



March 2010

City Commission,

The City of Decatur and its residents have been engaged in issues of sustainability for many years. Our residents have a reputation for being responsible stewards of the environment and in understanding the environmental consequences of their actions.

A commitment to environmental quality, as noted in the City of Decatur 2000 Strategic Plan, is important to citizens who shared that they wanted to focus on linkages between green spaces; preservation of green space, wetlands and trees; and quality of the air and water in Decatur. We expect that the 2010 strategic planning process will underscore our citizens' continued commitment to the environment.

By creating the Environmental Sustainability Board in 2009, the City further solidified its commitment to sustainability and provided an opportunity for residents to work together to ensure that environmental issues remain a top priority. This board, as you know, has an incredible amount of talent and expertise in various areas of sustainability, as well as a willingness and eagerness to continue to make Decatur a leader in how we use and protect our resources.

We would like to take this opportunity to share with the City Commission some of the efforts and activities we focused on during our launch year and also share a bit of what we are planning for 2010. We also wanted to thank the Commission for approving the hiring of a Resource Conservation Coordinator. It has been a pleasure getting to know Lena Stevens, and we are thankful for her hard work and passion.

During our first year, the ESB worked in a number of areas outlined in this document. Operationally the Board has worked in committees focusing on four distinct areas, in addition to an overall focus on outreach and education. We have also created some specialty subcommittees, such as Urban Agriculture, to handle key issues. These areas are modeled loosely after the categories of the ARC Green Communities certification:

- **Land:** focuses on green space and urban agriculture.
- **Water:** focuses on overall water management and stormwater issues
- **Energy:** focuses on energy efficiency, transportation and resource consumption
- **Waste:** focuses on waste management and recycling
- **Outreach and Education:** collaborates on outreach activities through the above committees.

What's in the works for 2010? In January, the Board held a half-day session and each committee outlined some initial priorities for the year (see end of this document). We will share updates on these with you as they start to take shape. However, some activities the Board has committed to accomplish include:

- **Be actively involved in the citizen strategic planning process** – ESB members will participate in the process as citizens and/or facilitators, and encourage our neighbors to attend. ESB members will also be available to provide support to the process if needed. It is expected that the 2010 Strategic Plan will help set the goals of the ESB in 2011 and beyond.
- **Revitalize Green Umbrella** – To maximize community involvement and deepen collaboration among groups involved in environmental issues throughout the City, the ESB is working to revitalize the Green Umbrella project by hosting quarterly meetings for green focused organizations, businesses, faith based groups and other stakeholders.
- **Continue outreach and education efforts** – Sustainability information will be disseminated through several channels such as the Green Focus insert, local “eco” events, neighborhood list serves, our newly renovated green initiatives page on the City website and more.
- **Develop a vetting process for environment related proposals** – As the City becomes well known for progressive work in the field of sustainability, staff must be prepared to analyze various proposals to determine if they support the strategic vision.
- **Develop a benchmarking process for sustainability efforts** – Performance measurement is vital in determining the success of municipal operations. By developing a benchmarking process, the ESB will help the City target areas for improvement and identify areas of success.

In closing, the Environmental Sustainability Board is committed to enacting programs that reduce the environmental impact made by the city of Decatur and its citizens. We believe that a continued focus on our area’s water, land, waste and energy resources will benefit the health and well being of all creatures within our wonderful city.

While we expect our goals to be refined following the 2010 Strategic Planning process, we are heartened by the fact that Decatur’s government recognizes the importance of reducing our impact on the environment and we appreciate the city’s support of our initiatives. The ESB looks forward to another year of serving Decatur – the best city in America – and welcomes citizen volunteers to join us in our efforts to influence environmental affairs within this city and the surrounding area, as we continue in a leadership role in environmental sustainability.

Please feel free to contact us with questions, concerns or ideas.

On behalf of the Environmental Sustainability Board,



Gary Garrett
Chair, Environmental Sustainability Board
City of Decatur

2009 Accomplishments

The Board was established in early 2009 and much of the effort in our inaugural year was around combining two existing groups – the Greenspace Commission and Waste Management Advisory Board as well as fulfilling the requirement for establishing a Stormwater Management Advisory Board – into a single, cohesive and functioning Board. With great support and commitment from City staff we were able to put a sound committee structure in place and were able to invest appropriate time in understanding our charge. Members were also briefed on the City’s existing sustainability initiatives. Below is an outline of the Board’s focus and outcomes for 2009.

LAND

Our main objective for 2009 focused on getting “smart” about the City’s green space plan and also on urban agriculture, which will allow us to provide guidance for the City in developing and implementing its Urban Agriculture Initiative.

Key accomplishments included:

- Formed an Urban Agriculture subcommittee to evaluate and review information on the environmental impacts of urban agriculture and developed a plan to help the City in ensuring that urban agriculture supports and enhances programs directed at environmental protection.
- Submitted a guiding principles document that provides direction to assist the City in the sustainable design and implementation of the Urban Agriculture Initiative.
- Hosted a briefing with Friends of Hidden Cove Park on their master plan and conducted a tour to help educate the Board on Decatur’s parks.
- Began discussion on ways and methods for linking Decatur’s green spaces to help support the City’s master green space plan.

