

# Glenn S. Wrightson

## Mayoral Forum on Greenspace

### Question Responses

#### Q1

*The premise that parks should be safe, crime free areas has been challenged by recent senseless acts of violence that took the life of Jakari Dillard at Anderson Park pool and the horrific murder of Katie Janness at Piedmont Park.*

**How will you address the concerns around safety in our parks?**

Coordinate with GA Power Co to add outdoor lighting – research potential benefit of nighttime motion detectors

Install standard and night vision cameras in and around parks – and have them tied into the public / private coordinated camera security system – also adding police officers city wide

#### Q2

*To advance a sustainable future for Atlanta, we must focus attention on both our urban spaces and our natural spaces and resources. Atlanta's projected population growth of approximately 106,000 people over the next ten years further stresses a current challenge of making intentional decisions regarding our use of land that support our local ecology, our economy, and our quality of life in equal measure.*

**As the city grows, how will you balance the need to protect trees and greenspace with other city priorities (namely public safety and affordable housing) which are often positioned in either / or terms?**

I will balance the need to protect trees and greenspace with other priorities by devoting to our tree canopy and greenspace its' deserved consideration so that it remains intact and expanded to the maximum extent possible. Zoning and permitting approvals must include a thorough evaluation of projects' impact on trees and needs for greenspace.

#### Q3

*Data shows that only 6% of Atlanta's land is dedicated to parks, far below the national average of 15%. Meanwhile, 28% of Atlanta residents do not live within a 10-minute walk of a park. Recent acquisitions like Lake Charlotte, the opening of Westside Park, and the continued development of the Atlanta BeltLine Trail are a step in the right direction, but the city needs significantly more parkland.*

**How will you fund critical land acquisition needs for Atlanta over the next four years and ensure a funding stream is available for future acquisitions as the city grows?**

I shall fund acquisitions thru all available options including issuing bonds, allocating funds from current operations, and private sourcing – I would not be able to “ensure” a funding system for future acquisitions absent changing the City Charter. Anyone candidate that responds they “ensure” funding is giving an empty promise to get elected.

## Q4

**How will you ensure that major new park investments do not displace existing members of the community who cannot afford higher rents and taxes that are likely to result from quality-of-life improvements?**

I could not ensure new investments would not displace legacy residents absent having a change of the taxing mechanism thru the State legislature / county assessor’s office.

Any candidate that responds that they “ensure” no displacement is giving an empty promise to get elected.

## Q5

*Through the public engagement process for ActivateATL (the Department of Parks and Recreation’s 10-year master plan), we learned that:*

- *24% of City of Atlanta residents reported that park facilities are not well maintained. This is double the national average.*
- *Park maintenance and improvement-related issues are the #1 reason that prevents Atlantans from using parks and rec facilities.*

**How will you address the lack of adequate resources and funding for park maintenance, especially as new parks and trails are developed?**

While one may accept the results of the public engagement, I doubt the # 1 reason citizens don’t use parks is because of maintenance and improvement-related issues. Instead, I submit there are personal reasons.

The lack of adequate funding to parks is not due to a lack of resources. The lack of funding is due to the alternative prioritization of funding. Persons in positions of authority must possess the desire to allocate funds to support existing and acquire new parks. The Mayor proposes the budget and the City Council members then may adjust and adopt the budget. As Mayor, I would increase the proportional allocation of funds to parks.

## Q6

*While greater public investment is necessary to build and maintain a world-class park system, private dollars are being left on the table. The philanthropic community has expressed to its nonprofit partners an interest in additional investment in greenspace if the City committed additional dollars to maintenance. Further, a lack of adequate resources for park maintenance puts park conservancies and friends groups in the position of compensating for a lack of public resources instead of leveraging private dollars to make good parks even better.*

**How will you work with park conservancies, “Friends” groups and the philanthropic community to ensure all available dollars are leveraged for a better park system?**

I shall require that monies are spent for the purposes for which they are donated. Shall make a cross-reference of targeted donations to targeted use – then monitor and correct as needed.

## Q7

*Considering the multitude of new parks coming online, the infrastructure challenges of existing greenspaces, and the chronic understaffing of the Department of Parks and Recreation, green job training and workforce development presents an opportunity to increase employment (particularly amongst youth of color aged 16-25 who are not college bound) while also addressing the needs of Atlanta’s parks department and park system.*

**How would your administration support and expand green job training programs?**

I would not support any programs that intentionally provide greater opportunities to one race over another. I am in favor of green job training as there is currently and will be a need for more Parks and Recs. employees who have gained an appreciation for a career in park-related employment.

## Q8

*Equity is about creating policies, structures, processes, and tools for All people to prosper including low-income and people of color.*

**What policies, structures, processes, and tools will you advance in your administration to ensure that historically disenfranchised communities receive equitable investments in their parks and greenspaces as well as the public resources necessary to maintain them?**

I would require equal attention and proportional allocation of resources to every park. At a minimum, all parks to be “brought up” and maintained at an acceptable threshold level.

## Q9

*The Atlanta City Design—adopted into the city charter in 2017—aims to protect and expand Atlanta’s watersheds, forest, and habitat in the face of rapid urbanization. It proposes additional large investments in new parks along with an*

*approach to growth that focuses new development in appropriate areas, while protecting ecologically valuable areas as conservation corridors.*

**How will your administration use the framework laid out in Atlanta City Design to protect existing trees and preserve nature while growing and building our city?**

My administration would abide by the “aim” of The Atlanta City Design by not taking action which conflicts with said goals. I am in favor of slower growth and not continuing to reward developers. The City does not need seek maximum growth in the shortest timeframe. We can grow slower longer – and better manage all of our affairs

## **Q10**

*We struggle to slow the loss of mature trees and increase the planting of new. For the last three years, there has been an effort to rewrite Atlanta's Tree Protection Ordinance so that we can better enforce the protection of trees from illegal and unnecessary removal.*

**Do you support a stronger tree ordinance and how will you address issues of enforcement?**

Yes – I support protecting trees through a stronger tree ordinance. Increase fines for the indiscriminate cutting down of trees.

## **Q11**

*Impervious surfaces like roads, parking lots, and roofs prevent rainwater from soaking into the ground. When it rains in an urban area like Atlanta, flooding can occur which may lead to property damage, a degraded natural environment, and even become a threat to public health and safety. Additionally, because Atlanta's stormwater infrastructure is aging, an increase in flooding is expected to cause damage to the City's water treatment facilities. A Stormwater Utility Fee would provide necessary funds for the operation of a stormwater management program to provide for necessary maintenance and new infrastructure to address the impacts from stormwater.*

**Do you support the establishment of a Stormwater Utility in the City of Atlanta?**

No - not at this time – The City does should not collect additional taxes or fees until it accomplishes greater productivity and efficiencies using the current level of taxes and fees.

In areas of the City the stormwater and sewer collection systems are combined – separating the two could be a prohibitive burden on the taxpayers – and – a portion of the system is in DeKalb County – further complicating cost based fee recovery.

For starters - need to restrict the use of leaf blowers to reduce infiltration of debris into the stormwater system.

I would want to study the financial pros and cons of such attempted separation and imposition of fees.

## Q12

**Tell us why you see yourself as a greenspace champion.**

I spent the first 8 years of my life living in the country ( on a dirt road ) watching tadpoles turn into frogs in the stream and birds building nests. I have a unique appreciation for natural surroundings and know the intrinsic value green space and tree canopies provide. It is part of me.