

A Scorecard for the Atlanta Mayoral Race

Please note some comparisons are not exact based on different life experiences. Vincent Fort's experience in the State Senate is not perfectly analogous to the sitting city council for comparative purposes. Similarly, Peter Aman has never served in elected office; his two-year term as Atlanta's chief operating officer stands in its place. I weight the scorecard with double emphasis on economic development and gentrification and half on education and transportation, simply because the mayor does not control the Atlanta Public School board, MARTA or the Department of Transportation.

Peter Aman

Experience: Bain and Co. partner, former Atlanta COO. BA in public policy from Duke, MBA from Penn (Wharton).

Criminal Justice: Aman emphasizes community policing and training in implicit bias for all employees. Aman was a founding member of the Atlanta Police Foundation. With George Turner, Aman led the post-Neal Street Shooting reforms of policing under Reed, which resulted in a significant reduction of no-knock warrants and 40 percent fewer narcotics arrests since 2010. Has no formal position on marijuana decriminalization or expanded powers for the citizens review board. **B+**.

Education: The Reed Administration stiffed APS on \$9 million in payments related to TAD funding for the Beltline until 2016. However, Aman left before Reed began renegotiating those payments. Aman serves on the board of the Galloway School. Aman emphasizes industry partnership for job training for APS students. **B**.

Gentrification: Aman served as the founding chairman of Partners for Home, the city's homelessness services nonprofit. He laid the consulting resources of Bain on the table for strategic planning, helping direct about \$40 million in public and private spending around homelessness here. Aman was also COO as the Beltline began its early development but appears to have had little influence over it. Aman's platform calls for city policies on zoning, housing and development to be re-examined, but is unspecific about the goals. "The city needs to be a partner, not an obstacle, to those who seek to invest in our neighborhoods." He also wants to establish new land trusts, which is a counter-cyclical initiative that is financially sensible but not particularly bold. "In the case of the single-family units, we have these neighborhoods with single-family units, that's a zoning issue. Let's replace them with single-family units. In many cases, let's have the land owned by community land trust so it's a durable affordable housing in perpetuity so that it doesn't become a flip to market-rate someday in the future. That we've replaced those with single-family units as opposed to just knocking everything down and putting up the three-story stucco expensive stuff." **B-**.

Economic Development: Aman's work with Bain, on local boards like the Westside Future Fund and at the COO's job leaves him with more economic development experience than any other candidate. He acknowledges the failures of the Beltline and the wide gap in income and wealth inequality in the city, and his platform emphasizes economic mobility as the centerpiece

of the campaign. Much of his platform focuses on maintaining a competitive advantage at the airport and making Atlanta more attractive to startup capital, though without being specific. **A-**.

Transportation: Aman set very specific goals related to transportation improvements – more so than other sections. His platform emphasizes regionalism, developing the BeltLine into a practical transportation mechanism, bicycling, technical improvements to signaling and faster accident clearance. He does not, however, say anything specific about parking – particularly ParkAtlanta, which started on his watch and at his recommendation. **A-**.

Community Support: The racial questions of the city – wealth and income disparities, mobility, police brutality, gentrification and the like – infuse Aman’s campaign. I don’t believe he’s trying to out-Buckhead Mary Norwood, not while he’s showing up to every NPU meeting he can find. But he’s climbing uphill with the black community, particularly since he has never run for office before and thus hasn’t built many of the relationships other candidates have. Also, he was in operational control during the most significant losses of economic wealth in the black community landed. **C+**.

Vincent Fort

Experience: 20-year state senator for south Atlanta. Bachelor of Arts Degree in American History from Central Connecticut State College, master's degree in African-American History from Atlanta University.

Criminal Justice: Fort is a leading activist in the Moral Monday movement and has a long track record of support for criminal justice reform at the state level, from sponsoring body camera legislation to restrictions on no-knock warrants. He has been a stern critic of police power, broadly, as well as a lack of transparency around high-profile use of force cases in Atlanta. Fort supports the decriminalization of marijuana. He has taken no position on raises for police officers. **A**.

