

# Decatur Grows Greener

## Decatur Environmental Sustainability Plan 2012

### Contents

Introduction	2
Action Plan Summary	3
Creating the Plan	7
Accountability & Adaptability	8
Sustainability Assessment	9
Existing Conditions	10
Accomplishments and Performance Metrics	14
Action Plan	17
Government Management Practices	18
Food & Agriculture	22
Natural Systems	25
Buildings & Energy	28
Transportation	31
Resource Conservation & Waste Reduction	34
Education & Outreach	37



# At its heart, the Decatur Environmental Sustainability Plan is a direct response to a charge from the people of the City of Decatur.

During the 2010 Strategic Planning process, a frequent theme put forth by the community was the importance of sustainability. Decatur residents submitted hundreds of ideas of how Decatur can become even more environmentally responsible, and specifically tasked the government with creating a citywide plan to address these issues.

## TASK 12A

“Develop a citywide sustainability plan with the assistance of the environmental sustainability board to address issues such as the creation of a climate action plan, initiatives such as an ordinance to limit motor vehicle idling and roof color standards to reduce the heat island effect.”

– 2010 Decatur Strategic Plan

**The basic purpose of this plan is to fulfill that task,** but the City of Decatur is not satisfied by simply meeting the expectations of those who participated in creating this community vision. Decatur worked to exceed those expectations and create a substantive plan that helps to meet the challenges we face today, and help us prepare for hurdles we might face in the future.

Sustainability is not just about the environment. It also requires a focus on strong communities,

economic vitality, and robust institutions that ensure the quality of life for our residents, now and in the future. This plan concerns Decatur’s relationship with the natural environment, but the importance of comprehensive sustainability is a guiding principle for the City of Decatur, and it was a key consideration in the development of this plan.

The land, air, water, and wildlife within and beyond our city limits provide us with benefits on a daily basis, and our actions have impacts on these resources. This plan envisions creating a community where our relationship with the environment will protect and enhance these resources and ensure that future generations will be able to share in the benefits they provide, as much – or even more – than now. In the daily life of our city, we bring in resources and materials from outside the city – water, food, energy, consumer goods –and we send products and wastes out of the city. We also benefit from the environmental resources that are found within our city limits, including our water, air, and land. This plan seeks to ensure that we minimize the adverse impacts that our consumption has on the environment outside of the city, while protecting and enhancing the environmental resources within.

Our vision is ambitious, but it is not out of reach. Many steps toward sustainability have already been taken in this community. This plan outlines goals and strategies that Decatur should take to deepen our commitment to serving as good stewards of the environment and community resources. It provides guidance for current and future decision makers, City employees, committee members, residents, businesses, and organizations. It is recognized that this plan will evolve with advancements in science and technology as well as community interest and that over time, new methods might become viable alternatives to reaching the same goals.



## INTRODUCTION

Implementing this plan will create momentum toward a more sustainable framework through which we view our community and our relationship with the natural environment. Decatur can also provide leadership in our region, state, and country on how to create sustainable communities that will provide a high quality of life for ourselves and future generations.

### Focus Areas & Sustainability Goals

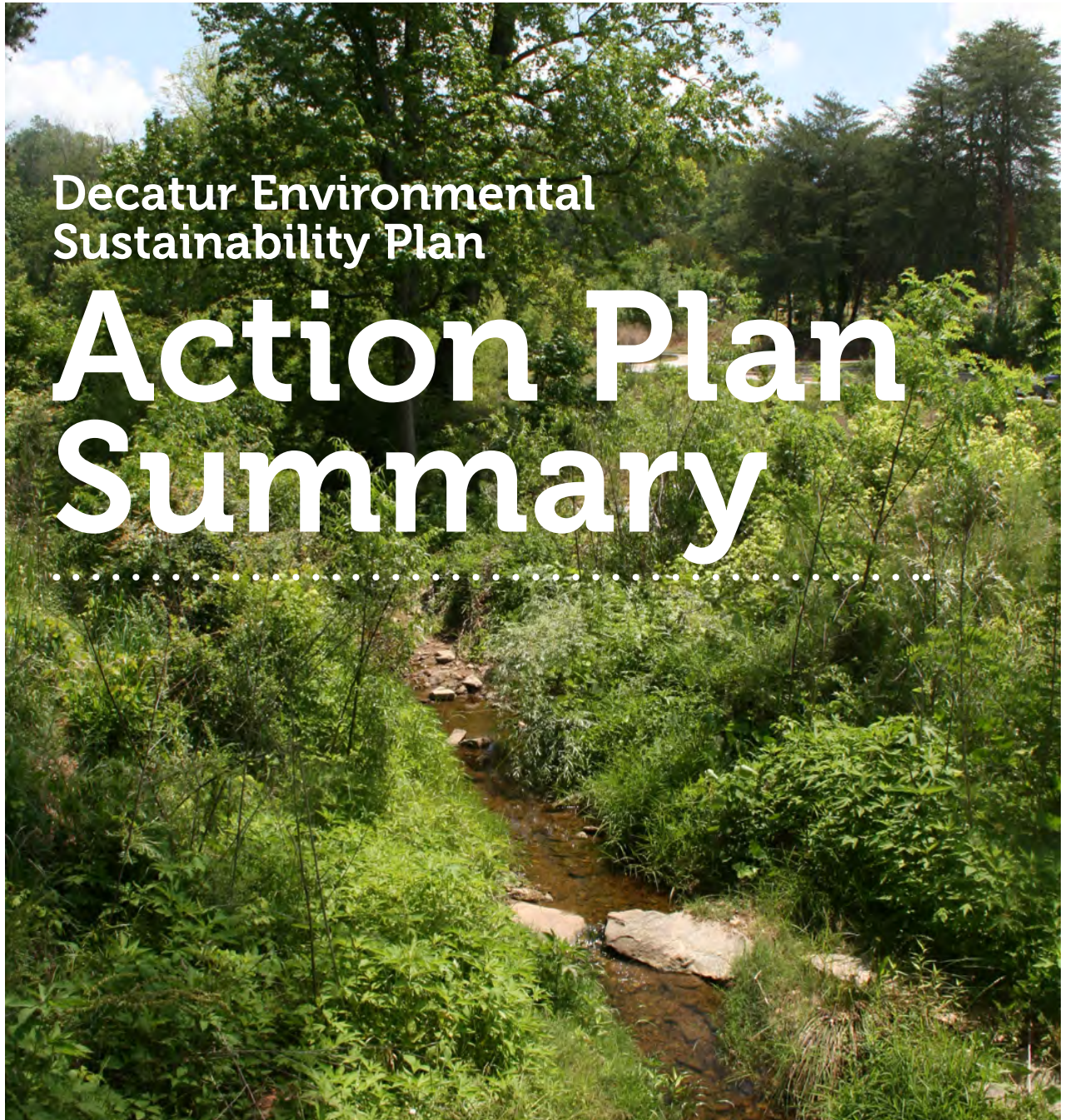
**Seven focus areas** and **twelve goals** are identified in the Action Plan. Each category includes a brief definition of the goals, which will focus decision making on the outcomes and help prioritize actions. A list of key tasks is also included in each category. This list is designed to be non-exclusive, so that it may change and adapt to new circumstances in the future. Additional information such as performance metrics, timeframe, and potential funding sources is also provided to give more detail to the proposed tasks.



