

# Atlanta Candidate Survey on Affordable Housing

CANDIDATES FOR DISTRICTS 1, 2, AND 3



Candidate Survey  
Conducted by:

CITYFORALL



**Housing as an Issue of Importance**

How do you rank these issues for importance to Atlanta’s future, with 1 being the highest priority?	Candidate						
	Council District						
	1		2				3
	Bill Powell	Carla Smith	Amir Farokhi	Zelda Jackson	Nick Mulkey	Lauren Welsh	Greg Clay
Economic Development / Jobs	1	3	7	2	6	6	2
Education	5	5	1	1	1	4	4
Environment / Sustainability	9	7	9	7	7	7	7
Housing Affordability	4	1	4	3	2	1	3
Infrastructure	8	6	2	8	5	5	5
Property Tax Assessment	7	9	8	4	9	8	9
Public Safety	3	2	5	6	3	2	1
Transportation	2	4	3	9	4	3	8
Water	6	8	6	5	8	9	6
<b>Offer any issues you believe are important to Atlanta's future not listed above</b>							
Ex-offender re-entry				✓			
Fair living wage for all jobs in the City of Atlanta	✓						
Equity and equality, those all of these issues are tightly linked and related			✓				
Socioeconomic Mobility: This would be number 3 on my list.					✓		
Revitalize and update the NPU system to be a more robust civic engagement model.						✓	
Arts and Culture would be an additional focus area to this list coming in between 6 and 10.							✓

City for All / TransFormation Alliance Affordable Housing Council Candidates Survey – Districts 1,2 and 3

Candidate		Please explain your views, overall, on the housing challenges faced by the City of Atlanta and what you believe the role of City government is in providing affordable housing?
District 1	Bill Powell	Confiscation and removal of abandoned/blighted property – I would propose a hefty tax rate of 10x the neighborhood rate for abandoned/blighted homes and commercial property in District 1. I would create a file for each property along with photos and any police reports of criminal activity on the site.
	Carla Smith	No response
District 2	Amir Farokhi	As Atlanta grows, so too does the cost of living, especially in District 2. It is an undeniable and unfortunate fact that it's becoming harder and harder for working-and-middle class Atlantans to find a place to live in District 2. This affordability challenge requires a broad policy approach that includes increasing the supply of affordable housing stock, protecting senior homeowners, increasing access to transportation, and ensuring proximity to jobs, shopping, and healthcare. In addition to the transportation priorities listed above, I believe 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, lobbying to increase the homestead exemption for those over 65 and increasing property tax assistance for low-income residents, and exploring density bonuses along major corridors.
	Zelda Jackson	The role of City government in providing affordable housing is simply making sure the programs we have in place are performing what they were designed to do. For instance, Invest Atlanta needs to make sure guidelines are working to make affordable housing available to everyone, and the Beltline needs to have affordable housing as it was designed to have in the initial planning stages.
	Nick Mulkey	Atlanta, like many others cities, is facing an affordable housing crisis due to 1. An increasing wealth gap, 2. An increase in the demand for urban living, and 3. An increase in construction costs due to labor. We can do very little about #1 as it is largely driven by macroeconomic forces, and #2 is good for us. This means that there are very limited ways for us to address affordable housing. The traditional way is to directly fund the creation of units, incentivize/mandate developers to create them. These highly inefficient ways will lead us to exchanging millions of dollars for a few hundred units which would only scratch the surface of our demand for affordable housing. My proposal is that the city actively recruit and incentivize developers who use the modular construction building method. Pre-fabricated modular construction is a method used around the world that cuts construction costs in half by greatly reducing the amount of time of a project. This allows developers to tap into a larger market with a lower price point but retain the same profit margins as a luxury project. This would spur the creation of hundreds of affordable units per project versus hundreds of units in total output.

