta in the next four years, what would it be? Note: This should be something within the city government's ability to implement.

Building the Belt Line and a multi-modal transit center are two obvious solutions to our traffic problems.

These facilities should network with MARTA, bringing efficient light rail service to a much larger number of travelers. This will bring more people to heavy rail capability without the huge expense of trying to expand the heavy rail system itself. The city can also help control congestion by simply discouraging the use of private automobiles downtown and by exercising better controls over parking. Within a well-defined district within the heart of the city core, the City of Atlanta should tax surface parking lots in the downtown area at a rate that would apply to the highest and best use of the land. Much land is being held 'fallow' in the heart of the city, denying the city the full stream of revenue it should generate, and also encouraging its inefficient use for surface parking of automobiles. Parking fees should also be raised and enforcement increased. Through tax and development incentives the city, in collaboration with surrounding counties, & MARTA should encourage the building of high-rise parking garages strategically located near surface transit such as train stations and major bus lines, and on/off ramps to the interstate highway system. This will encourage distance parking and the use of public transit into the city, while cutting auto commute times and distances. For the foreseeable future, Atlanta will continue to have a high concentration of jobs and workers will be tempted to drive into the city. Better planning for parking and disincentives aimed at the use of automobiles downtown will be positive steps toward managing congestion. Because of the large amount of federal and state dollars involved in transportation, the best government agency to coordinate all this is probably the Georgia Regional Transit Authority.

9. In your opinion, what are the three greatest infrastructure problems facing Atlanta over the next four years? Please rank them in terms of importance and urgency.

1. Transportation - Increasing public transit and offering a wider variety of options for mobility is one of the City's greatest challenges. It is generally acknowledged that congestion and its resulting waste and inefficiency are damaging to the City's long-term economic prospects. Addressing transportation infrastructure issues has to be a priority.

2. Greenspace - The City will develop more compactly in the future because of demographic trends as well as an emphasis on conservation, which will lead to smaller housing footprints. Higher density living will have to be complimented by a greater investment of open space for recreation.

3. Water - The City's access to fresh water has been put in doubt by recent court decisions concerning Lake Lanier. Attention to identifying, securing and providing for the distribution of sufficient sources of drinking water should rank high among the City's infrastructure concerns.

LaShawn M. Hoffman

Candidate for Atlanta City Council District 4

LaShawn M. Hoffman is one of Atlanta's most distinguished young civic leaders. A 7-year resident of the city's southwest neighborhoods, Mr. Hoffman lives and works in Atlanta's historic Pittsburgh community. He currently serves as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association, Inc. a neighborhood-based community development corporation.

With more than 10 years of active service to Atlanta's local and regional organizations, Mr. Hoffman has built an exceptional record of experience and leadership. He is a former chair of Neighborhood Planning Unit-V, which serves the Adair Park, Mechanicsville, Summerhill, Pittsburgh, Capitol Gateway and Peoplestown neighborhoods. Reflecting his strong commitment to economic development in Atlanta, Mr. Hoffman also served on many community boards and county panels including the Fulton County Community Development Block Grants Citizens Review Panel, the Mayor's Office Weed & Seed program, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site Team, Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership's Mixed-Income Communities Initiative and the Atlanta Housing Association of Neighborhood-based Developers (AHAND).

As a member of the local school council boards for C.L. Gideons Elementary School and W.L. Parks Middle School Mr. Hoffman is a noted advocate for improving educational opportunities for Atlanta students. A long-time champion of public safety he created a "Best Practice Community Safety Plan" that has been adopted and implemented by several Atlanta neighborhoods. He currently serves on the Atlanta Citizen Review Board, which provides citizen oversight for the Atlanta Police Department and the Atlanta Department of Corrections.

Mr. Hoffman is an active member of the Tabernacle Baptist Church where he formerly served as church administrator. His other numerous civic activities include membership in the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Coalition, as well as participation in the Southwest Neighborhood Planning Unit Coalition, Equity Atlanta, Georgia Stand Up! Policy Institute and the Georgia Academy for Economic Development, among others.

Mr. Hoffman is more than a community resident; he is a community advocate, leader and friend. He brings the energy, experience, and talent needed to help make Atlanta a safer, cleaner, place. On November 3, 2009, elect LaShawn M. Hoffman for Atlanta City Council District 4 - the Community's Choice for Council