



CITY OF ATLANTA

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ANDRE DICKENS
MAYOR

LISA GORDON
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

September 13, 2022

The Honorable Mary Norwood
55 Trinity Ave, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-0300

Dear Council Member Norwood:

I read your article, “Atlanta’s Buckhead— not getting services it needs,” published today in which you raise concerns about City services in District 8. As the City’s Chief Operating Officer, I oversee the areas you identified in this article and I am taking the opportunity to shed light on several of the specific items you highlighted which lacked context or accuracy.

I appreciated meeting with you last Wednesday, Sept. 7, to discuss traffic concerns in Buckhead and I agreed to respond to you by Sept. 16. I regret that you did not share these other concerns at that time before publishing this article.

First, I would like to highlight the areas where we agree. You wrote: “We need: Our streets paved ... Our traffic calmed ... Our zoning protected ... Our quality of life assured ... Our tax dollars well spent ... Our citizens safe ... Our neighborhoods preserved.”

Since Mayor Dickens took office in January, he has continually delivered on each of these priorities, not just for Buckhead but for all of Atlanta. The Mayor, his senior team, and the more than 8,300 City employees who come to work on behalf of Atlanta residents every day are committed to building a city of safe, healthy, connected neighborhoods with an expansive culture of equity, empowering upward mobility and full participation for all residents, embracing youth development, and an innovative, dependable government moving Atlanta forward, together.

When the Mayor appointed me as Chief Operating Officer, he directed us to deliver City services with excellence as we emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. As you have identified previously, the City had struggled in several areas of service delivery. I am proud to report we are delivering. Through reconstituting the Pothole Posse, we have repaired 6,775 potholes in

2022 alone. We are over halfway to our goal of installing or repairing 10,000 streetlights through the Mayor’s Light Up the Night Initiative. Residential trash and recycling services have been nearly totally restored. We are investing in our greenspaces and climbed 22 spots—the biggest move of any city in the country—on the ParkScore list this year. We are making significant investments in housing and education. Companies continue to choose Atlanta for major expansions. These are accomplishments shared by and benefiting all Atlantans. Under the Mayor’s Moving Atlanta Forward agenda, the City is emerging from the pandemic in a strong position, and we are doing it together as one city.

With respect to individual concerns you share in the article, I offer these points:

1. **Preventing Inequity:** You wrote that you have requested a “Five-Year Capital Plan for District 8.” As you are aware, the City of Atlanta has historically produced Capital Plans on behalf of the entire city, not for specific neighborhoods or Council Districts. It would be inappropriate for the Administration to unilaterally produce a Capital Plan for a specific Council District without consideration by the City Council. Therefore, we advise that the appropriate venue for proposing such a plan is through legislation introduced to City Council and discussion and alignment with your colleagues. Doing otherwise would be a formula for inequity, both at Council among members and for residents across the city.
2. **Prioritizing Investments:** You wrote about the condition of transportation infrastructure in District 8. Since taking office Jan. 3, the Mayor has prioritized investment in our transportation infrastructure, and championed the passage of the Moving Atlanta Forward infrastructure package. This package includes \$460 million for transportation investments, including \$32 million for street repairs, \$10 million for traffic and pedestrian signals, \$196.5 million for sidewalks and trails, \$108 million for safe streets projects and protected bike lanes and \$40 million for bridges. We are proud that Atlanta voters—including those in District 8—overwhelmingly passed this package in May, and these dollars are about to start flowing to vital projects across the city, including in Buckhead. For example, these projects include the repaving of Blackland and Putnam roads, as well as \$3.9 million in investments in PATH400.

The City is also using currently available funds under 2020 LMIG to prioritize the resurfacing of four streets in District 8. This includes sections of Tuxedo Park, Weyman Court, Nacoochee Drive and Hawick Drive, all slated for resurfacing before the end of 2022.

The City will also soon provide to Council the resurfacing plan for West Paces Ferry Road, and we are working with the Buckhead Community Improvement District to implement and enhance the project.

3. **Enabling Progress:** You wrote of your efforts to produce a “District 8 Traffic Plan.” As you are aware, the Mayor supported your request for the Atlanta Regional Commission Livable Centers Initiative study grant. When you and I met last week, you raised the possibility of using your campaign funds to fund such a study. The Department of Law has advised that the manner in which your traffic study proposal was obtained from a “prohibited source” potentially violated the City’s ethics code and could possibly violate campaign finance laws.

While in your article you indicate support for traffic calming, you also introduced legislation (22-O-1479) to impose a moratorium on intersection improvements within District 8.