## Decatur Environmental Sustainability Plan

# Action Plan Summary

.....





# Decatur 2010 Strategic Plan

## Guiding Principles

from 2010 Strategic Plan

.....

**The City of Decatur is in a position to decrease its environmental impact while also serving as a leader for other communities. As such, this plan is based on the following principles and goals identified in the 2010 Decatur Strategic Plan.**

**1** Serve as good stewards of the environment and community resources. (Principle C)

**2** Environmental, social, and economic sustainability should be fostered in all aspects of city life and practice. (Goal 12)

**3** City policies and programs should strive to protect and restore natural resources, support environmental health, and increase ecological awareness. (Goal 13)

## ► Government Management Practices

**GOAL 1:** Promote sustainable practices within local government operations to reduce the overall environmental impact of facilities, fleet, programs and practices.

**TASK A** Measure sustainability performance on a regular basis and communicate the results to the staff and community.

**TASK B** Educate, empower and engage employees in the City's sustainability commitment.

**TASK C** Ensure that existing city facilities are operated in a manner which enhances sustainability.

**TASK D** Ensure that city building projects implement strategies that enhance sustainability.

**TASK E** Apply environmentally preferable purchasing procedures to all city operations.

**TASK F** Continue to encourage waste reduction and recycling strategies in all city facilities and operations.

**TASK G** Reduce energy consumption by city fleet vehicles and employees.

**TASK H** Ensure compliance with the Sustainable Landscape Procedures policy.

## ► Food & Agriculture

**GOAL 2:** Promote healthy food options within a sustainable food system.

**TASK A** Ensure that local food production meets city environmental objectives.

**TASK B** Support the expansion of urban gardening opportunities.

**TASK C** Promote the expansion of food composting.

**TASK D** Capture viable food that might otherwise be wasted.

**TASK E** Encourage regular local farmers markets, and support expansion of existing ones.

**TASK F** Explore the potential use of bio-diesel.

## ► Natural Systems

**GOAL 3:** Maintain healthy ecosystems and outdoor recreational opportunities.

**TASK A** Remove local streams from the state list of impaired waters.

**TASK B** Restore in-stream flows (overland and in-stream) to mimic pre-development flows more closely and to the extent practical.

**TASK C** Maintain or reduce city dependence on water and wastewater systems, within limits of public health needs.

**TASK D** Promote enhanced water conservation adoption in drought periods.

**TASK E** Protect and enhance the city's tree canopy.

**TASK F** Promote native and drought-tolerant landscaping.

**TASK G** Improve and increase public access to greenspace.

## ► Buildings & Energy

**GOAL 4:** Increase the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings.

**TASK A** Use zoning and building codes to ensure more energy-efficient development.

**TASK B** Create an energy efficiency education program targeted towards businesses.

**TASK C** Use retro-commissioning as a tool to increase the efficiency of existing building stock.

**TASK D** Use and promote widespread energy efficiency and water conservation retrofits.

**TASK E** Encourage preservation of historic buildings as identified in the Decatur historic resources survey.

**GOAL 5:** Increase the use of clean energy sources.

**TASK A** Explore starting a municipal electric utility.

**TASK B** Facilitate opportunities for individual homeowners and businesses to generate clean energy on-site.

## ► Transportation

**GOAL 6:** Increase the opportunity for using alternative transportation.

**TASK A** Increase the mode share for energy-efficient transportation.

**TASK B** Continue to implement the recommendations of the Community Transportation plan.

**GOAL 7:** Reduce the environmental impact of current transportation systems.

**TASK A** Support the installation of alternative fuel source stations in public or semi-public places.

**TASK B** Reduce vehicle idling.

### ► Resource Conservation & Waste Reduction

#### **GOAL 8:** Minimize waste.

- TASK A** Create a promotional program to encourage citywide composting.
- TASK B** Expand the existing recycling options to include commercial properties and hazardous waste like paint, motor oil, and electronics.
- TASK C** Increase opportunities for recycling in public places.
- TASK D** Install additional pet waste bag stations in public places and in residential neighborhoods.

#### **GOAL 9:** Reduce consumption.

- TASK A** Develop and incorporate best practices to discourage the use of disposable food and beverage containers, water bottles, and disposable plastic bags.
- TASK B** Educate and encourage the community to reduce consumption.

### ► Education & Outreach

#### **GOAL 10:** Raise public awareness and engagement in the city's sustainability initiatives.

- TASK A** Develop annual communications and outreach plans to ensure residents (individuals and businesses) are aware of the key City programs and initiatives.

#### **GOAL 11:** Educate and encourage city residents and businesses to adopt more sustainable behaviors and practices.

- TASK A** Continue educational programs to encourage individual participation in specific environmental sustainability programs like the Kilowatt Crackdown.
- TASK B** Host eco-focused education programs and support third-party events to engage residents/businesses/organizations.
- TASK C** Look for creative ways to recognize businesses and organizations that best exemplify sustainable principles.

#### **GOAL 12:** Ensure Decatur is recognized for its leadership in its sustainability program and initiatives.

- TASK A** Identify and apply for sustainability awards and grants, and identify opportunities to share our story.

## Partnerships

Many of the initiatives outlined in this plan will require that the city work in cooperation with City Schools of Decatur, DeKalb County and other entities. Cultivating these relationships will ease implementation and increase the impact of Decatur's sustainability initiatives.





# Creating the Plan

This plan was created as a joint effort between City of Decatur staff and the Decatur Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB), with significant input from residents and members of the community. The process began by evaluating all current achievements, goals, and commitments related to environmental sustainability. Staff and board members reviewed sustainability plans created by other cities and compiled a list of best practices. Of specific note were tasks and ideas captured from the 2010 Decatur Strategic Plan process, which was plan was developed with the participation of over 1,500 community members. Many of the conversations during that process focused on environmental sustainability.

## CREATING THE PLAN

Using the ideas from the 2010 Strategic Plan as a starting point, the members of the ESB worked directly with volunteers on various committees to identify opportunities for refining and enhancing these ideas.

Once a draft had been created, public input sessions were held with community members to gather input. The plan was also made available on the website with an online comment card. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback, ask questions, and suggest changes. More than 100 comments were collected from 80 participants.

The input gathered during the creation of this plan demonstrated a strong willingness among Decatur residents to support sustainability initiatives. During the public input sessions, participants wrote notes using sticky pads and also had the option of using green and red dots to indicate preferences. The online comment card asked users to select three of the 12 goals that were most important to them.

