

Eric Tatum

Candidate for Fulton County Chair

Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) and Economic Development

Question

Fulton County has recently considered its participation in City of Atlanta Tax Allocation Districts and the conditions under which county tax revenues should be committed to TAD projects. What criteria should Fulton County use when deciding whether to participate in a TAD, and what financial safeguards, limits, or accountability measures do you believe should apply?

Eric Tatum's Response

A tax allocation district commits county tax dollars for a generation, so the county should join one only on strict terms. Used lawfully, for a set period and a specific purpose, a TAD is a legitimate tool. Since 2013, \$413 million in county revenue has gone into Atlanta's districts, \$53 million in 2025 alone. Every one of those dollars was unavailable for the courts, public safety or holding the tax rate.

My criteria, in writing:

1. Real blight, as the law requires. A TAD should lift a community the city cannot lift on its own, not fund projects that would be built anyway.
2. Named projects with costs and a completion schedule. If the promise is a live, work, play and pray community, the plan shows the homes, stores and businesses that make it one.
3. A hard end date. Any extension resets the base to current values and returns to the board as a new decision.
4. A cap on the county's contribution and an annual public audit of every dollar.
5. Five votes. A commitment this long should never pass on a simple majority. On July 15 the board declined Atlanta's 30-year extension 4 to 1 and adopted these protections. I would keep them and negotiate with the city on those terms. The detention center purchase I pushed for proves clear terms produce deals.

The mayor who sought that extension has endorsed my opponent. My only commitment on TADs is to the people who pay for them.

Property Assessments and Taxation

Question

Changes in residential and commercial property values have increased attention on Fulton County's assessment process, including valuation methods, appeals, exemptions, and the distribution of the property-tax burden. What changes, if any, would you support to improve the accuracy, fairness, transparency, and predictability of Fulton County's residential and commercial property assessment and taxation process?

Eric Tatum's Response

Fairness starts with values that are accurate and hold up. This year they did not: the assessors failed to finish the 2026 digest, a judge had to authorize temporary tax bills, and corrected bills arrive in November. The commission appoints the assessors, so the commission owns the fix.

Four changes:

1. Site visits, not aerial photos. Too many values are set from an aerial image without anyone seeing the property. Every value should meet the standard a court would uphold.
2. A dedicated unit for high-value commercial and complex properties, valuing them at what they would sell for, no more and no less. When they are undervalued, homeowners pay the difference. The unit inspects one third of them on site each year, every property every three years.
3. Qualified real estate counsel who defend a correct value in court and settle quickly when a value is wrong. An appeal should be a correction, not a fight.
4. Predictability for homeowners. Protect the homestead freeze, which caps growth in taxable value at inflation or 3 percent, whichever is lower, and make sure every eligible senior receives the exemptions at 65 and 70.

Accurate values, not a higher rate, are how the county pays its bills. I will hold the rate at 8.87 mills. My opponent made the motion to raise the ceiling 11 percent, about \$400 a year on a \$1 million home, then cast the only vote against holding the rate.

County Services and Priorities

Question

Fulton County is responsible for major services including courts and justice, health and behavioral health services, libraries, elections, and services for seniors. What are your top priorities for improving Fulton County government over the next four years, and how would you measure whether those improvements are successful?

Eric Tatum's Response

Fulton County must focus on core statutory duties, fiscal discipline, and measurable outcomes across three key priorities:

1. Fix the jail. Rice Street is under a federal consent decree, and the monitor's August report found 54 percent of required staffing hours unfilled. If it takes better pay to recruit and keep trained, certified officers, we pay it to stop the deaths and injuries. That also protects taxpayers: the county self-insures, so every judgment comes out of our budget. On September 2, I urged the commission at public comment to buy the Atlanta City Detention Center; a week later, the city agreed to sell. My opponent cast the only vote against the 2025 plan to fix Rice Street and build a new facility; she wanted ankle monitors instead. Measure: net new officers against the target of 200 a year, and the decree ending because the county complied.
2. Open, accountable government. Every department, elections included, follows Georgia law, and anyone who breaks it answers for it. Every contract posted online, every department reporting quarterly in public against its targets, and the rate held at 8.87 mills. I welcome the same accountability for myself. Measure: reports published on time and an annual elections audit made public.
3. Services people can reach. Fulton provides meals for homebound seniors, job help, voter registration for residents without a home and more, yet too many who qualify never get through the application. I will simplify it, starting with our most vulnerable residents. Measure: an annual public report of who each program reaches, by district, and how long it takes to get help.