WATER

Our objective is to work with the City of Decatur to build water conservation programs and manage stormwater policies. In addition, two of the City’s primary watersheds – Peavine Creek and Shoal Creek -- experience violations of federal and state water quality standards due to fecal coliform levels. Through better stormwater management, we would like to assist City staff in improving these watersheds.

Key accomplishments included:

- Hosted a board session on the City’s master stormwater plan.
- Reviewed research on water quality conditions in the City’s primary watersheds.
- Hosted a meeting with representative from Friends of Hidden Cove Park, the Sugar Creek Garden project and an ad hoc group of Winnona Park residents to discuss projects to address stormwater concerns in their neighborhoods.
- Began a review the City’s stormwater ordinances and policies with a focus on the Post Development Stormwater Management Ordinance. The committee aims to complete its review by the summer of 2010.

ENERGY

Our objective is to reduce total energy use and Decatur’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through education and outreach activities with Decatur residents, as well as through improvements in energy conservation thorough City managed property and activities. These GHG emissions reductions are

a commitment made by the City through the Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, calling for a 7% reduction from 1990 levels by 2012.

Key accomplishments included:

- Secured accurate electric usage data from Georgia Power for 2000 and 2006 (the first community in Georgia Power's service area to do so) as well as secured accurate natural gas usage data from Atlanta Gas Light for the same years. This data will allow the City to have an accurate inventory of emissions for future benchmarking.
- Reviewed and advised staff on a number of grant opportunities to help to enable Decatur's private homeowners and businesses implement energy saving techniques including a community energy alliance grant and numerous Recovery Act- related grants.
- Facilitated a partnership with the City of Atlanta to provide funding for homeowner energy efficiency improvements.

WASTE

Our objective is to reduce landfill deposits through increased recycling rates within the business and residential community with an end goal of reducing Decatur's impact on the environment. Concurrently we will strive to reduce waste by encouraging conservation and reuse through the principles of *Reduce, Reuse and Recycle*.

Key accomplishments included:

- Supported two electronics recycling programs in the spring and fall which collected over 20 tons of material.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Our objective is to increase public awareness about their individual impact on the natural environment as well as promote city programs and activities in this area.

Key accomplishments included:

- Volunteered at Earth Day and Greenfest.
- Published articles in the Decatur Focus.
- Leveraged neighborhood list serves to educate community on the curbside recycling program, watering restrictions and to promote our fall Electronics Recycling Day.
- Met with Community and Economic Development to provide input on the website redevelopment so that it can support increased communications.

2009 ESB Board members & staff liaisons:

- KC Boyce (*vice chair of board, chair of Energy committee*)
- Tiffany Brott (*secretary of board, chair of Education/Outreach committee*)
- Greg Coleson (*member of Energy and Land committees*)
- Gary Garrett (*chair of board, Waste Management and Energy committees member*)
- Ben Jordan (*member of Education/Outreach and Water committees*)

- Jill Jordan (*chair of Waste Management committee, member of Education/Outreach committee*)
- Tony Leung (*member of Land committee*)
- Steve Provost (*chair of Land committee, member of Water committee*)
- Kristin Rowles (*chair of Water committee, member of Land committee*)
- Lena Stevens (*Resource Conservation Coordinator, City of Decatur*)
- David Junger (*Assistant City Manager for Public Works, City of Decatur*)
- Julie Gyuricza (*Stormwater Engineer, City of Decatur*)
- Amanda Thompson (*Planning Director, City of Decatur*)

Initial focus areas for 2010

At the Board’s planning session in January, several key initiatives and activities were identified beyond those shared at the beginning of this document. We will keep the City Commission apprised as these take shape. They include:

Land

- Review and recommend modifications to Tree Ordinance
- Promote implementation of Greenway Plan to promote city-wide connectivity
- Promote urban agriculture through the use of the Urban Agriculture Initiative guidance document and support for the Farm to School program

Water

- Explore water conservation measures
- Review stormwater ordinances and recommend updates
- Set targets to remove Decatur streams from the “violator” list

Energy

- Complete greenhouse gas emissions inventory to determine Decatur’s carbon footprint
- Revisit Decatur’s greenhouse gas emissions goals and recommend new/updated goals as appropriate
- Create a plan for reducing Decatur’s carbon footprint to meet its goals
- Promote existing incentives programs for energy efficiency initiatives and explore development of a local program
- Explore clean-air alternatives such as anti-idling strategy

Waste

- Expand city commercial recycling program through an aggressive campaign
- Expand electronics recycling event to include variety of other items
- Develop a strategy for commercial composting of food waste

Outreach and Education

- Provide educational campaigns on a variety of topics including tax benefits for energy efficiency activities, water conservation measures and others
- Promote environmental awareness in community events such as Earth Day