Education: As a member of the Education committee, Fort takes credit for securing \$40 Million in funding for buildings at Atlanta Technical College and Atlanta Metropolitan College. Fort is a very, *very* strong opponent of charter schools, and has campaigned against black Democrats who were insufficiently opposed. He serves on the Education and Youth committee in the State Senate. His platform calls for schools to provide clinics, three meals a day, after school care, and tutoring to children of struggling families. It is unclear if the mayor’s office could engineer such a thing. **B+**.

Gentrification: Fort has been present at the Turner Field occupation and is actively involved in the neighborhood dispute over eminent domain evictions in Peoplestown. Fort is pressing for more inclusionary zoning and a re-examination of city tax breaks to reorient economic incentives toward affordable housing development. He has also sponsored legislation to change foreclosure law in Georgia, to require a longer process with more judicial oversight. **A+**.

Economic Development: Fort has pressed for a \$15 wage for all people employed in Atlanta. He has also been a vocal critic of Fort McPherson deals with the city's administration. Beyond that, his platform is without specific economic development proposals. **B.**

Transportation: Fort has served on the MARTOC state senate committee for many years, and wants MARTA to take over operation of the Atlanta Streetcar, a prospect that may fray relationships with DeKalb County. He also attempted to block funding for a pedestrian bridge at Mercedes-Benz stadium, and is questioning the city's efforts to annex Emory and drive rail into it. **B+.**

Community Support: Fort's strongest base of support is in the southern half of the city, his district. He has long been a visible and vocal political presence to the black community. He has taken unpopular and politically-risky positions on the edge of progressive possibility in order to advance policies around racial and economic justice. He is to the left of a majority of African American voters, never mind the rest of the city. He has been endorsed by Bernie Sanders in a city that voted 3-1 for Clinton. **A.**

Kwanza Hall

Experience: Attended MIT's political science undergraduate program, but did not complete it. Elected to the Atlanta Public School board in 2002, city council in 2006. Business development director for MACTEC Engineering. Son of civil rights veterans Leon and Evelyn Hall.

Criminal Justice: Hall was the primary sponsor of the city's pre-arrest diversion initiative, which launches this month. He also sponsored legislation to ban job applications from asking about criminal records in the city, and requiring body cameras on police officers. He has been criticized for offering a repeal of quality of life ordinances that he failed to pursue. He voted in favor of considering a marijuana decriminalization ordinance that failed to advance. **B+.**

Education: Hall is the only former school board member running for the office. He sponsored legislation creating a joint Atlanta-APS committee. His platform is without real specifics or bold initiatives, which may reflect a nuanced understanding of what is actually possible here. **B.**

Gentrification: Hall's downtown district over the course of his three terms on the council has had more sustained gentrification than any other in the city. The Old Fourth Ward is the poster child for it. Hall argues that he is the only candidate that has delivered affordable housing – 80 units on Boulevard –proposes tiny house development as an approach to alleviating homelessness, and has been willing to sponsor negotiations between Carter and GSU president Mark Becker for a “real agreement” on community benefits for Peoplestown on the Turner Field project. He voted in favor of the new inclusionary zoning ordinance. **A-.**

Economic Development: Hall's campaign supports ideas like the Ponce City Market Construction Training Program and the Beltline Workforce Housing program, while not

explaining how these economic development ideas for worker skill building are tied to larger problems of big development and the gentrification he opposes. **C**

Transportation: Hall's campaign calls for transit oriented development to complement mega projects like Ponce City Market and Krog City Market. Hall is a sponsor of the Eastside TAD and has been an active part of redevelopment master planning downtown, in Castleberry Hill, Midtown and elsewhere. Hall sits on the ADID board. While Hall made a major stumble early in the campaign by questioning the scientific validity of global warming, he has since proposed moving the city's energy grid to renewables by 2025. The proposals are less than concrete. **B-**