Candidate		Please explain your views, overall, on the housing challenges faced by the City of Atlanta and what you believe the role of City government is in providing affordable housing?
District 2	Lauren Welsh	Our city leadership simply has not prioritized housing equity in the last 8 to 10 years. It's only now a topic of conversation because Nathaniel Smith and Ryan Gravel resigned from the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership and made it a hot topic of the media and therefore mayoral campaigns. We are so behind in addressing affordable housing in this city that anything less than an extremely aggressive housing policy is unacceptable. Instead of considering housing for those making 80% AMI, we need to be creating policies to support those making 15% to 30% AMI. With more than half of all Atlantans spending 30% or more of their income on housing, we need to focus on what our real goal is and how we're going to get there. We must place a high value on creating diverse socioeconomic communities in Atlanta, and we can only do that when we have a city leadership that prioritizes affordable housing.
District 3	Greg Clay	The city should have been more proactive as it relates to displacement issues in District 3. Affordable housing options have been dwindling for years, boxing families out of the area

City for All / TransFormation Alliance Affordable Housing Council Candidates Survey – Districts 1,2 and 3

Candidate		Do you have a specific plan, legislative initiatives or structural/operational changes to City government you will champion around affordable housing?
District 1	Bill Powell	Enforcement of affordable housing on the Beltline Overlay District.
	Carla Smith	No response
District 2	Amir Farokhi	See response to previous question. In addition: (1) inclusionary zoning that provides housing for those who earn 30-80% of Area Median Income in areas where public investment has created the incentive for development; (2) reduction in parking requirements for developments near transit; and (3) grow and permanently establish an affordable housing trust fund.
	Zelda Jackson	I believe the City Atlanta must have legislation for rent control, and every developer must have a portion of their housing for affordable housing. The City of Atlanta can give incentives to these developers, and fine them if they do not adhere to the guidelines which will prohibit them to build in Atlanta again.
	Nick Mulkey	Yes. 1. An inclusionary zoning policy that does not have a buyout clause (current proposals would allow developers to pay out of the affordable units requirement). 2. The removal of parking minimums in our building code. Mandating parking drives up the costs of development by several million dollars. This increased cost translates into higher rents. 3. A resolution directing Invest Atlanta to recruit a prefab modular construction company
	Lauren Welsh	I propose several changes to the way we regulate and think about housing. First, I will support the Department of City Planning’s work to update our 1982 zoning code that will encourage and regulate a variety of types of housing for those at all ages and stages in life as well as at all socioeconomic levels. This includes zoning that supports “missing middle” housing, accessory dwelling units, and more. Second, I will strengthen the capacity and resources of our Atlanta Land Bank Authority. We had the opportunity to do this during the Great Recession when home prices were particularly low, but we didn’t prioritize it. In Genesee, Michigan, they’ve had huge success with their land bank. In their first 10 years of operation, there were more than 19,000 foreclosures, of which the Genesee Land Bank took over 75%. Third, I will support mandatory inclusionary zoning policies that require affordable housing units at all new developments. And I will work with MARTA to create permanent supportive housing at their transit-oriented developments. Lastly, I will focus on property tax reform that keeps our taxes at a consistent level so we don’t have the massive increases like the recent ones in Fulton County.
District 3	Greg Clay	Site control for more locations within the district, along with partnerships with more impact investors that look at triple-bottom lines. These specific investors can get credits for development when focusing on economically depressed areas. I would also like to pursue legislation that identifies the areas in the city that most need affordable housing and create specific development incentives for housing and retail developers for consumer goods.

**Income Level Commitments for City Investments**

Candidate		Annual household income level you'd commit to for:		
		Prioritizing the use of Housing Trust Fund revenue	Producing housing with Inclusionary Zoning	Prioritizing City funding for Housing Preservation
District 1	Bill Powell	\$33,750 (50% AMI) or less	\$33,750 (50% AMI) or less	\$33,750 (50% AMI) or less
	Carla Smith	No response	No response	No response
District 2	Amir Farokhi	\$33,750 (50% AMI) or less	\$67,500 (100% AMI) or less	\$67,500 (100% AMI) or less
	Zelda Jackson	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less
	Nick Mulkey	\$40,500 (60% AMI) or less	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less	\$33,750 (50% AMI) or less
	Lauren Welsh	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less
District 3	Greg Clay	\$24,300 (30% AMI) or less	\$33,750 (50% AMI) or les	\$33,750 (50% AMI) or les

