

Jodi Merriday

Candidate for Fulton County, District 3

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?

Jodi Merriday's Response:

Budgetary Reconciliation – The Commissioners and taxpayers of Fulton County will need to collaboratively create and approve a budget that addresses the needs of the County and proposed TAD/s. There are multiple TADS (i.e., Atlanta, North Point). Fulton County must ensure that services are funded and delivered with fidelity and support the economic engines that TADS provide.

The following financial safeguards, limits, and/or accountability measures should apply:

Compliance – Adherence to the State of Georgia legal ceiling.

Traunching – Disbursement of funds in phases with metric-based contingencies (based upon if the TAD is for a specific project, area, and/or project structure).

Valuation Updates – Fiscal benefit from property appreciation.

Specificity – SMART projects and plans (i.e., specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, and timeline specific).

Auditing – Independent auditing to monitor real-time compliance.

Caps – Delineated caps (i.e., definitive caps on how much revenue leaves the County general fund).

End date/s – Definitive end dates

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?

Jodi Merriday's Response:

I would support the following changes to improve the accuracy, fairness, transparency, and predictability of Fulton County's residential and commercial property assessment and taxation process:

- Update property databases and public records to reconcile errors.
- Utilize digital tools and aerial technology to track improvements and additions in real time.
- Execute market adjustments in increments.
- Ensure commercial and residential properties are evaluated using consistent, transparent market standards.
- Simplify yearly statements to enable tax payers to better understand County explanations of values and final tax assessments.
- Make the comparable (comps) sales data that the County Board of Assessors uses to value homes public information.
- Cap spikes by limiting value increases.
- Streamline the Appeals process to expedite the resolution of disputes.

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?

Jodi Merriday's Response:

My top 3 priorities for improving Fulton County government over the next four years include:

Cultivating diplomacy, civility, and a constituent-centered focus among Commissioners and Fulton County employees.

Nourishing a culture of efficient, transparent, responsive, and exemplary service delivery.

Strengthening compliance and deploying resources that align with protecting the constitutional rights of Fulton County citizens.

I would measure whether those improvements are successful if the following metrics are achieved:

Justice and Safety: Fulton County and the Sheriff's Office meet and exceed federal consent decree obligations and execute physical repairs, operational reforms, and transparent independent monitoring (US Department of Justice consent decree; <https://fultonjailmonitor.com>). The DA, Solicitor General, and Clerk of Court are funded to optimize compliance with the constitutional guidelines and timelines that govern due process and justice. Local police departments in Fulton County exhaust the funding that has been appropriated for Diversion Programming and PADS.

Elections: The ballots confiscated by the FBI are returned to Fulton County and the Elections Board administers fair and secure elections.

Health and Human Services: Funding for behavioral health, senior services, and healthcare increases. Community-based primary care centers and a hospital are built in South Fulton.

Arts and Libraries: Funding for Arts Programming and Libraires increase by 25% (general fund, grants, private partnerships) and utilization of libraries for community-based extracurricular engagement/ literacy doubles.

Good Government: Recipients of services and programming from the County evaluate delivery as Satisfactory or Above using point of service capture and customer service surveys at sites of service delivery (Animal Services, Business Services, Human Resources, Human Services, Libraries, Licenses and Certifications, Public Safety, Senior Services, Youth Services, Voting and Elections, Water Services).