The strongest preference was shown for the following three goals:

**GOAL 2: Promote healthy food options within a sustainable food system.**

**GOAL 3: Maintain healthy ecosystems and outdoor recreational opportunities.**

## Project Timeline

### 2011

Mid-Summer	ESB begins drafting plan with input from committees
November	First draft released to public Public input session held at City Hall Online comment card posted to website

### 2012

Jan/Feb	Feedback analyzed
March	Clarification questions posted to Open City Hall City Commission work session held
April	Second draft posted to website "Dialogues" sessions held on tree and historic preservation Second public input session at City Hall
May	Feedback analyzed Final draft of plan prepared City Commission work session held
June	Request for approval to City Commission

### GOAL 4: Increase the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings.

Tree protection and historic preservation were also identified as issues needing further attention in the plan. To start that conversation, two dialogue sessions were hosted in early April. Experts were invited to speak, and attendees were encouraged to have open conversation. The Natural Systems and Buildings & Energy section were edited based on the feedback received to include tasks related to both issues.

## Accountability & Adaptability

This plan, though it represents best practice and current knowledge, is not intended to be a static document.

The field of sustainability is changing rapidly, and any document intended to promote sustainability must also change in response. Today's best practices may be obsolete tomorrow. Building a sustainable community requires willingness to adapt to changing circumstances. Consequently, this plan will be a living document, in the sense that it will grow and change as our knowledge and abilities grow and change. Status checking, thorough cost/benefit analysis, annual reports and regular updates will ensure that this plan remains a relevant and effective tool to improve the health, welfare, and overall sustainability of our community.

An annual progress report will be developed that will provide useful information to city leaders, staff, and community members on progress being made toward meeting goals and targets of this plan.

**The City of Decatur participates in several environmental programs and policy commitments including – The U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities Program, the Governor's Energy Challenge and the Decatur Agricultural Initiative.**



# Sustainability Assessment



*Fire Station #2 in Oakhurst was opened in 2009 as the city's first L.E.E.D. certified building. It obtained the Silver-level rating, which is now the goal for all new large city facilities.*

Though this is the first Sustainability Plan created by the City of Decatur, it is not the first time that Decatur has taken action to promote sustainability. This section presents the results of the assessment of current sustainability-related activities, and serves as the foundation for recommendations and actions towards a more sustainable future. Each category contains a list of the performance measurements that will be used to accurately gauge the impact of Decatur's sustainability initiatives.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Development

According to the U.S. Census, the City of Decatur's total population in 2010 was 19,335 persons. Decatur is physically a small community at just 4.2 square miles, but is the most densely populated city in the Georgia with roughly 4,600 residents per square mile. It has a historic town center surrounded by residential neighborhoods. The land use is roughly 15 percent commercial and 85 percent residential. Decatur is home to several churches and educational institutions including Agnes Scott College, the Decatur Atlanta School of Art, DeVry University and Columbia Seminary.

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) operates three heavy rail stations within the city limits along its East-West line: East Lake Station, Decatur Station and the Avondale Station. In addition, 16 bus routes serve the stations and the Decatur area. A major component of the downtown development has been the construction of residential projects in the central business district near the Decatur and Avondale stations. Since 2000, 28 town house units, 417 condominium units, and 105 apartment units have been added in the central business district.

The city actively promotes and protects its three business districts and has begun to realize the benefits of revitalization. In 2005, the City characterized these three areas as follows:

- Downtown Decatur Business District
- Oakhurst Business District
- College Avenue Corridor

Though the economic benefits of these three business districts have not been quantified, a private analysis conducted for the city in 2003 revealed that there are more than 955 businesses and 9,820 employees within a one-mile radius of downtown Decatur.

### Air

As a municipality within DeKalb County, the City of Decatur is subject to the same air quality standards as the Atlanta region. The Clean Air Act (CAA) is a law designed to ensure that all U.S. residents have the same basic health and environmental protections. Under the CAA, each state that does not meet one or more of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) is charged with developing a State Implementation Plan (SIP) that outlines how air quality will be improved by a specific date. Of the six pollutants that the CAA establishes standards for, two are of particular concern in Atlanta – ozone and particulate matter. Atlanta recently reached attainment status after being designated as a non-attainment area for ozone and fine particulate matter for decades.

### Transportation

One of the ways that the City of Decatur addressed air quality concerns is by creating alternative transportation initiatives for its residents. "There is growing recognition that the places where people live, work, learn, and play affect community health. The City of Decatur has chosen to define itself as an 'Active Living Community.' 'Active Living' is about creating healthy communities that have safe and convenient choices for people to walk, bike and be more physically active on a daily

routine basis. An Active Living Community is designed to provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to participate." (Community Transportation Plan, 2007) More than \$25 million in transportation improvements have been identified to be implemented over the next 20 years. More than 85 percent of all the streets in the City have a sidewalk on at least once side, there are three miles of bicycle lanes and trails and an active Safe Routes to Schools program in every elementary school. Seventy percent of Decatur residents drive alone to work as compared with 90 percent of Metro Atlanta residents who drive alone to work.

### Water

The City of Decatur lies entirely within Georgia's Piedmont Province. Topography in the city consists mostly of very gently sloping soils on broad to narrow ridge tops, and some small areas of steeper sloping soils on hillsides adjacent to small drainage ways. The ridge tops commonly are smooth and convex and the hillsides commonly are irregular. Nearly level land is found along the various tributaries of Peachtree Creek and the South River. The flood plains are generally narrow.

Decatur is bisected by a major east-west ridgeline that generally follows the CSX Railroad corridor. The ridgeline forms the boundary between the Chattahoochee River Basin and the South River Basin. Rain that falls north of the CSX Railroad drains into the Chattahoochee River via Peachtree Creek at a point below both the DeKalb County and City of Atlanta water intakes, and the area south of the CSX Railroad drains to the South River which is not used as a water supply source. Thus, the city is not required



to develop water supply watershed protection regulations.

Federal law defines freshwater wetlands as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Decatur's only wetland is located in the Decatur Cemetery.

Decatur's location along the drainage divide limits the potential for flooding. Issues generally concern flooding in floodplains and other areas close to streams during heavy rains. In terms of water quality, a large part of the city is residential which limits the negative impacts on receiving streams. Impacts to the four major watersheds intersected by the city are limited as well, since Decatur occupies a very small percentage of the overall contributing area.

The city adopted its first storm drainage ordinance in 1972, with comprehensive revisions in 1977, 1990, 1997, 2001, and 2004. The city currently requires onsite storm detention systems for all new developments with its Post-development Stormwater Management for New Development and Redevelopment ordinance. Ordinances related to storm water volumes and water quality include ordinances regulating soil erosion and sedimentation control, illicit discharge and illegal connection, floodplain management/floodplain damage prevention, and stream buffer protections, litter control, and conservation subdivision/open space development.

In 1999, the city implemented a Storm Water Utility under the city Engineering Department to provide a means of funding its storm water management plan. The Utility is responsible for the maintenance and upgrades to the storm water system including pipes, culverts, inlets, manholes, headwalls, flumes, concrete channels and related appurtenance. It is also responsible for the enforcement of environmental regulations, and for the city's compliance with Clean Water Act requirements and other environmental regulations related to storm water. It is estimated that the city's Storm Water Utility will generate approximately \$750,000 per year to fund the storm water improvements and management plan based on its current (existing) fee schedule.

