



THE TREE NEXT DOOR

"An organization of neighbors dedicated to protecting Atlanta's tree canopy"

Kasim Reed, Mayor
55 Trinity Avenue, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

September 17, 2010

Dear Mayor Reed:

I write on behalf of The Tree Next Door, a citizen's organization dedicated to the retention and maintenance of the magnificent urban forest of Atlanta. TTND formed in recognition that the Arborist Division of the Bureau of Buildings was failing to implement and enforce the Tree Protection Ordinance of the City of Atlanta in accord with its written Standards of Practice. This failure jeopardizes the forest. It also negates the decade-long effort of many individuals and groups – the city's own Tree Conservation Commission prominent among them – to create a workable ordinance acceptable to and accepted by the entire spectrum of people and organizations impacted by the law.

Your COO, Peter Aman, invited us to report specific instances of arborist misapplication of the law to the Commissioner of Planning. We have done so, to no avail. The Arboricultural Manager denies any problem in his division. We beg to differ.

We invite you to examine the report on field arborist productivity that is published on our website (www.treenextdoor.org). As both concerned citizens and city taxpayers, we find its conclusions – and the data on which the conclusions are based – very disturbing.

We urge you, as Mayor of this great city, to take a personal interest in this issue with an eye towards early resolution. As a first step, we ask that you order an independent audit of the functioning of the Arborist Division to determine if, indeed, the conclusions of our commissioned report are valid.

Such an audit was ordered by the City Council in 2008 but, to our knowledge, never performed. Conditions in the Arborist Division have deteriorated since. We ask that you, as a new mayor early in your term of office, accept the responsibility to initiate and follow through with a comprehensive investigation of the Arborist Division and its practices in implementing and enforcing the Tree Protection Ordinance.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the recent audit and reorganization of the office of Code Compliance (see AJC article attached). As a long standing Board Member of NPUA, the change will make our work easier.

Very truly yours,

Sheldon Schlegman
Chair, The Tree Next Door

Cc: Peter Aman COO
Commissioner Shelby