

# Yolanda Adrean

City Council ▪ District 8

[www.YolandaAdrean.com](http://www.YolandaAdrean.com)

## My First 100 Days on City Council

Dear Neighbors,

The most frequent question I now get is “**what is it really like down there?**” First I must tell you that I find service as a Council Member fascinating, rewarding, challenging and more than full time. My colleagues have been welcoming, supportive and hard at work with me to address the challenges we all spoke about during our campaigns.

No one week is typical but we do have a series of standing meetings that form a framework to address the myriad of resolutions, ordinances, communications and reports that come through City Hall every week. I serve on three committees, Finance and Executive (FEC), Public Safety (PS) and Utilities. Each committee meets twice a month and in addition there are briefings prior to each meeting. Commissioners, staff and the Mayor’s cabinet leaders frequently come to each of these meetings to provide support and answer questions. Meetings last anywhere from an hour to several hours.

**My priorities** are to serve you in the most cost effective way during this economic downturn. I am working very closely with my colleagues to ensure that your tax dollars are working for you by:

- Keeping you safe by adding more police and eliminating brownouts at the fire stations
- Making as many improvements as we can in the infrastructure without increasing your property taxes.
- Caring for greenspace including new Beltline park space

The budget challenges are the most time consuming and impact many of the decisions we face as well as the level of service to citizens. Doing more with less is going to be a theme for the near future.

Revenues are simply not keeping pace with the growth of government expenses in the area of pension, health care, fuel, maintenance and investments needed in infrastructure. Additionally, weakness in the tax digest due to foreclosures and lagging sales tax revenues will result in flat or slightly declining revenue in fiscal year 2011. The major initiatives to address this imbalance are as follows:

**Pension Task Force:** The Mayor has appointed a task force to study options to reduce pension costs. One of every five tax dollars goes to pension. It is simply unsustainable. Making changes will be difficult because of state law that controls changes to plans. We cannot simply change existing “dials” such as vesting and multipliers on our plan. We are only able to improve benefits, not take them away. So the choices become, ending our plan for everyone, coming up with a new plan, or coming up with a new plan for non-vested employees or some combination of those alternatives. Since City employees do not participate in Social Security, those who are currently in our plan, depend on future payments for retirement. Clearly a comprehensive look is needed.

For this year’s budget, the Mayor is proposing that non-vested employees have longer vesting periods and lower multipliers.

**Proposed lease/purchase of the jail:** Our charter does not require that we provide detention services. It is a County function. One of the proposals we are considering, is to sell our city

detention center to Fulton County through a lease purchase. We would then lease bed space for our detainees from Fulton County and would be relieved of the cost of operations. Such a plan could save the city about nine or ten million per year. This agreement is actively being pursued and agreement could be reached before the end of our fiscal year.

**Sale of City Hall East:** City Hall East is a former Sears building and is one of the single largest buildings in the Southeast. Located on Ponce de Leon, this facility formerly housed Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation and Cultural Affairs. These departments have been relocated and we are actively negotiating for the sale of City Hall. Though this is a one-time transaction, disposition of this asset will relieve the City of ongoing maintenance of an unused asset.

**Sales Tax or Special Use Taxes:** As part of our legislative package to the State, we requested up to one penny as a special use tax to fund our back log of infrastructure projects that amount to \$750 million dollars. Atlanta Public Schools have used this mechanism over the last 11 years to fund capital improvements of all of its schools and will have raised nearly \$1.2 billion when the tax expires in 2012. Our belief is that a similar tax would provide the City with resources to improve its roads, bridges, traffic signals, sidewalks and aging fleets for fire and police.

This initiative was not acted upon during this session but perhaps the transportation bill will be the ticket to getting our roads and other transportation needs funded.

The challenge we face is that 560,000 taxpayers are funding infrastructure used by a day time population of over 1,000,000. Federal stimulus dollars stopped at the Capital and provided minimal relief to the City. In fact, the state received \$3 Billion in stimulus money and of that a mere \$100 million went to the city and was used for a bridge, the airport and to fund 50 policemen.

**So what about all the sales tax you already pay?** The state takes the first four pennies and one each goes to Marta, the Sewer and the Schools and the remaining penny is shared with Fulton County (we get .42 of a penny).

**Any good news?** It looks like we will finish fiscal year 2010 with a decrease in expected expenses and revenue on target resulting in some savings that may provide relief to us in fiscal year 2011. Additionally we are on target to add to the general fund reserves. The finance team is providing timely data on a monthly basis so we can closely track our results.

**Investments in District 8:** With a combination of remaining Quality of Life Bonds and Park Opportunity Bonds, as well as money Council Member Clair Muller left unspent at the end of her term we have been able to either complete or begin several projects:

Tanyard Creek Path, which is part of the Beltline, is now open and it connects several neighborhoods from Ardmore Park to Collier Hills.

Chastain Tennis Center is under construction.

The new Green lot which is a combination of parking and green space for passive play, is now open at Chastain.

Sidewalks are being installed in the Margaret Mitchell neighborhood to connect with the new Brandon Elementary Annex on Margaret Mitchell Drive.

Most of Mt. Paran Road is scheduled for repaving in the late summer or early fall.

**Most frequent complaints and emails:** Our District prizes the beautiful tree canopy that makes our neighborhoods unique among American cities. While the tree ordinance is one of the better in

our country, its enforcement leaves much to be desired and penalties for illegal cutting of trees are not steep enough to achieve the desired goal of protecting trees. The Trees Next Door program is working hard to come up with suggestions to improve the tree ordinance. You can learn about this organization by joining its Facebook page or logging on to [www.treenextdoor.org](http://www.treenextdoor.org).

Water bills! Unfortunately some of you are still subject to estimated bills which leave you overcharged and out of patience. I do not blame you. Commissioner Hunter tells us he is committed to customer service and if that is not your experience, please do not hesitate to ask my council aide, Priyam, to help. She can be reached in my office at 404 330-6051.

Potholes are becoming worse and worse as the underlying structures of our roads deteriorate. Until we have capital to permanently address road quality, please report all potholes immediately for attention. Normally they can be filled within the week. Ask Katie, my senior council aid, for help by phone (404 330-6051) or email at [yadrean@atlantaga.gov](mailto:yadrean@atlantaga.gov)

**How to contact me:** I welcome your concerns. My staff and I want to hear from you so do not hesitate to call 404 330-6051 or email me at [yadrean@atlantaga.gov](mailto:yadrean@atlantaga.gov). Look for calendar updates, pictures and neighborhood news and updates on my website and my Facebook Fan page.

We will also be adding polls to see what you think, especially as the budget conversation unfolds. The Mayor delivers his budget on Wednesday April 28th. I will let you know when public hearings are scheduled and in the mean time, tune in live on Channel 26 on the first and third Wednesdays at 1:00 PM to see your finance committee at work.

Yours in service,

Yolanda