To address the city's storm water needs on a long-term basis, a Storm Water Master Plan was completed in 2004 and adopted in 2005. The report included an inventory and assessment of the city's existing storm drainage system, an evaluation of system performance during storms, and recommendations for improvement. The report found that parts of the city storm drain system function adequately during moderately intense storms while other parts showed overflows during low intensity storms. Most of the significant overflow problems were associated with the densely developed core downtown area. To remedy these issues, the report recommends \$6.4 million in critical improvements and the installation of best management practices during the development or redevelopment of properties within the city. The Storm Water Master Plan will be updated in the next five years. Drinking water and sanitary services are provided by DeKalb County.

## Soils

In general, most of the land within Decatur falls within one of the three soil groupings described below.

- Cecil: Urban land – These are deep, well-drained soils that have a loamy surface layer and clay subsoil. These soils are very gently sloping or gently sloping and are typically found along ridge tops. Slope ranges from 2 to 10 percent.
- Pacolet: Urban land – These are deep, well drained soils that also have a loamy surface layer and clayey subsoil. These soils have steeper slopes than do Cecil soils and are typically found on hillsides. Slope ranges from 10 to 25 percent.
- Urban land – These very gently sloping to strongly sloping urban land areas are found on both ridge tops and hillsides associated with drainage ways and flood plains. Slope ranges from 1 to 25 percent.

The soils in the urban land areas have typically been modified by cutting, filling, shaping, and smoothing. Most soil areas designated as urban land areas contain higher density uses such as commercial centers, schools, parking lots, and housing developments.

Generally, the soils found within Decatur are very suitable for the type of development that Decatur has experienced in the past and for the type of development expected to occur in the future. While there are some isolated areas of steep slopes within the city, such areas are already developed and no special needs are required at this time.

## Greenspace

The city has made several efforts in the past few years to address the need for parks, open space and green infrastructure. Decatur has been largely built out since the 1960s. There is very little remaining open space and most undeveloped lots are located in stream buffers, in floodplains or are very small. New trails and trail connections require approval and in many cases access easements from property owners since they have to cross private property. In 2006, the city adopted the Decatur Greenway Plan to guide the acquisition of greenspace and plan for connected trails throughout the city. Funding for greenspace acquisition was available from the state in the early 2000s. However, as the state has reduced its funding levels, the city has had to invest more local tax dollars for these types of projects. The Capital Bond Issue passed in 2006 by Decatur residents provided funding for improvements to the major city parks, to acquire new greenspace and to build new trails.

There are 14 city-owned parks in Decatur totaling 56.5 acres. The parks range in size from less than half an acre up to 17 acres and offer such amenities as tennis and basketball courts, swimming pools, picnic pavilions, playgrounds, skateboard facilities, softball and soccer fields, and nature/walking trails.

In terms of passive open space, the City of Decatur operates the Historic Decatur Cemetery, which covers 43 acres in the heart of the city and shares the 8.5-acre Dearborn Park with DeKalb County. Also within city limits is The Woodlands, a seven-acre nature preserve managed by a non-profit organization. The

city also owns a small lot adjacent to the Oakhurst Community Garden. For a nominal fee, the parcel is leased to the nonprofit group for environmental educational purposes. More recent greenspace purchases include the Glenn Creek Nature Preserve, a two-acre passive park and the extension of Hidden Cove park through the purchase of six properties adjacent to the stream. The city also received the land donations from private developers to expand the northern portion of Dearborn Park and to create Corely Commons in the Lenox Place neighborhood.

## Solid Waste Collection

Backyard and curbside collection of household garbage is carried out on a weekly basis by the Decatur Sanitation Department. Commercial, business, and apartment garbage collection is also offered by the city, and provided by private companies as well.

Decatur residents love to talk trash. A recent posting on a local blog about the city's residential sanitation program generated over 100 comments. Decatur instituted a "Pay-as-You-Throw" refuse collection system in July 1998 in an effort to meet state requirements to reduce landfill deposits. The program was created by a community task force. Under the program, residents pay an annual fee for collection of garbage and collection and disposal of vegetative trimmings, furniture, most appliances and recyclables, and for street sweeping. Residents purchase special plastic bags from local supermarkets, hardware stores and other local suppliers to use for disposal of garbage. The cost of disposal is included in the cost of the bag. Business operators pay fees



based on the size of their commercial container and the number of service visits each week.

Once collected, solid waste is transported by the city to the DeKalb County transfer station on Memorial Drive and ultimately disposed of at the county's Seminole Road landfill. Yard trimmings are collected separately and delivered to the compost facility at the landfill. The city also conducts a voluntary, single-stream residential curbside recycling program.

The city currently hosts electronics recycling events in the spring and fall of each year and held its first Styrofoam recycling and paper-shredding event in April 2012. Trash cans and recycling bins are available for use throughout commercial areas and in city parks. The city is able to provide recycling at special events through the Georgia Recycles trailer purchased with grant funds.



## Greenhouse Gas Inventory

In June 2007, Mayor Bill Floyd and the City Commission joined the mayors of more than 800 other cities in the United States in signing the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. It commits the City of Decatur to act on behalf of its citizenry to take proactive steps to intentionally reduce its level of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) consistent with reductions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol.

There are six GHGs as identified by the International Panel on Climate Change; carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), perfluorocarbons (PFC), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>). Each of these gases contributes to the greenhouse effect by trapping heat in the atmosphere.

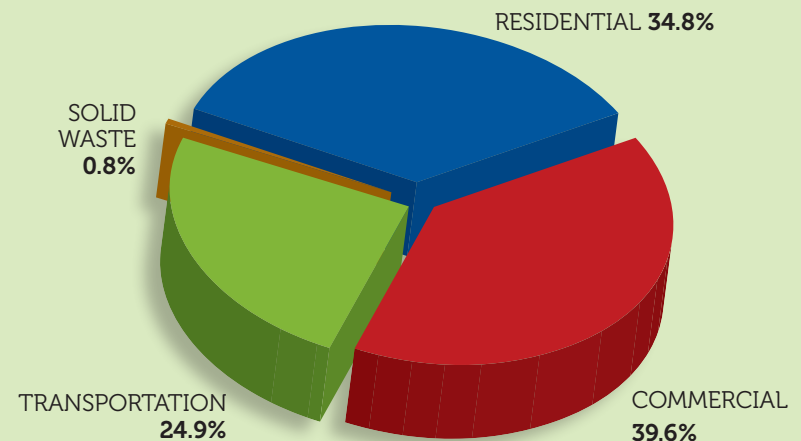
The City of Decatur's greenhouse gas inventory uses the ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Clean Air and Climate Protection Software (CACPS) tool. This tool can be used to measure emissions both at the community-wide level as well as for government operations. CACPS reports emissions in metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (MTCO<sub>2</sub>e). This plan presents data from the community-wide perspective only. The government inventory is currently under development.

GHG emissions generated in the City of Decatur in 2009 totaled 265,403 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (MTCO<sub>2</sub>e). As the table above demonstrates, the commercial sector is the largest emitter, followed by residential, transportation, and finally solid waste. Total emissions were reduced by 2 percent.