Community Support: Hall is the child of civil rights era nobility and walks by King's grave on the way to work. He has an unquestionable connection to the city's black political roots, and is a favored candidate of the hip-hop scene. He is, however, a figure nearly as polarizing as Vincent Fort, fueled by Hall's hazy connection between vision and execution, with an active anti-Hall element operating under the radar. He manages to both attract and repel the business community at once. Both of these conditions are likely to be overcome if he is victorious. **B.**

Keisha Lance-Bottoms

Experience: City council for 8 years. Private corporate law practice. BA from Florida A&M, J.D. from Georgia State.

Criminal Justice: Bottoms, whose father spent many years in jail, presents public safety as the most important issue in her campaign. She opposed marijuana decriminalization. She was one of the principal authors of the "tourist triangle" anti-panhandling legislation. She opposed changes to city ordinances removing quality of life crimes from the books. She was critical of the "don't run" billboard campaign presented by the citizens oversight board, however. "It may be ill advised but the issue is not with them exercising their rights but the response to them exercising their rights," she said. **C+**

Education: Aside from broad strokes about the value of city-school board partnership, I can find no reference to a specific education policy agenda. **D.**

Gentrification: Bottoms introduced legislation in November to create "displacement free zones" across Atlanta, to prevent the eviction of low-income property owners and small businesses because of gentrification. The legislation has not advanced. Bottoms' district in southwest Atlanta has a much larger blight problem than a gentrification problem, and the bulk of her attention has been on this issue instead. Bottoms, a close ally of Mayor Reed, was placed on the Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority ahead of the Turner Field deal, and has been largely silent during the resulting gentrification discussion. She did, however, vote in favor of the new inclusionary zoning ordinance. **C.**

Economic Development: Bottoms describes the city as "out of balance" in forums, and says she wants to find ways to better connect the portions of Atlanta where jobs are scarce to areas where

they are plentiful. She serves on the Central Atlanta Progress board, and has been broadly supportive of large-scale initiatives like Ponce City Market and the redevelopment of Philips Arena. **B-**.

Transportation: Bottoms said in a forum that she wanted to build an Atlanta Streetcar line south past Fort McPherson to provide transportation for southside commuters. She helped navigate the opening of the new international terminal at Hartsfield Jackson. Her platform beyond this lacks specifics. **B.**

Community Support: Bottoms is running a campaign driven largely by her personal story and not her politics. She is the daughter of a famous musician who ran afoul of the law, leaving her to grow from hardscrabble to a law practice and public service. She is perceived by many to be a creature of Mayor Reed, who endorsed her early in her run and raised money for her. The power of those networks cannot be discounted, both in terms of raw political power and in their ability to shape and influence her views. She competes with Peter Aman for the title of most corporately-aligned candidate in the race. **C.**

Cesar Mitchell

Experience: Lawyer with DLA Piper, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Hands On Atlanta, President of the Gate City Bar Association, President of the Atlanta City Council since 2010. Morehouse College BA in Economics and English, J.D. from the University of Georgia School of Law

Criminal Justice: Silent publicly on marijuana decriminalization. Opposed changes to the quality of life ordinances. Supported pre-arrest diversion. Mitchell has pressed for a greater emphasis on community policing, however. **B.**

Education: Mitchell hosts a College Prep Series semi-annually, which helps prepare about 400 middle and high school students to go to college. He wants to form an office of youth services to “provide substantive summer employment, apprenticeship and mentorship programs that give our youth the opportunity to gain real-life practicable employment experience to keep them busy during the summer months and equip them with skills to be successful in tomorrow’s economy.” **B.**

