



## **2016 Atlanta Civic Activism Response**

On Monday, July 18, 2016, Mayor Kasim Reed and members of his cabinet met with members of the Atlanta community for a wide-ranging discussion touching on policing, community investments, and other equity issues. This meeting was scheduled at the suggestion of four civic activists representing AtIIsReady whom Mayor Reed and Atlanta Police Department Chief George Turner first met at a protest outside the Georgia Governor's Mansion on July 11, 2016. During the meeting, the activists made several demands to which Mayor Reed committed to responding in writing. This document represents that response.

### **I. Written Queries from Civic Activists Representing AtIIsReady**

This section contains written responses to the queries recited aloud by the four AtIIsReady activists during the July 18<sup>th</sup> meeting; these queries are also posted on the AtIIsReady website at [www.atlisready.black](http://www.atlisready.black).

#### **1. The people demand a complete overhaul of Atlanta Police Department's (APD) training institutions, and instead utilize models based on de-escalation rather than militarized tactics that aid or perpetuate mass incarceration.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* The Atlanta Police Department (APD) is one of only fifteen law enforcement agencies nationwide to have received a model city designation for its implementation of the fifty-nine recommendations established by President Barack Obama's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing. APD has adopted a philosophy of serving as protectors and guardians, and is continually working to build community trust and nurture relationships with Atlanta's residents.

With respect to training, APD officers are certified by participating in the state mandated training required by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (POST). APD not only meets the mandatory training requirements established by POST, but exceeds them. For example, Atlanta Police Recruits receive 880 hours (22 weeks) of Basic Law Enforcement Training (BLET) at the Academy. The State of Georgia mandates only 408 hours BLET to become certified as a police officer. Atlanta Police Recruits receive an additional 480 hours (12 weeks) of Field Training prior to graduating and being assigned Field Operations. Total time in training for an Atlanta Police Officer is 1360 hours (34 weeks).

In addition to the state-mandated training, APD recruits currently receive APD-mandated instruction in several areas related to de-escalation, crisis intervention and culturally-sensitive communications. Please see the attached appendix for additional detail on these trainings.

**1(a). We demand a termination to APD’s involvement in the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) program that trains our officers in Apartheid Israel.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* It is the position of Mayor Reed that APD’s affiliation with GILEE is a necessary, appropriate and successful counterterrorism-training resource. As recent events in Paris, Nice, Istanbul and Brussels demonstrate, cities, and especially tourist areas, can be attractive targets for attack. Not only is Atlanta home to several renowned tourist hubs, but the city is also home to the world’s busiest airport. Atlanta’s GILEE participation is part of a vigilant approach to keeping Atlanta’s residents and visitors as safe as possible.

**1(b). We demand implementation of mandatory bias training audits.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* Bias training and diversity are critically important to the success of an urban police department such as APD. It is APD’s philosophy that bias-aversion begins at the recruit stage, with the selection and training of a police force that is racially and culturally diverse. APD recruits then receive 14 hours of training regarding cultural awareness, including LGBT community awareness. This training helps recruits to understand diverse cultural backgrounds, learn how law enforcement practices could be perceived as offensive or threatening by persons from diverse cultural backgrounds, and identify effective techniques for assisting and interacting with persons from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In August 2016, a select group of APD certified training instructors will attend Fair and Impartial Policing, an anti-bias training program funded by the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ). (See <http://www.fairimpartialpolicing.com/training-programs/> for additional information.) The Fair and Impartial Policing training program addresses not only racial and ethnic bias, but biases based on factors such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status. Once they have completed this August training, the APD instructors will be equipped to teach these concepts to APD’s recruits and officers. The Fair and Impartial Policing training program is guided by the following principles:

- All people, even well-intentioned people, have biases.
- Having biases is normal to human functioning.
- Biases are often unconscious or “implicit,” thus influencing choices and actions without conscious thinking or decision-making.
- Policing based on biases or stereotypes is unsafe, ineffective and unjust.
- Fair & Impartial Policing is a cornerstone of procedural justice and important for the achievement of agency legitimacy.
- Officers can learn skills to reduce and manage their own biases.
- Supervisors can learn skills to identify biased behavior in their direct reports and take corrective actions when they detect biased policing.
- Law enforcement executives and their command-level staff can implement a comprehensive program to produce fair and impartial policing.

**1(c). We demand APD require community outreach hours for officers in assigned zones.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* APD officers currently engage in a variety of youth-mentoring and community outreach activities through programs such as Every Kid Needs a Hero, Coffee with a Cop, Police in the Park, and the Junior Cadet Program. This type of engagement is critical to maintaining trust and understanding between residents and police. Mayor Reed looks forward to working with APD to strengthen these efforts.

