# CITY OF ATLANTA

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MAYOR

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GREGORY J. GIORNELLI
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

August 26, 2008

The Honorable Lisa M. Borders, President
Councilmembers
Atlanta City Council
City Hall
55 Trinity Avenue, S.W.
Atlanta, Ga. 30335

Dear President Borders and Councilmembers:

As you know, a former employee of the City's Arborist Division has recently raised questions about his termination and the performance of the area he was directly responsible for supervising. While it would be inappropriate to comment on the circumstances surrounding the employee's termination (the Mayor has requested a review of the termination by the Department of Human Resources, which should be completed shortly), I do think it is important to correct certain misinformation that is circulating in the public and to inform both City Council and the public about the record of the Arborist Division in protecting one of Atlanta's most precious resources, its tree canopy.

The Arborist Division enforces the City's Tree Protection Ordinance, and through its efforts the City is at the forefront of the region in preserving and replanting trees. No construction work takes place in the City without an assessment of its impact on existing trees. No new building or improvement receives a certificate of occupancy until the Arborist Division inspects the property for compliance with the tree replanting requirements. The Division has 12 full-time employees, including an Arboricultural Manager and 6 arborists. Six of the Division's staff are certified by the International Society of Arboriculture. This well-qualified team has been responsible for the following accomplishments:

- We are on track in 2008 to add 15,000 new trees across every area of the City. This number includes about 13,000 new trees on private property (to replace trees lost in the process of new construction) and another 2,200 plantings in the public right of way.
- We spend nearly $2 million per year on enforcements actions, new plantings, and maintenance of trees in the public right of way.
- We have an effective partnership with Trees Atlanta to both plant and maintain trees in the public right of way.
- Over the past two years the Division has conducted nearly 7,000 inspections per year.
- While the Northwest section of the City sees the most inspection activity (because of a larger amount of development), no single arborist is more important than any other arborist. None of the arborists conduct more than 1,900 inspections per year.

As you can see from the information above, the Arborist Division is one of the City's bigger success stories. It is unfortunate that there is misinformation circling that has obscured our track record. Be

assured that our success is not the function of any one person, but rather the work of a qualified team of individuals dedicated to protecting trees.

I attach a fact sheet on the Arborist Division for your information. I encourage you to pass this information along to your constituents who have expressed questions or concerns about the Arborist Division.

Lastly, please know that representatives of the Arborist Division will attend NPU meetings over the next several months to better inform our residents of the work of the Division.

Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Gregory J. Giornelli

Cc: The Honorable Shirley Franklin

# City of Atlanta Arborist Division

- The Arborist Division enforces the City's Tree Protection Ordinance. The Division not only ensures zero net loss of trees within the City of Atlanta, but takes pride in making sure the City has a net gain of trees.

- The Arborist Division is on track for adding 15,000 new tree plantings in 2008 (about 1,100 per month on private property and another 185 per month in the public right of way).

- The Division is comprised of 12 staff members including 1 Arboricultural Manager; 6 field arborists; 2 plan reviewers and 3 Administrative staff. Six of the staff are certified by the International Society of Arboriculture.

- In addition to $700,000 in funding for the Arborist Division's annual budget, the City also spends about $1.2 million each year on tree plantings and maintenance of existing trees.

- Tree replanting in the public right of way is accomplished through a formal partnership with Trees Atlanta.

- The Division collected approximately $1.7 million in Recompense Fees in 2007.

- In 2007-08, five arborists conducted approximately 7,000 inspections each year. The arborists are rotated annually into assigned geographically areas in the city. The Northwest area is the busiest due to construction and landscape activities. None of the arborists performed more than 1,900 inspections annually.

- No construction work takes place in the City of Atlanta without an assessment of its impact on existing trees. Further, no new building or improvement receives a permit for occupancy until the Arborist Division inspects the property for required planting of replacement trees.