Gentrification: Pro-BeltLine, and supported legislation for community input in the Atlanta Beltline Project. Mitchell intends to implement inclusionary housing zones by requiring developers to set aside a percentage of housing that is affordable to people with low to moderate incomes, and to revise the city’s Affordable Housing Policy to require residential developers receiving city grants or subsidies to increase their affordable housing levels. He also proposes to place caps on annual property tax hikes in underserved communities to prevent residents from being priced out or displaced from their homes due to urban redevelopment. His proposals are both concrete and appear achievable. However, his time as City Council President during this time of huge displacement suggest that he did not do enough to combat this issue. **B.**

Economic Development: Mitchell supported legislation facilitating economic revitalization in underdeveloped areas by authoring measures to create 4 of the city's 10 Tax Allocation Districts. Mitchell is pressing for more sustainable energy use in the city, and for a tax credit for employers that hire from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods or open, relocate, and expand their operations in the southern region of the city. He favors a \$15 wage. **A.**

Transportation: Mitchell intends to synchronize the city's traffic light system to improve the flow of traffic, and to conduct an immediate assessment of the city's bridges, roads, and streets to prioritize repairs and concentrate spending on roads most in need. He wants MARTA expansion, of course. **B.**

Community Support: Mitchell is ... connected. Only he and Norwood have run city-wide before. Mitchell has friends – and foes -- in every corner, with the most significant support coming from large black-owned and black-controlled institutions. He is, however, perceived as an inside dealer and the institutional candidate to replace Reed. Transparency issues are likely to hit him first and hardest. That said, he's running a thoughtful campaign with serious ideas. **B+**

Mary Norwood

Experience: B.A. in history from Emory University. Owner of Norwood Communications, a broadcast voice agency. Broad portfolio of civic group engagement. Three-term at-large Atlanta councilwoman.

Criminal Justice: Norwood is the police union's endorsed candidate and is running as a law and order candidate, particularly around issues of public corruption. She was the lone absent vote on the day the marijuana decriminalization bill was killed by being sent back to committee. Norwood helped create Community Restorative Boards at Juvenile Court for youthful offenders, and "Court Watch" at Superior Court, which notifies communities when repeat offenders in their neighborhoods come before the court. She is a proponent of anti-panhandling and quality of life ordinances, and speaks often about the need to put the idle poor to work cleaning up neighborhoods. She is campaigning for increased incentives for recruitment and retention of officers, including guarantees of affordable housing for public safety personnel. She supported pre-arrest diversion, and is focused on increasing prosecution of chronic offenders while increasing community-based intervention programs for juvenile offenders. **B-**

Education: Norwood says little about this in public and has published nothing about education in her platform statements. This may reflect experience: the mayor has little control over education policy. **C.**

Gentrification: Growth through the most recent cycle has not been "the kind of growth I want to see throughout the city," she said. "It was tragic in the bubble how much of Atlanta was affected — it wiped out whole communities." She has said little about the Turner Field redevelopment deal except that it should move forward. **C.**

Economic Development: Fighting against blight and property abandonment through rigorous code enforcement has been a major theme of her campaign. Norwood has touted a city program that pays low- to moderate-income families up to \$45,000 to buy or renovate homes near the Beltline. She has been perceived as anti-development in the past – particularly in her Buckhead neighborhood, where she once proposed view-protection legislation. But she has told people on the campaign trail that her interest is in seeing equitable development across the city and not solely bundled into fashionable districts like midtown. She has proposed an all-renewable energy city by 2025. **B+.**

Transportation: Norwood served on the Metro Chamber's Transportation Council in the 1990's and now chairs the zoning committee. She has been instrumental in rewriting zoning code that attacks traffic congestion in neighborhoods. Norwood has called for investment in new traffic signalization technology. She is supportive of new MARTA tunnels being cut below Buckhead to alleviate surface congestion. **B.**

Community Support: Norwood is running as an independent, and it's working. She has a small but significant group of core black supporters who look to her as a strategic counterweight against Atlanta's black political machine. In essence, she's viewed as a necessary threat to wring political performance from the black political class. **B.**