**2. The people demand an immediate end to Operation Whiplash, the collaboration between the Atlanta Police Department and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and all practices of racial profiling that unjustly target and punish Black, Latinx, and other communities of color.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* Announced June 29, 2016, “Operation Whiplash” is the informal name for Atlanta’s Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, a concentrated effort to disrupt and prevent gun crimes in multiple Atlanta neighborhoods that have recently experienced an increase in such crimes. This Task Force was convened in part in response to the concerns of residents who have been personally affected by the uptick in violence. The Gun Violence Prevention Task Force brings together federal, state and local law enforcement officials to pool resources and share best practices to protect Atlanta’s communities. Ensuring public safety is a key priority of the Reed Administration, and collaborative efforts like the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force have been shown to be effective in making communities safer.

The City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Police Department unequivocally reject racial profiling.

**2(a). We demand APD discontinue the practice of holding individuals on the basis of ICE detainers.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* Immigration policy is set by the Federal government. Enforcing immigration laws is not a primary focus for APD, but APD will maintain compliance with federal laws.

**2(b). We demand citywide abolition of “No-Knock” Warrants.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* In 2006, APD reviewed its “no-knock” warrant policy and procedures. Based on this review, APD implemented stringent requirements that ensure that “no-knock” warrants are used only in exceptional circumstances. These requirements mandate issuance from a neutral State Court Judge. Prior to execution of the warrant, a tactical plan and the warrant must be created and approved by the requesting officer’s lieutenant and the requesting officer’s major. This plan must include specific details and descriptions that are reviewed and updated to ensure accuracy. As a result of these stringent requirements, “no-knock” warrants are rarely used by APD. For example, APD identified only one instance in 2014 where a “no-knock” warrant was used. There were no instances where APD used a “no-knock” warrant in 2015.

Since it has been ten years since this policy was comprehensively reviewed, the Reed Administration is open to conducting an updated review of APD's no-knock policy and procedures to determine whether even today's very limited use is consistent with the current needs of Atlanta's communities.

**2(c). We demand a decrease in school police presence.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* As of June 30, 2016, APD no longer has officers in the Atlanta Public Schools (APS).

**2(d). We demand that the engagement of private probation firms be made illegal in the City of Atlanta.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* In the wake of an investigation concluding that the town of Ferguson, Missouri had relied heavily on misdemeanor fines and fees as a municipal revenue source, a municipal reform movement has arisen targeting the excessive imposition of fines and fees on individuals without regard for their ability to pay. In March of this year, the USDOJ issued a set of guidelines to local jurisdictions with respect to the imposition of municipal fines and fees. Examining the municipal use of private, for-profit probation firms and collection agencies is an important component of this issue. The Reed Administration is open to exploring alternatives to the use private probation and private collection firms.

**2(e). We demand the implementation of citywide mental health response units.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* APD developed a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) in 2004. CIT offers mental illness response assistance and provides practical alternatives to arrest. Since 2015, all APD recruits have been required to complete CIT training, which is comprised of 40 hours of comprehensive training, above and beyond state-mandated requirements, on recognizing and understanding the most common forms of mental illness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and addictions. The National Alliance of Mental Illness is an APD partner and facilitates the vast majority of this training. As part of the training, recruits visit mental health care facilities and meet with citizens who suffer from mental illness and their families. Additionally, the recruits are exposed to a variety of treatment and care options that can be utilized in lieu of an arrest. The training also focuses heavily on verbal techniques designed to de-escalate interactions with a person who is in a highly agitated state or having a mental health crisis, in order to achieve voluntary compliance.

APD developed the Homeless Outreach Protective Enforcement ("Hope") Team in 2005. The Hope Team primarily focuses on homelessness response and intervention. The Hope Team works closely with neighboring counties and community partners such as the United Way to address the needs of the homeless individuals and seek resolutions outside of arrest.

**3. The people demand that expanded mechanisms be implemented to hold police officers accountable for killing civilians, and measures taken to deter acts of police violence.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* On July 1, 2016, the Atlanta Police Department fired an officer who shot and killed an unarmed man on June 22, 2016. The Fulton County District Attorney's Office subsequently charged the former officer with felony murder and violation of oath by a police officer. This case exemplifies the City's commitment to timely police accountability for excessive force and other unlawful acts.

Unlike most professions, law enforcement officers may have a lawful, and at times critical, need to use reasonable force. Federal law requires that officers be provided with “qualified immunity,” which legally protects officers who perform their official duties in good faith. Qualified immunity is a *limited* protection; it does not protect officers who violate clearly established legal or constitutional rights. In such instances, the police officer can be held liable under applicable civil and criminal statutes.