### GHG EMISSIONS BY SECTOR

	2006	2009
Residential	94,908	92,285
Commercial	105,566	105,089
Transportation	66,768	66,000
Solid Waste	2,261	2,029
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>269,503</b>	<b>265,403</b>
<b>CHANGE</b>		-2%

### 2009 GHG EMISSIONS



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PERFORMANCE METRICS

The City of Decatur intends to improve the tracking and reporting of environmental sustainability performance metrics in the coming years. For many of the metrics identified here and in following pages, data do not yet exist. They are included here to provide a complete picture of the measurement goals in each category.

## ► GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The City of Decatur has an ongoing commitment to creating a sustainable community, and works to be a leader in the municipal marketplace. Performance in this category will take into account the overall environmental impact of its facilities, fleet, programs and practices.

### Accomplishments:

- Certified Gold under the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities Program.
- Fire Station No. 2 was awarded LEED Silver certification in 2010. Renovations at Fire Station No. 1, Decatur Recreation Center, and Public Works are all being designed to achieve a minimum of Silver level certification.
- All major city facilities have received energy audits.
- Holiday light display in downtown Decatur now uses LED lights.
- Rain water captured at Public Works is being used to water trees, wash city vehicles, and other tasks.
- City Commission adopted a No Net Loss of Trees Policy in 2010 for property owned and maintained by the city government.
- Created an internal Green Team.
- The City of Decatur fleet currently contains five hybrids, and one electric vehicle.

Performance Metrics	FY2011
Greenhouse gases emitted from city operations	TBD
Resources used by government facilities	
Electricity (kWh)	1,569, 853
Natural gas (therms)	42,722
Water (gallons)	TBD
Number of trainings provided for staff on sustainability issues	1 annual
Number of city-owned facilities that have received a green building certification	1
Number of alternatively fueled vehicles in fleet	5
Quantity and type of paper purchased	unknown
ARC Green Communities status	Gold Level



*Georgia Congressman Hank Johnson and Decatur Mayor Bill Floyd cut the ribbon officially opening the Decatur Farmers Market's Saturday location at the corner of N. McDonough Street and Trinity Place in May 2010*

## ► FOOD & AGRICULTURE

### Accomplishments:

- Supported the creation of Decatur's Kitchen Garden.
- Developed guidelines for Decatur's Urban Agriculture Initiative.
- Created Community Garden Guidelines.
- Approved Tanyard Community Garden, the first garden to be approved under the Community Garden Guidelines.
- Provided support for existing community gardens in Decatur such as assisting with the installation of a rainwater catchment system at Sugar Creek Garden.
- Recognized as a "Partner Up! for Public Health Hero" by the Georgia Department of Public Health for the Decatur Farm to School Initiative.

Performance Metrics	FY2011
Number of community gardens on city-owned property or supported by the city	5
Number of community gardens on private property	TBD
Square feet of gardens on city property, city schools, or supported by the city	TBD
Number of residents within ¼ mile of a community garden	TBD
Estimated annual attendance at farmers markets	TBD



## ► NATURAL SYSTEMS

### Accomplishments:

- Designated a Tree City USA since 2010.
- Completed stream bank restoration and bio retention elements at Glenlake Park.
- Developing street improvements that include green infrastructure elements.
- Reduced flooding risks by increasing city protected lands in the flood plains of Hidden Cove Park.
- Purchased 12 acres of greenspace since 2003.
- Facilitated the creation of the Glen Creek Nature Preserve and the Woodlands Garden.
- Conducted a survey of the 153 street trees in the commercial area of Ponce de Leon Avenue and determined they are valued at \$337,944 and that 96 percent are in good or better condition.

Performance Metrics	FY2010	FY2011
Estimated annual potable water consumption by Decatur residents based on DeKalb County per capita average (gallons)	698,297,000	726,899,325
Developed park acres per 1,000 population	4.90	4.90
Acres of publicly owned greenspace	108.22	108.22
Data on impaired streams	TBD	TBD
Tree canopy coverage	45.1%	TBD
Number of trees planted on city-owned property	TBD	425

## ► BUILDINGS AND ENERGY

### Accomplishments:

- Completed community greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories for 2006 and 2009.
- Garnered over \$600,000 in grant funding from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program to administer various energy savings projects.
- Created the Kilowatt Crackdown Neighborhood Energy Challenge and recognized Decatur Heights as our inaugural winner.
- Developed and launched the DecaturWISE residential energy efficiency rebate program.
- Facilitated three commercial energy efficiency retrofits.
- Worked with Southface Energy Institute to design and deliver energy efficiency code training to metro-Atlanta building code officials.

Performance Metrics	2006	2009	2010
<b>Greenhouse gas emissions by sector (CO2 equivalent, tons)</b>			
Residential	94,908	92,285	TBD
Commercial	105,566	105,089	TBD
Transportation	66,768	66,000	TBD
Solid Waste	2,261	2,029	TBD
<b>Residential electricity and natural gas usage</b>			
electricity (kWh)	93,546,290	90,977,839	103,172,564
natural gas (therms)	4,236,570	4,117,236	4,910,577
<b>Commercial electricity and natural gas usage</b>			
electricity (kWh)	124,878,587	123,729,476	128,502,454
natural gas (therms)	1,868,236	1,911,940	2,244,191
<b>Transportation Streets and Highway Lighting</b>			
electricity (kWh)	1,438,323	1,609,321	1,594,147

Drilling a well to help provide geothermal heating and cooling at Fire Station No. 1



## ► TRANSPORTATION

### Accomplishments:

- Received Silver level Walk Friendly Community designation
- Eighteen projects were identified in the community transportation plan including the redesign and reconstruction of key intersections, corridors and selected traffic calming projects. The timeframe for completion is the year 2020. To date, nine projects are underway or completed.
- Four traffic calming projects have been designed or completed including “sharrows,” mid block crossing, concrete medians and speed humps. Each project complies with the Complete Streets policy and many provide innovative bicycle facilities like bike boxes and cycle tracks. Streetscaping and wide sidewalks address pedestrian needs.
- Supported alternative transportation through Safe Routes to Schools program, Car Free Day, the Ride to the Capitol and the work of the Active Living Board with Team Decatur Host Safe Routes to school in six schools in the City.

Performance Metrics	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
Percentage of streets/roadways with a sidewalk	TBD	94%	96%
Percentage of streets/roadways with bike lanes	TBD	5%	5%
Vehicle miles traveled within city limits (calendar year)	101,500,000	102,100,000	TBD
Number of greyfield sites redeveloped	TBD	TBD	TBD
Participation rates for Safe Routes to Schools	TBD	TBD	TBD
Bicycle Friendly community status	not rated	not rated	Honorable Mention
Walk Friendly community status	not rated	not rated	Silver level

## ► RESOURCE CONSERVATION & WASTE REDUCTION

### Accomplishments:

- Host twice a year Electronics Recycling Day with a total of nearly 1 million pounds recycled as of 2011.
- Launched inaugural paper-shredding and Styrofoam-recycling event in 2012.
- Recycled an average of 26 percent of residential solid waste between 2009-2011.
- Diverted an average of 52 percent of residential solid waste from landfills between 2009-2011 due to the recycling and composting program.
- Collected an average of 400 tons of recycling per year from commercial, governmental, and multi-family properties between 2009-2011.

