

# Council



# Spotlight

## An open letter from Atlanta City Councilman H. Lamar Willis



Dear Fellow Atlantans,

For the past several months, my office has been diligently addressing your public safety and fiscal management concerns. We hosted several public safety workshops to inform homeowners of ways to protect our most precious resource, our families and homes, met with many of you at your neighbor-

hood planning unit (NPU), community association, and civic association meetings, continued efforts to bring a Community Improvement District to Southwest Atlanta, and hosted my annual Swing Into Spring Tennis Camp at the McGhee Tennis Center.

As we move forward with the work of the City, I will continue to be responsive to your concerns and seek ways to put

your tax dollars to work in the most efficient means possible without raising taxes or decreasing critical services like our police officers and firefighters. There is still much to be done as we approach the end of 2009.

We face challenging times but as Atlantans when we work together we can defeat any economic or social challenge. I am committed to intelligently addressing issues that impact the heart of who we are as Atlantans: health, safety, and general welfare. Our city is unique place because of who we are and what we can become.

I am always available to meet you to answer any questions that you may have regarding the City of Atlanta and/or my role as your at-large council member. Please call my office at 404-330-6041 or contact me via e-mail at [hlwillis@atlantaga.gov](mailto:hlwillis@atlantaga.gov) to discuss your concerns.

Yours for a Better Atlanta,  
H. Lamar Willis



## What Does Atlanta's Budget Mean to You?

For several months, the City Council debated the best use of tax payer money. It was with resounding clarity that the citizens of Atlanta expressed a need to end the public safety furloughs, and make the difficult decisions that are necessary to begin to repair the City's troubled finances. On June 29th, the Atlanta City Council voted 8 to 7 to increase the property tax by 3 millage points which would result in \$56 million in revenue. This money will be used to END public safety furloughs.

There are several questions that are still on all homeowner's minds...

•**How much will my tax bill increase?**

*The tax increase amounts to an additional \$236 — or nearly \$20 a month — for the average city homeowner. The average Atlanta home is valued at \$239,500.*

•**When should I expect to see the increase?**

*Homeowners will see an increase on the August tax bills.*

•**Will this tax increase restore all of the 2009 budget cuts?**

*No. The 2010 budget does not reopen fire stations that were closed during the 2009 budget cuts. The new budget ends furloughs (i.e.*

*returns police and fire to 40 hour work weeks) but does not fund any positions that were previously cut. This budget will restore trash collection to 5 day service and City Hall is now open to the public on Fridays.*

•**Will this tax increase solve all of the City's budget problems?**

*The tax increase will not solve all of the City's budget issues. It will however help the citizens of Atlanta to receive the basic services that we are required by the Charter to provide such as police and fire protection. The leadership at City Hall is currently considering several options that will generate revenue and/or savings such as selling/leasing the municipal jail, restructuring several departments to create maximum efficiency, continued furloughs for the majority of City employees, and reducing departmental budgets. This is a difficult time for all Atlantans. The sacrifices that each resident has made are not without appreciation. Atlanta has survived difficult times in the past, and will emerge from this current difficulty stronger and better than before!*

# Congratulations Are In Order!



## **Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran received the Senate's confirmation as U.S. Fire Administrator**

Cochran's priorities would include reassessing the use of firefighter grants and building a closer relationship between the federal government and local fire departments.

Prior to joining the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department, he served in the Shreveport, La. fire department as a Firefighter, Assistant Chief Training Officer, and Fire Chief. Cochran also served as President of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association, the 1st Vice President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and Vice Chairman of Volunteers of America (VOA).

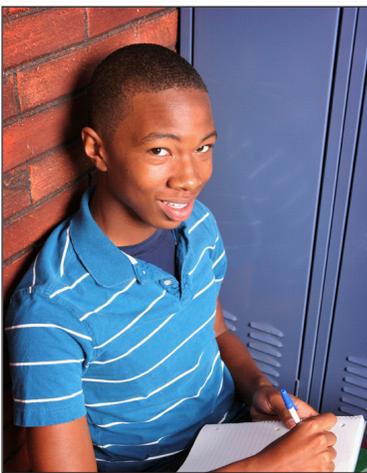
Joel Baker will serve as the Acting Fire Chief, until a permanent replacement for Chief Cochran is found. We wish him all the best as he works to lead the greatest Fire Department in Georgia!