Because qualified immunity is granted by federal law, it cannot be restricted by a local or state government, such as the City of Atlanta or the State of Georgia.

**3(a). We demand that the Atlanta Citizen Review Board be dissolved and reconstituted with direct community representation. We demand the ACRB be given subpoena power, the authority to enforce its rulings and the power to issue legally-binding disciplinary actions against APD. To this point, APD and the police unions have repeatedly overruled or rejected the Board’s recommendations, leaving no additional redress for grievances.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* The Reed Administration will not disband the Atlanta Citizen Review Board, and is committed to the review process being effective and meaningful for citizens, officers and the public.

The City of Atlanta created the Atlanta Citizen Review Board (ACRB) in 2007. A central purpose of the ACRB is to provide citizen oversight over the Departments of Police and Corrections and the conduct of their officers. In 2010, the City expanded the ACRB’s authority by empowering it to issue subpoenas independently rather than obtain pre-approval from the Atlanta City Council. Furthermore, the Reed Administration has increased the budget for the ACRB in each fiscal year, due to the significant role of this board in our community.

The Atlanta City Code of Ordinances mandates that all City employees cooperate with the ACRB. Additionally, in March of 2016, the City amended the Code provisions governing the ACRB to increase efficiency, accountability and service to citizens. The City also expanded the jurisdiction of the ACRB to include claims of discrimination and abuse of authority. The 2016 changes now allow for anonymous complaints. The Chiefs of Police and Corrections are now required to provide a detailed explanation for rejecting or modifying the ACRB’s recommendation within thirty days of receiving it. Finally, in order to reach a wider cross section of the community, the ACRB expanded its membership from 11 to 13 members, and includes a representative from the Georgia Coalition for the People’s Agenda and the Urban League of Greater Atlanta.

**3(b). We demand justice and independent investigation of Atlanta specific cases of police murder including, beginning with the release of all material evidence and surveillance footage in the Alexia Christian case.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* The City of Atlanta will release the Alexia Christian video, along with the entire investigative file, at the conclusion of the APD investigation into the actions of Officer Jeffery Cook and former Officer Omar Thyme related to the April 30, 2015 shooting. APD anticipates completion of this investigation by September 30, 2016.

District Attorney Paul Howard has concluded the criminal investigation of Officer Cook's and former Officer Thyme's actions pertaining to the shooting of Alexia Christian, determining that no criminal charges were warranted. The APD investigation is performed by APD's Office of Professional Standards and will determine whether Officer Cook or former Officer Thyme violated any APD policies during the incident. Former Officer Thyme is no longer with APD, but the conclusion of the investigation could result in the suspension or firing of Officer Cook.

**4. The people demand the City divest critical funding from the APD and invest in social services such as affordable housing, equitable health and environmental resources, and equal access to quality public education, particularly in underserved communities. In addition, funding from miscellaneous fines and fees should be directed into funding pools for alternative solutions such as pre-arrest diversion, social welfare and anti-recidivism programs.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* The City of Atlanta has experienced tremendous fiscal growth over the past decade, having received seven consecutive credit rating increases during the Reed Administration. The city's strong financial health means that it is unnecessary to pit areas of need against each other, or to divest from critical public safety services to provide adequate investment in other essential service areas. Rather, Atlanta is now in the fortunate position of having the resources to be able to make necessary investments across areas of need.

Accordingly, the City of Atlanta will not divest funding from existing programs. Mayor Reed has previously stated that individuals with great ideas for specific projects in their neighborhoods or communities should bring them forward for potential funding. The Reed Administration looks forward to an ongoing dialogue about how best to ensure that every Atlanta neighborhood is receiving the investments and services it needs.

**4(a). We demand redirecting of city funds to programs such as mental health response units, Pre-Arrest Diversion, such as the Pre-Booking Program proposed by SNaPCo or Seattle's LEAD Project, and indigent care clinics.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* June 2016 marked the launch of the Atlanta/Fulton County Pre-Arrest Diversion Initiative. This effort, convened by SNaPCo, brings together officials from the City of Atlanta and Fulton County, as well as legal experts, service providers and community stakeholders, to design a pre-arrest diversion system that works for Atlanta. Pre-arrest diversion programs are intended to direct people out of the criminal justice system who would be better served by social services and other community-based resources.

The Atlanta/Fulton County effort is guided by the core principles originating from 2015's National Convening on Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD), and is looking to existing LEAD-based models, including those implemented in Seattle, Santa Fe and Albany, for guidance.