Performance Metrics	FY2009	FY2010	FY2011
Tons of curbside recycling collected	2187	2078	2107
Tons of curbside yard waste composted	1886	2192	2144
Tons of curbside solid waste taken to landfill	3744	3870	3943
Curbside recycling rate	28.0%	25.5%	25.7%
Total curbside diversion rate	52.1%	52.5%	51.9%
Number of commercial recycling accounts serviced by City of Decatur	12	32	39
Tons of electronics collected during semiannual Electronics Recycling Day	74.22	89.02	56.78
Tons of restaurant and residential food waste composted	unknown	unknown	unknown
Tons of useable food diverted to food pantries	unknown	unknown	unknown

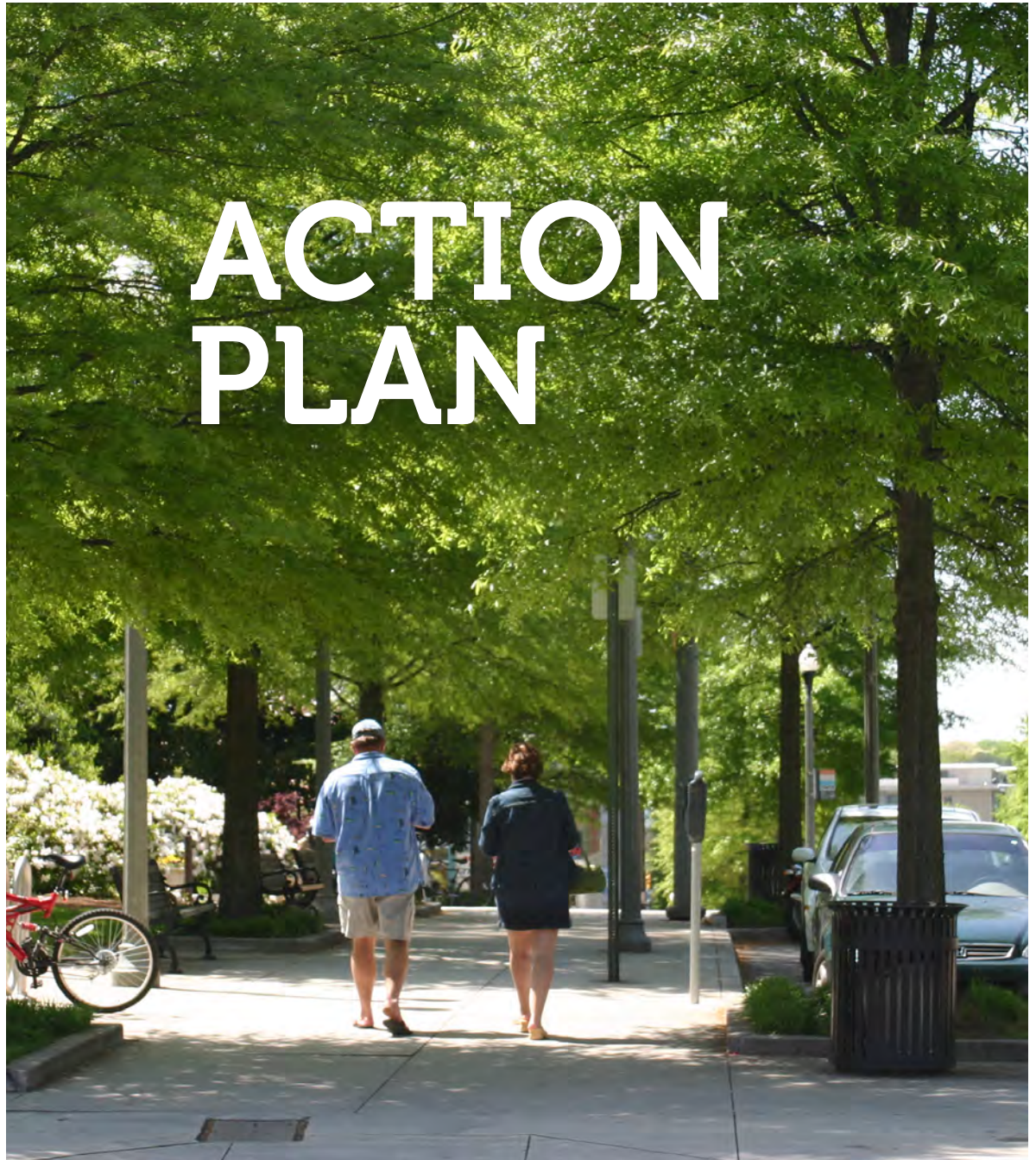


## ► EDUCATION & OUTREACH

### Accomplishments:

- Formed the Environmental Sustainability Board in 2009.
- Hosted community information tables at numerous green events such as Earth Day, Car Free Day, Greenfest and more.
- Developed ongoing communications program to educate and engage community on various initiatives.
- Received Gold level certification from the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities Program.
- Partnered with Oakhurst Community Garden Project and the DeKalb Public Library to create the Living the Green Life Speaker Series.
- Created Green Your Event materials for those managing public events in Decatur.

Performance Metrics	FY 2010	FY2011
Number of sustainability focused events supported by the City of Decatur	TBD	TBD
Number of stories included in the Decatur Focus related to environmental sustainability	28	31
Recognition received by City of Decatur for environmental sustainability initiatives	ARC Green Communities Bronze Level Certification	Tree City USA, ARC Green Communities Gold Level Certification





## GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

---

The City of Decatur is committed to identifying specific measures that will help reduce the overall environmental impact of its facilities, fleet, programs and practices as well as encourage environmentally sustainable practices in the community. The tasks outlined in this section will serve as the basis for the development and implementation of practical programs, policies and initiatives to reduce waste, improve energy efficiency, use nonpolluting transportation alternatives where possible, and participate in other measures to help reduce pollution and secure a healthy environment for future generations.

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that the City of Decatur operates in a manner which:

- is environmentally sustainable
- takes into consideration the full impact of the products and services it purchases
- enhances the City of Decatur's reputation as a fiscally, environmentally and socially responsible municipal government
- addresses the health and well-being of the people who use and occupy city-owned buildings

## GOAL

## 1

**Promote sustainable practices within local government operations to reduce the overall environmental impact of facilities, fleet, programs and practices.**

► **TASK A: Measure sustainability performance on a regular basis and communicate the results to the staff and community.**

Performance measurement is critical in any high performance organization. In order to ensure that the City of Decatur's sustainability efforts are having a positive impact on resource use, a standardized system of measurement and reporting must be developed and regularly communicated to staff and the public.

At a minimum, this system should annually measure:

- Utility usage at all city buildings and facilities (electricity, natural gas, and water).
- Energy usage by sector (residential, commercial, transportation) in Decatur.
- Fuel usage for city vehicles.
- Energy savings that can be directly attributed to city programs such as the Kilowatt Crackdown or DecaturWISE.

At a minimum, this information should be communicated:

- Annually.
- Through the Decatur Focus, city website, blogs and listservs.
- At sustainability-related events.
- Through participation in regional and national certification programs, like the Green Communities program at the Atlanta Regional Commission.