**Housing Trust Fund**

Candidate		At what level of investment would you be willing to commit local public funds for capitalizing a Housing Trust Fund by year 2021?				
		\$50 million	\$150 million	\$250 million	\$350 million	Other
District 1	Bill Powell					✓ \$10 million
	Carla Smith					
District 2	Amir Farokhi					✓ I think a significant investment in public funds is important but until we have a citywide affordable housing plan, it's premature to name a commitment with any accuracy/equity. Between all the funding sources we can draw on (public, private, state, federal, etc.), the public commitment should be substantive.
	Zelda Jackson					✓ Authoring a Housing Trust Fund without having access to the budget, I cannot rationally give an exact number. Council will have to determine where monies would come from? Will the City of Atlanta have monies allocated from the Federal Government, or will be operating within the City of Atlanta's budget?
	Nick Mulkey		✓			
	Lauren Welsh					✓ Instead of picking a number, I would approach the problem from where we are to where we should be. With 50% of Atlantans spending 30% or more of their income on housing, our goal should be to reduce that number of Atlantans to 10% and then dedicate the right amount of funding.
District 3	Greg Clay		✓			

City for All / TransFormation Alliance Affordable Housing Council Candidates Survey – Districts 1,2 and 3

Candidate		What sources of local public funds would you be willing to commit to using to capitalize a Housing Trust Funds? Select all that apply.		
		Annual Budget Allocation	Dedicated Source of Revenue. Even though state approval may be required	Other
District 1	Bill Powell	✓		
	Carla Smith			
District 2	Amir Farokhi		✓	
	Zelda Jackson			✓ Both. I would again need to see the budget, and hopefully an annual budget, and new source of revenue through state approval can fund the Housing Trust Fund.
	Nick Mulkey		✓	
	Lauren Welsh	✓	✓	
District 3	Greg Clay		✓	

**Inclusionary Zoning**

Question	Candidate						
	Council District						
	1		2			3	
	Bill Powell	Carla Smith	Amir Farokhi	Zelda Jackson	Nick Mulkey	Lauren Welsh	Greg Clay
Indicate your level of commitment for supporting a city-wide mandatory Inclusionary Zoning ordinance?							
1 – Not Committed							
2	✓		✓				
3							
4 – Totally Committed				✓	✓	✓	✓
What incentives would you commit to approve as part of an Inclusionary Zoning ordinance? Select all that apply							
None	✓						
Tax abatement				✓		✓	
Density bonuses			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reduced parking minimums			✓		✓	✓	
Lower permit fees			✓		✓		
Expedited permitting			✓		✓		✓
N/A, I'm not at all committed to IZ							
Other (please specify)			✓				

Farokhi: The above format leaves little room for discussion of a complex issue. I'm fully committed to IZ where there has been public investment/incentives and where there is access to transit.

**Housing Preservation**

At what level are you committed to:	Candidate						
	Council District						
	1		2			3	
	Bill Powell	Carla Smith	Amir Farokhi	Zelda Jackson	Nick Mulkey	Lauren Welsh	Greg Clay
Requiring public investment in affordable housing achieve long term (30 years or more) or permanent affordability?							
1 – Not Committed							
2							
3	✓						
4 – Totally Committed			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specific City investment in Community Land Trusts to achieve permanent affordability for subsidized housing units?							
1 – Not Committed							
2	✓				✓		
3							
4 – Totally Committed			✓	✓		✓	✓
Specific City investment to preserve existing affordable units with extended, expanded or new subsidies?							
1 – Not Committed							
2	✓						
3							✓
4 – Totally Committed			✓	✓	✓	✓	