**4(b). We demand redirection of funds from the bond referendum, MARTA and beltline sales tax, and transportation sales tax into investment in black, marginalized communities.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* Bond funds, MARTA Tax and Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales and Use Tax (TSPLOST) cannot be redirected for any purpose other than those previously approved by voters. But the projects planned under both of these referenda are within two and a half miles of 94% of the city's population, including within the marginalized communities that are the focus of many civic activists. Under Mayor Reed, the City of Atlanta has also successfully competed for the \$30 million federal Choice Neighborhood grant, which will leverage additional public and private infrastructure investment in Atlanta's Westside neighborhoods. Additionally, the Reed Administration has made significant investments in code enforcement and efforts to clean up blighted and abandoned properties, which negatively impact quality of life in affected communities. Mayor Reed has prioritized efforts to ensure that all real estate investors in the English Avenue and Vine City communities address housing code violations or face stiff punishment. Mayor Reed doubled the code enforcement budget to \$2 million for demolitions, and departments such as Public Works received additional funding to clean vacant properties, all contributing to enhanced safety and quality of life.

Please see the attached appendix for a list of proposed TSPLOST and MARTA projects.

There is no special or independent sales tax imposed by or collected for the Atlanta BeltLine project.

**II. Additional Suggestions and Queries from July 18, 2016 Community Meeting**

In addition to the written queries from the four activists Mayor Reed initially engaged at the Governor's Mansion protest on July 11, 2016, the community meeting convened at the request of those activists yielded various other questions and suggestions. This section contains the City of Atlanta's responses to those additional issues.

**1. APD Officers should undergo annual mental health screenings and regular rotations from dangerous or high-stress assignments to lower-stress assignments.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* In light of recent deadly police encounters viewed on social media globally, concerned citizens want to be reassured that all officers who interact with the public are screened appropriately, hired and trained to uphold the law in the most humane manner possible.

In response to these concerns, representatives of the City of Atlanta's Human Resources Commission and the City of Atlanta's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) are collaborating to assess departmental needs and recommend specific strategies for strengthening the caliber and resilience of APD's officers, and the resources which comprise their support system.

This proposal will address each of the three phases of the officer's professional development in the department: Pre-hire/Applicant, Academy Training/Recruit and Incumbent Officer.

## **2. The City of Atlanta should decriminalize the act of prostitution.**

*City of Atlanta Response:* Prostitution is considered a criminal offense under state law, and Georgia's criminal laws are enacted by the Georgia General Assembly. The State of Georgia does not allow municipalities to decriminalize conduct that is deemed criminal by the General Assembly, and therefore the City of Atlanta cannot decriminalize the state offense of prostitution.

Nevertheless, the City makes continual efforts to support other agencies' actions to end sex trafficking. In January 2013, Mayor Reed partnered with the "I Am Not Yours" national campaign to aid in efforts to stop child trafficking. In June 2015, Mayor Reed signed a resolution in partnership with 35 mayors across the country that demanded the federal government provide additional resources to cities to prosecute traffickers and to support victims. APD is also a key member of the Governor's Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force.

## **3. What has Mayor Reed done to enhance public safety, including with respect to Atlanta Police Department pay?**

*City of Atlanta Response:* Since Mayor Reed's inauguration in 2010, public safety personnel and city employees have received ten salary increases exceeding \$21 million in compensation (see Reed Administration Compensation Actions in the Appendix for additional details). In conjunction with the Atlanta City Council, Mayor Reed has taken several critical steps toward enhancing public safety and providing fair and competitive compensation throughout the Atlanta Police Department. These steps have included bringing the police force to full strength at two thousand officers for the first time in APD's history, and increasing officer pay to achieve equity in comparison to other jurisdictions and within APD's ranks. Over the course of his administration, Mayor Reed has funded approximately \$25 million in new equipment purchases and upgrades as part of his pledge for APD to have the resources they need to protect public safety.

In addition to his efforts within APD, Mayor Reed has also partnered with the Atlanta Police Foundation to support various public safety initiatives including housing incentives for officers who live within the City of Atlanta, addressing repeat offenders, launching the Westside Security Plan and expanding Operation Shield.

See <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?recordid=4281&page=672> for additional information regarding the City of Atlanta's recent public safety efforts.

## **4. Even with the salary increases during the Reed administration, are APD officers' compensation on par with other comparable jurisdictions?**

*City of Atlanta Response:* Compared to similar jurisdictions in the metro Atlanta area and in the Southeast region, APD officers receive competitive salaries and a comprehensive benefits package. Although some jurisdictions may offer higher starting salaries, current APD compensation packages overall are comparable or, in some instances, greater.

See <http://www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?recordid=3720&page=672> for additional information regarding police pay.

Detailed information about APD compensation benefits in comparison to other local departments and jurisdictions is included in the Appendix.

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