► **TASK B: Educate, empower and engage employees in the city's sustainability commitment.**

The City of Decatur has several policies and practices in place to encourage sustainable behavior among staff such as the "lights out" and "anti-idling" policies. It is the responsibility of all City of Decatur employees to understand these policies and conduct their work in a sustainable and responsible manner; however it is our goal to move beyond simple compliance. Empowering staff to become involved in sustainability efforts increases the effectiveness and spurs creative solutions.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Annual training on the city's green policies.
- Quarterly meetings of the green team.
- Recognition and information sharing on the intranet of best practices.

► **TASK C: Ensure that existing city facilities are operated in a manner which enhances sustainability.**

The City of Decatur has a responsibility to operate existing facilities in such a way as to balance organizational, community, economic, and environmental considerations.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Minimizing the resources needed to operate the facility such as energy and water.
- Providing adequate recycling opportunities.
- Using environmentally preferable cleaning products and practices.

### ► **TASK D: Ensure that city building projects implement strategies that enhance sustainability.**

It is the policy of the City of Decatur to plan, design, construct, manage, renovate, and maintain its facilities and buildings to be sustainable. This applies to new construction and renovations. The current policy states that facilities and buildings shall be certified under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for New Construction (LEED-NC) or equivalent certification standards.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Continue to implement existing Green Buildings Policy. (SP 12D)
- Complete energy conservation audits of city facilities. (SP 12E)

### ► **TASK E: Apply environmentally preferred purchasing procedures to all city operations.**

The City of Decatur strives to procure materials, products or services in a manner that integrates environmental, fiscal, and social responsibilities and utilize best practices in sustainable procurement as they evolve. Employees are encouraged to purchase the most environmentally friendly product that can perform a specified task unless deemed cost-prohibitive. Whenever feasible, specifications for recycled and environmentally preferable products should be included in contracts.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Purchasing paper with a minimum post consumer recycled content of 30 percent and/or that is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.
- Utilizing life-cycle cost assessment (i.e. lowest total cost when taking into account planning, design, construction, managing, operation, maintenance and disposal or disassembly costs over the useful life of a product.)
- Purchasing products that are certified by Energy Star or the Watersense program.

### ► **TASK F: Continue to encourage waste reduction and recycling strategies in all city facilities and operations.**

In order to encourage proper waste reduction and recycling behavior among City of Decatur employees, appropriate receptacles for the collection of traditional recyclable materials (paper, glass, metal, and plastic) must be provided at all work locations. Educational efforts must also be put into place to ensure that all employees understand how and where to recycle traditional and non-traditional materials. Whenever possible, electronic forms of communication should be employed to reduce paper usage.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Provide recycling containers at all work locations and check them annually.
- Place Recycling Education posters at all work locations.



### ► **TASK G: Reduce energy consumption by city fleet vehicles and employees.**

Reducing the energy consumed by the city fleet and employees lessens the impact on the environment and conserves financial resources. Air pollution, specifically the fine particulate matter created by emissions, has been shown to increase rates of cardiovascular disease. The adopted Sustainability Policy will guide all identified purchasing strategies.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- New vehicle purchasing preference should be given to hybrid or alternative-fueled vehicles. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 12H)**
- Replace conventional gasoline-fueled vehicles such as carts and pick-up trucks used by groundskeepers, maintenance workers, parking management with battery operated, plug-in electric and/or non-motorized.
- Assess the feasibility of using biodiesel fuel in diesel vehicles.
- If a hybrid or alternative-fueled vehicle is not feasible, ensure that new vehicles meet the intended use while maximizing fuel efficiency and minimizing emissions.
- Ensure compliance with the City of Decatur's anti-idling policy.
- Minimize vehicle miles traveled by enacting measures such as meeting at centralized locations and/or teleconferencing.



### ► **TASK H: Ensure compliance with the sustainable landscape procedures policy.**

In 2010 the City of Decatur adopted the Sustainable Landscaping Procedures policy for city-owned property. The goals of this policy are to encourage environmental protection and enhancement, reduce energy and water usage, and create a sense of place. It outlines guidelines for plant selection, water conservation, soil preparation and care, and landscape maintenance.



Staff should ensure that these procedures are being followed both internally as well as by any contractors responsible for landscaping activities on city-owned property.

#### **Identified Strategy:**

- Require review and approval of landscaping plans by the Engineering Department to determine compliance with the landscaping policy.
- Require compliance with the landscaping policy as part of the contract with third party vendors.
- Adopt a long range maintenance schedule for parks and greenspaces in the city. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 13D)**
- Remove all invasive plant species from city property and ban the sale of invasive species on city property. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 13G)**

## FOOD & AGRICULTURE

---

Healthy food, food that is nourishing and safe, is a basic need for every community. Decatur residents are passionate about access to locally produced food. They also want to minimize adverse impacts on the environment caused by the production, distribution, consumption, and disposal of our food and drink.

While there are many benefits to having healthy food options and a sustainable food system, in the context of this Sustainability Plan the access to and cultivation of healthy food may impact land and water quality, greenspace management and food waste management.

From an environmental perspective, it is important that community gardens (as well as all landscape areas) are designed and managed to protect our limited water and soil resources and to reduce the movement of pollutants into our waterways. Community gardens in Decatur are often located near waterways, due to the availability of open spaces near floodplains. This makes protection of water resources a primary concern with the implementation of community gardens. While local gardens can at least in part replace food sourced from distant locations, the greenhouse gas, air pollution, and energy consumption benefits of locally produced food can only be realized if vehicular transportation in the production of local food is minimized. Community garden areas need to be within walking or biking distance for participants in order to minimize the use of cars in accessing the sites.

## GOAL

## 2

**Promote healthy food options within a sustainable food system.****► TASK A: Ensure that local food production meets city environmental objectives.**

In 2010, the Decatur City Commission adopted a set of environmental guidelines, developed and recommended by the Decatur Environmental Sustainability Board, to be used in decisions regarding the development of community gardens. The guidelines were designed to ensure that local food production would proceed in an environmentally responsible manner, especially in environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains.

The City of Decatur will continue to implement the community garden guidelines and look for environmental pitfalls related to food production in regard to energy use, water use, erosion and pollution. Potential areas of concern include:

- Transport to or between gardens
- Collecting or distributing compost
- Irrigating gardens
- Collecting or distributing food
- Controlling weeds, plant disease and insects

**Identified Strategies:**

- Review and update the Community Garden Guidelines at least once every five years.

**► TASK B: Support the expansion of urban gardening opportunities.**

(STRATEGIC PLAN 12C)

In the Decatur strategic planning process, Decatur citizens expressed a strong interest in developing more opportunities for local food production. In order to accomplish this, the City of Decatur will support opportunities for the creation of community gardens throughout the city, located so that everyone in the city will be within walking distance (0.25 mile) of a garden.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Identify potential garden sites throughout the city.
- Connect community gardeners with composting program(s).
- Promote interaction between gardens and community food banks.
- Encourage food garden education programs at all city schools.