The ATLDOT and the Department of Procurement have also informed me that a request you have made to conduct a new traffic study and design change for intersection improvements at Moores Mill Road at West Wesley Road and at Howell Mill Road has the potential to significantly delay that project. The City was prepared to move forward, but now may have to conduct a new feasibility study and re-bid the project based on your requested modifications. I am hopeful that you will work with ATLDOT to quickly resolve these concerns so this project vital to safety and traffic improvement in this Buckhead neighborhood can move forward.

4. **Constructive Solutions for Housing:** You wrote that single-family zoning in Atlanta “was under assault by the city government during all of 2021.” As you are aware, the Mayor took office in January of this year. Since that time, he has not pursued reforms to eliminate single-family zoning and has no intention to do so.

Instead of zoning reforms, the Mayor has focused his efforts on utilizing publicly-owned land in underdeveloped areas, increasing collaboration between city agencies, and cutting red tape to speed the development of affordable housing in pursuit of his plan to build or retain 20,000 units of affordable housing for Atlanta residents. Just this year we have already opened more than 1,500 of these units, and have another 4,044 under construction. With other major projects on the horizon—including the redevelopment of the Civic Center site—and significant progress already from the Mayor’s Affordable Housing Strike Force, we expect to make continued progress toward that goal without revisiting the zoning issues you referenced.

5. **Delivering for Atlantans:** You raised concerns regarding the 2015 Renew Atlanta Bonds and TSPLOST funds. Mayor Dickens has also been vocal about his concerns that promised projects under the previous program were not delivered as promised. The City has invested in building its internal capabilities to plan, design and execute transportation projects, including the establishment of ATLDOT in 2020. To build the transportation project list for the Moving Atlanta Forward infrastructure package, ATLDOT developed

a framework using advanced analytics and other best practices. The package also included funds to account for overhead, inflation and sales tax administration costs to ensure that projects are delivered as promised.

In the article, you wrote: “I asked about the new bond and TSPLOST funding (which the citizens approved in March) and was told: 1) Bond funds wouldn’t be available until November and 2) TSPLOST had not collected enough funds to grant my request.” Noting that the measures were approved by voters in May, not March, the funds only become available when the bonds are issued and revenue from the special-purpose local-option sales tax are collected. Funds cannot be spent before they are generated.

In addition to the aforementioned transportation investments in Buckhead, the Moving Atlanta Forward infrastructure package also includes nearly \$4.2 million for Chastain Park parking deck and park improvements and a \$13 million replacement of Fire Station #26 at Howell Mill and Moores Mill roads.

Atlanta voters were provided the full project list, as approved by City Council, for the Moving Atlanta Forward infrastructure package. We are now focused on raising the funds approved by the referenda so that we can deliver these projects—including the many projects in Buckhead—to our constituents.

In addition to addressing these specific points in your article, I am compelled to highlight additional areas where Mayor Dickens has worked to invest in the Buckhead community:

1. **Investing in Public Safety:** In June, we were joined by Buckhead civic leaders and Gov. Kemp to officially open the Buckhead Village Precinct, delivering on a public safety commitment that the Mayor made to the community. This precinct houses 12 Officers and two Supervisors, including two Bike Units and a Crime Suppression Unit. This precinct complements the more than 120 sworn personnel assigned to Zone 2.
2. **Public Safety Collaboration:** The Administration supported your proposal to establish the Buckhead Public Safety Task Force and appointed a senior member of the Atlanta Police Department leadership team to serve on the task force. A senior member of the Mayor’s leadership team attended all but one of the meetings. The City has already implemented, or is in the process of implementing, many of the recommendations that the Task Force put forth this summer.
3. **Real and Measurable Results:** Due in significant part to the public safety investments the Mayor has made through his One Safe City plan, we are proud to report to you that crime in Zone 2, which includes Buckhead, has markedly decreased this year. Through week 35 (ending Sept. 3), total crime in Zone 2 is down 10 percent compared to the same point last year. That includes a 4 percent decrease in person crimes and a 10 percent

decrease in property crimes. This progress builds on the use of department-wide resources to reduce crime in Zone 2, which resulted in Zone 2 winning the 2021 Crime Reduction Award.

The Mayor remains committed to serving the needs of all of Atlanta's residents, visitors and businesses. He will continue to be the city's loudest and most forceful champion in ensuring we remain one city, in opposition to efforts to de-annex any part of Atlanta. Breaking up our city would be a travesty for everyone. It is far better for us to work together during challenging times. That is what made Atlanta—and the special community of Buckhead—great.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Administration's support of Buckhead and clarify any misconceptions.

I have copied your colleagues on the Atlanta City Council on this correspondence to ensure that they have this information as well, in the spirit of pursuing one city with one bright future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Y. Gordon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Gordon" clearly legible.

Lisa Y. Gordon, CPA
Chief Operating Officer

CC: Atlanta City Council President Doug Shipman
Members of the Atlanta City Council
City of Atlanta Chief of Staff Odie Donald II
Senior Policy Advisor Courtney English