**Gentrification and Displacement**

Candidate		How would you rate gentrification and displacement as a priority for the City, and what role do you see government playing to address this issue?
District 1	Bill Powell	No response
	Carla Smith	No response
District 2	Amir Farokhi	This should be a high priority for the City. The first step at mitigating displacement is preserving the ability of existing homeowners to stay in their homes. We have traditionally not been active in doing so. Government can play a role in helping enact policies that protect longtime and low-income homeowners and work with the philanthropic and non-profit community to provide resources for home repair and property tax assistance.
	Zelda Jackson	I have a whole section on my website dedicated to combat gentrification at <a href="https://zeldajackson.com">https://zeldajackson.com</a> I have not read a plan from the City of Atlanta to combat gentrification. The City of Atlanta should make it a top priority to address these issues of gentrification in legislation. We should have safeguards for our seniors, disable, and lower income families.
	Nick Mulkey	I would rate this in the top 5 of priorities. I believe the governments role in this is to establish policy that helps those who lived in the community stay.
	Lauren Welsh	Minimizing displacement must be a very high priority for the City. City government can use a variety of approaches to address this. First, we need to make sure that if residents are on a fixed income (i.e. seniors) then their property taxes must be fixed. Second, we need to focus on property tax reform that minimizes large shifts in property taxes each year. There should only be moderate increases each year, and if the value of the home goes up significantly, then the property taxes can go up that amount only when sold. Third, we need to create homestead tax exemptions for people who are making improvements to their homes as well as to those who've been in their homes for a long period of time.
District 3	Greg Clay	I would like for all people to be able to live in the city, experiencing a great quality of life. This is a top 5 priority for me.

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Level of commitment to adopting gentrification and displacement policies or actions, even if state legislative approval is required?:	Candidate						
	Council District						
	1		2			3	
	Bill Powell	Carla Smith	Amir Farokhi	Zelda Jackson	Nick Mulkey	Lauren Welsh	Greg Clay
Increased homestead exemptions							
1 – Not Committed							
2							
3					✓		✓
4 – Totally Committed	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Tax abatement / deferral							
1 – Not Committed							
2							✓
3			✓				
4 – Totally Committed				✓	✓	✓	
City investment for rehab/maintenance loans for home and apartment owners							
1 – Not Committed							
2					✓		
3							
4 – Totally Committed			✓	✓		✓	✓
Eviction prevention and reform							
1 – Not Committed							
2							
3			✓				✓
4 – Totally Committed				✓	✓	✓	

**Living Transit Fund**

Living Transit Fund (LTF)	Candidate						
	Council District						
	1		2				3
	Bill Powell	Carla Smith	Amir Farokhi	Zelda Jackson	Nick Mulkey	Lauren Welsh	Greg Clay
Are you aware of the LTF Proposal?							
Yes			✓	✓		✓	✓
No					✓		
Level of commitment to support the LTF proposal (if it's determined to be a legal use of transit referendum revenue)?							
1 – Not Committed							
2							
3						✓	
4 – Totally Committed			✓	✓	✓		✓

**Guiding Principles**

Rank the guiding principles listed below in order of importance to you for developing housing policy, with 1 being of highest importance.	Candidate						
	Council District						
	1		2				3
	Bill Powell	Carla Smith	Amir Farokhi	Zelda Jackson	Nick Mulkey	Lauren Welsh	Greg Clay
Recognize the value of neighborhood diversity and equitable growth outcomes			5	8	6	3	4
Make mitigating displacement and preserving existing affordable housing immediate priorities			3	2	5	5	3
Dedicate a source of local public revenue to sustain production and preservation			9	10	4	6	10
Target investment to the greatest need and to achieve long-term or permanent affordability			6	5	7	7	9
Be transparent and accountable in planning and implementation			7	1	3	1	2
Restore lost homeownership and household wealth in underwater single-family neighborhoods			10	4	9	8	8
Strategically target investment to both revitalizing and stable communities			4	6	8	9	1
Link transit and housing affordability			1	3	1	4	5
Require green, energy efficient design and construction			8	9	10	10	7
Ensure City investment creates community benefit and protects against displacement of low-income homeowners and renters.			2	7	2	2	6