## **The 32nd Atlanta Jazz Festival is a winner of the 2009 Greener Festival Award**

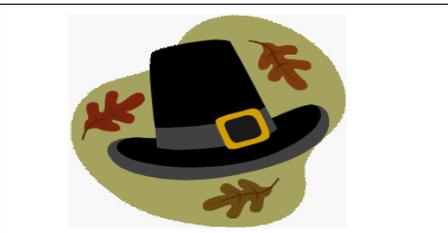
The Greener Festival Award is based on a 56 point checklist which covers green office policies, energy use and carbon reduction, travel and transportation, support for green initiatives, waste management, recycling, water use and environmental protection and noise pollution. The award organizers have a team of environmental auditors who visit festivals to assess environmental good practice and effective green policies.

The Atlanta Jazz Festival's Go Green initiative represented an ongoing commitment to sustainability in recycling, transportation and event administration. The festival had a comprehensive and cohesive waste management and recycling program, a biodiesel recycling plan for waste vegetable oil from concessions, encouraged walking, bikes and public transportation and promoted car pools and ride share on the 'Clean Air Campaign' website.



**So often we are bombarded with the news of what has gone wrong and who is not doing their best.** This section of the E-Update will focus on the outstanding achievements of Post 3 youth. If you or a child that you know is providing a positive example for other young people, are working to overcome adversity or have received an honor for your talents both scholastic and otherwise, please submit your story to be featured in the next E-Update. The youth of Atlanta need to know that their City supports them and is proud of their achievements.

Please submit all electronic entries to [hlwillis@atlantaga.gov](mailto:hlwillis@atlantaga.gov) or mail to Councilman H. Lamar Willis, 55 Trinity Ave Suite 2900, Atlanta GA 30303. Two young people will be selected to have their success story published in the upcoming newsletter.



**Councilman Willis will host a Fall Festival on October 31st at the Circuit City at the Camp Creek Marketplace.** This event will include food, fun and games for children of all ages. Any volunteers interested in participating should contact 404-330-6041. Details are forth coming. We look forward to seeing you there!



## Southwest Atlanta Community Improvement District (CID)

As a lifelong resident of Southwest Atlanta, I am deeply vested in seeing this area return to the thriving community that it once was. Unfortunately, blight and crime have been detrimental to the areas that many Atlantans living in the southwest quadrant work shop and spend recreational time. It was with concern for this section of the City that I began a dialogue surrounding the creation of a Southwest Atlanta Community Improvement District or CID in the Fall of 2008.

A CID is a self-taxing district that uses additional commercial property taxes to help accelerate transportation and infrastructure improvement projects. A CID is the most powerful public-private partnership in Atlanta. The CID is an effective tool for financing improvements that directly enhance property values by allowing commercial property owners to determine how funds are spent in their area. CIDs are comprised of private commercial properties zoned as office/industrial and retail properties. Residential and multi-family properties are not taxable by a CID.

In order to create a CID, a majority of the corporate property owners must approve the self-taxing district. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the taxable value of the commercial property located within the proposed CID constitutes a majority. The location that I propose for the CID includes most of Fairburn Road, Cascade Road, a portion of the Camp Creek

Marketplace, and Campbellton Road up to Centre Villa Road. It also includes Greenbriar Mall and the Tyler Perry Studios.

Frequently, residents voice concern about what they perceive as "favorable" treatment by the City towards communities in Downtown, Midtown and Buckhead. The reality is that these communities operate CIDs that are able to fund many of the services that the City simply cannot afford to provide. The money generated pays for services such as Midtown Blue (additional police patrol), Downtown Ambassador Force, transportation planning, street scaping and other quality of life issues that greatly impact residents, businesses and visitors.

While CIDs are typically generated by the community and brought to the council, I am taking an alternative path. First, I would like to speak with you and provide insight as to how a



CID could benefit Southwest Atlanta neighborhoods. Next, I would then like you to encourage the owners of businesses that you support to consider supporting Southwest Atlanta by signing a petition to create a CID. I am confident that we can work together as residents, property owners and government to restore Southwest Atlanta to the jewel that it once was.

If you would like me to speak at your community, business or civic association meetings regarding this issue, or any others, please contact my office at 404-330-6041.

