

# John Eaves

## Mayoral Forum on Greenspace Responses

### **1. What do you believe is the single most pressing issue impacting Atlanta's urban forest and greenspace, and how would you solve that issue?**

The single most pressing issue impacting the urban forest of Atlanta is uncontrolled growth in areas that are becoming saturated with new construction in such areas as Midtown, Buckhead, and Old Fourth Ward.

From an aerial view of Atlanta, there are clear fault lines that divide the tree canopy along the Peachtree Road corridor and Ponce de Leon Road in Old Fourth Ward. There needs to be a greater distribution of growth in areas south of I-20, with a focus on infill development of vacant industrial and commercial properties in such communities as Castleberry Hills, Grove Park, Pittsburgh, Mechanicsville, Thomasville, and West End. This can be achieved by incentivizing developers to build new construction projects through public financing by Invest Atlanta, tax credits from the Fulton County Tax Assessor's Office, or obtaining "opportunity zone" designation by the State of Georgia.

### **2. The community is frustrated with widespread tree destruction and removal on teardown/infill sites. Would you support tree ordinance changes that limit impervious surface and total clear-cutting?**

During my first term as Mayor, I would explore a legal basis to impose a 1 to a 2-year moratorium on new building construction in areas north and east of downtown, while incentivizing growth through commercial tax abatements in areas to the south and west of downtown. Further, I will adopt an "environmental justice" compliance regulation to the City's Zoning Ordinance, which will protect communities from the negative consequences of misguided development in distressed communities. I will also champion changes to city zoning regulations that would strengthen the tree ordinance that limits impervious surface and total clear-cutting.

### **3. How would you get the development community on board with growing and building our city while protecting our greenspace?**

I believe that development and growth in an evenly distributed way is a plus for developers and the city as a whole. As Mayor, I will use my office to bring the development community together to foster a shared vision of balanced growth while preserving green space. I believe that smart balanced growth can be a win-win for neighborhood interest and developers. Additionally, Invest Atlanta and the Fulton Development authority should adopt a joint policy of granting tax abatements only to new construction projects in distressed communities.

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### **4. As Mayor, what would you do to evaluate the current state of maintenance of our park system?**

Among my first actions as Mayor, I would conduct a full assessment and evaluation of all City of Atlanta departments, programs, and services. With this assessment and evaluation, I would develop a comprehensive strategy to address unmet needs, eliminate duplication, and make the necessary budgetary adjustments to deliver more efficient services, including the maintenance of the park system.

### **5. How would you make the case for increased funding for park maintenance? Are there specific funding sources you would consider for park funding aside from general funds?**

I am committed to increased funding for the maintenance of parks in Atlanta. The maintenance of parks is important from both an aesthetic and public safety perspective. Good clean functioning parks can also lead to better health outcomes and generate cohesive communities. We should consider whether or not voters would be willing to approve a special set-aside tax for parks and greenspace, similar to the T-SPLOST which funds transportation projects.

### **6. Do you believe we need more parks and protected greenspace? Are you in favor of convening a new Parks and Greenspace Task Force?**

I fervently believe that parks and green space can significantly enhance the quality of life of residents in Atlanta, and they can result in better health outcomes for children and the elderly when regularly utilized. The parks and green space footprint of Atlanta can be expanded through a partnership with the City of Atlanta, the Atlanta Public School System, Fulton County Government, Department of Transportation, MARTA and the private sector. Each of these entities currently operates in its silo, and each has undesignated green space that can be considered parks for recreational purposes, however, through a collaborative effort, great things can happen in the City. As Mayor, I would re-establish the Parks and Greenspace Task Force with representatives from the Atlanta Public School System, Fulton County, and the private sector.

### **7. Providing specific details, how would you develop a plan for our city that includes both future growth and our urban forest?**

In my role as chairman of the County and during my time in the Peace Corps, I have seen firsthand how we can achieve this goal. There is a critical need to develop a futuristic master plan for the growth and development of the City of Atlanta until the year 2040. This plan should be developed by multiple stakeholders with facilitation by the Atlanta Regional Commission.

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### **8. How do you see the City's role changing as maintenance of the Atlanta BeltLine becomes a more prominent issue?**

The BeltLine will become a part of the regional transit system for the Metro Atlanta Region and is likely to fall under the auspices of MARTA. The City will continue to play a leadership role in the Beltline as an active participant and influencer of ARC and MARTA.

### **9. What is the likelihood that the City will increase its commitment to maintenance of the BeltLine as this is critical to securing philanthropic support to make the Atlanta BeltLine a reality?**

Residents and stakeholders will have the final say on how the City proceeds--with not only the Beltline--but all projects that impact the quality of life in Atlanta. Like I have led as Chairman of Fulton County, bringing groups together to achieve a common goal, I will provide the same leadership at City Hall on this issue.

### **10. What would you do in your first 100 days as Mayor to preserve and maintain the City's parks and greenspaces?**

As stated earlier, among my first actions as Mayor would be conducting a full assessment and evaluation of all City of Atlanta departments, programs, and services, which will include parks and green space.

### **11. The city of Atlanta relies on Lake Lanier and the Chattahoochee River for high quality drinking water. And, when completed, the Bellwood Quarry will provide 30-days of emergency water supply for the city. What can the city do to cultivate a "culture of conservation" to ensure the city's water supply, wastewater, and storm water management are resilient?**

During my tenure as Chairman of Fulton County, we have had a terrific program that involves elementary-school children through high-school-aged young people promoting conservation and clean water. I believe we can echo this success at the city. When our kids talk about conservation and other critical issues, people tend to listen and take note. It's worked for the County, it will work at the City. Kids can be central in the effort to conserve our natural resources.

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**12. The city of Atlanta holds the permit to the largest wastewater treatment facilities in the southeast, but does not treat its effluent to the highest quality for return into the Chattahoochee River. Will your administration invest in the health of our river and upgrade its wastewater treatment capabilities to current technological standards?**

As the leader of the largest local government in Georgia, I co-authored a resolution to support "Chattahoochee Now," which is an intergovernmental initiative that partners with the private sector to protect the Chattahoochee River for the entirety of Fulton County from north to south. The Chattahoochee River is the primary source of water in Atlanta, and it should be protected and it WILL BE PROTECTED when I am Mayor.