City for All / TransFormation Alliance Affordable Housing Council Candidates Survey – Districts 1,2 and 3

Candidate		List any guiding principles not appearing above to which you are committed, and tell us where they rank.
District 1	Bill Powell	No response
	Carla Smith	No response
District 2	Amir Farokhi	Ensure ability to age-in-place in housing affordability policies and efforts.
	Zelda Jackson	No response
	Nick Mulkey	No response
	Lauren Welsh	No response
District 3	Greg Clay	No response

**Closing Statements**

Candidate		Do you have anything else to share that would help us understand how you view the issue of housing affordability and accessibility or actions you would take to address those issues?
District 1	Bill Powell	No response
	Carla Smith	No response
District 2	Amir Farokhi	Atlanta's strength lies, in large part, with its social, generational, and economic diversity. As we grow, our city must remain a place where people of all incomes can find a home and build a sustainable life. Housing affordability is also an economic development and transportation issue. The closer one can live to their place of work, the more livable the city becomes for all of us and the more businesses can flourish with a reliable workforce. Among the strategies that I believe we should employ include: (a) Inclusionary zoning that provides housing for those who earn 20-80% of Area Median Income ("AMI"), in areas where public investment has created the incentive for development (e.g., the Beltline overlay); (b) Density bonuses along corridors that are appropriate for density (e.g., Ponce de Leon, Boulevard, Moreland). This will allow developers to build more units and more floors in exchange for more affordable housing units. (c) Work with AHA and developers to ensure low-income and workforce housing for those making around AMI, an additional area of need in the city; (d) Support tax abatements and expansion of the homestead exemption for seniors on fixed income; (e) Support selling vacant city-owned land to true affordable housing developers; (f) Explore the utility of a city affordable housing fund that developers can pay into to support development of affordable housing units (see, e.g., Los Angeles); and (f) Protect and promote low-rise, "missing middle" apartments and allow accessory dwelling units.
	Zelda Jackson	I believe Atlanta should have a re-entry program for the homeless and ex-offender. Our homeless should not feel as if they have committed a crime for being homeless. We must not lump a homeless individual in one category either. Services must be available for the mentally challenge individual, drug addiction, financial, and fleet from law. Also, I would employ these same principles to ex-offenders giving that individual assistance, employment, and housing as well
	Nick Mulkey	My goal is to see Atlanta become the premier example of what a city of mixed income communities looks like. We must integrate the classes for the sake of stability, vibrancy, and economic development. We can solve many social ills by following the mixed income, mixed-use model.

Candidate		Do you have anything else to share that would help us understand how you view the issue of housing affordability and accessibility or actions you would take to address those issues?
District 2	Lauren Welsh	As evidenced by the sale of Underground Atlanta, Turner Field, Fort McPherson and the Civic Center, the current community engagement process for the City of Atlanta is broken. Whether the community input is gathered through the creation of a Community Benefits Agreement or through NPU and neighborhood organization leadership, the end result must be the same – our communities MUST be part of the planning process. We have an excellent Commissioner of Planning and we also have the recently created City Design Project. We need to be using that guide as well as the knowledge and input of our Department of City Planning to both share knowledge about smart urban design principles as well as to listen to community input and concerns. It needs to be a two-way conversation. The City of Atlanta will double in population in the next 20 years, and while I personally find that growth very exciting, many Atlantans (particularly ones who have been here a long time) are fearful of that growth. We need to hear their concerns and communicate in such a way that residents begin to understand that a more urban environment is an improvement to quality of life, not a negative.
District 3	Greg Clay	We are in a housing crisis because we did not prioritize policies, resources, and assets to address short and midterm needs. As a potential councilmember, and 4th generation Atlantan, my duty is to ensure that future generations from all backgrounds can enjoy the best Atlanta has to offer.