**► TASK C: Promote the expansion of food composting.**

Food composting strategies will help divert commercial and residential food waste away from landfills and into the local ecosystem.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Identify viable centralized composting program options while taking into account the environmental impacts of various collection strategies.
- Educate residents about proper composting methods as well as the benefits of diverting compostable food waste away from landfills and into the ecosystem.
- Connect community gardeners with composting program.



### ► **TASK D: Capture viable food that might otherwise be wasted.**

Unused food that might be discarded from restaurants, events, conferences, schools, etc., could be diverted to community food banks or homeless shelters.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Identify a viable operator for a food re-allocation program.
- Partner with restaurants, conference centers, schools, food banks and homeless shelters to discuss options for diverting unused food.

### ► **TASK E: Encourage regular local farmers markets, and support expansion of existing ones.**

Farmer's markets offer a way for urban communities to access locally grown, fresh products directly from the farm.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Promote the growers and vendors at the farmers markets as a component of the local economy.
- Develop and promote a farmers market facility(s) as a city feature and destination for visitors and residents.



### ► **TASK F: Explore the potential use of bio-diesel.**

The use of fat, oil and grease (FOG) by-products generated by some restaurants could be utilized in some vehicles and equipment as a bio-diesel fuel alternative to petroleum fuel. The use of FOG as a bio-diesel fuel could divert used oils from sewers and landfills.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Research the actual benefit of bio-diesel to environment, demand for bio-diesel and cost of developing an alternative fuel program that utilizes bio-diesel.
- If program is viable:
  - Implement a program or partner with private party.
  - Partner with restaurants and residents to collect oils.
  - Promote use and availability of bio-fuels in the city.

## NATURAL SYSTEMS

.....

A healthy ecosystem is composed of a built environment that works in conjunction with the natural environment. Green infrastructure elements, like trees and bioretention systems, can be implemented to replicate environmental processes while meeting engineering demands.

There were no local ordinances to regulate stormwater or protect stream buffers in Decatur until the 1980s. In urban environments, management of stormwater is critical to water quality and flood control issues. Traditional approaches to stormwater regulation are an important part of stormwater control and, as noted under Task A, compliance with stormwater regulations is important to water quality protection. However, residents have indicated their desire to restore water flows in the city to more natural conditions. Channelization of streams, increasing levels of impervious surface, and development of drainage systems that promote rapid overland movement of water to streams change the hydrology of our landscape. Stormwater controls that seek to restore natural flows are desirable in order to protect water quality, control flooding, and restore instream water quality and quantity needs.

A goal of this plan is to enhance opportunities for outdoor activity so that the people are physically active and the community is vibrant. Many of the goals in other areas of this plan involve reduction in the use of automobiles. Safe and enjoyable outdoor spaces are great incentives to leave the automobile behind and come outside to play.

This category is designed to be broad. It includes strategies to address:

- The protection of our water and land resources
- Quality of life for Decatur citizens, visitors, and downstream communities
- The City's natural inhabitants and their habitat

## GOAL

## 3

## Maintain healthy ecosystems and outdoor recreational opportunities.

### ► TASK A: Remove local streams from the state list of impaired waters (305b/303d list).

Decatur is at the headwaters of four major stream systems that lead to the larger Chattahoochee and Ocmulgee River watersheds. Several stream sections in the city violate state water quality standards. Because we are located at the headwaters, any water quality issues likely stem from local origination. Our actions can help to improve and protect water quality and address local impairments to provide for safe streams, healthy aquatic habitat, recreational opportunities, and clean water for downstream communities.



#### Identified Strategies:

- Create a local volunteer stream monitoring program.
- Promote pet waste removal on private and public land.
- Ensure compliance with city and state stormwater requirements in local development.
- Educate citizens about local water pollution threats and how to address them.
- Protect riparian buffer areas for water quality benefits.
- Install additional dog waste bag stations in public places and along streets to reduce the amount of dog waste that pollutes streams. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 13I)**

### ► TASK B: Restore in-stream flows (overland and in-stream) to mimic pre-development flows more closely and to the extent practical.

Channelization of streams, increasing levels of impervious surface, and development of drainage systems that promote rapid overland movement of water to streams change the hydrology of our landscape. Stormwater controls that seek to restore natural flows are desirable in order to protect water quality, control flooding, and restore instream water quality and quantity needs. Streambank restoration returns the stream to its pre-development condition allowing for slower water flow, the return of native plant and animal species as well as increased water quality.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Encourage the installation of green infrastructure, including rain gardens, bio retention, water harvesting, green roofs and constructed wetlands on private property in the city.
- Increase the installation of green infrastructure in public development projects, including road, park, and greenspace projects.
- Educate property owners about the benefits of managing stormwater close to its source.
- Conduct stream bank restoration and naturalization of stream channels in the city.
- Install signage or other information system to explain restoration activities along creeks. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 13F)**
- Develop a city-wide tree replacement program to provide for tree canopy benefits to stormwater control.
- Explore the benefits of pervious hardscape.

### ► TASK C: Maintain or reduce city dependence on water and wastewater systems, within limits of public health needs.

The City of Decatur relies on the DeKalb County Department of Watershed Management for potable water and wastewater treatment. High quality drinking water and wastewater treatment is resource-intensive, and as a city, reducing our need for these services will increase our resilience and decrease our environmental impacts.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Require the retrofit of plumbing fixtures to high-efficiency and low-flow fixtures on resale of residences in the City of Decatur (similar to DeKalb County).
- Promote the installation of water harvesting cisterns on private property.
- Support the development of gray water use in the city while adhering to public health guidelines.
- Incorporate changes as part of the Unified Land Development ordinance.



### ► **TASK D: Promote enhanced water conservation adoption in drought periods.**

Georgia has experienced several severe droughts in recent years, and increasing demands on our water resources from an increasing population in the state creates additional stress on our surface water and groundwater systems. Comprehensive water resource management should have general conservation measures designed to manage total water use during normal periods, and drought management measures to attain further potable water reduction during dry periods.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- See actions listed under Task C.
- Establish a reduction goal during drought of 20 percent (from a 2010 water use baseline).

### ► **TASK E: Protect and enhance the city's tree canopy.**

One of Decatur's greatest assets is the mature tree canopy. However, trees serve many other purposes beyond aesthetics and many of them support the sustainability goals of this plan. Trees reduce stormwater runoff, reduce soil erosion, conserve energy use by reducing heat through shade and transpiration, improve air quality and provide wildlife habitat. An extensive tree canopy is essential in supporting many of the goals outlined throughout this Sustainability Plan. Decatur's tree canopy coverage was measured at 45 percent in 2010.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Update the city-wide tree ordinance with a specific focus on development/redevelopment projects.
- Develop a city-wide tree replacement plan and strategies to assist property owners to plant and care for trees. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 13A)**
- Integrate street trees and a green infrastructure stormwater system.
- Develop city-wide goals related to tree diversity and preferred species.
- Incorporate changes as part of the Unified Land Development ordinance.

### ► **TASK F: Promote native and drought tolerant landscaping.**

Plant material is more likely to thrive and require less water and maintenance in regions in which it is native. However, there is non-native plant material that performs well in this region with low maintenance and water use, and should not be disregarded. Promoting native plant material implementation along with xeriscaping practices could minimize water use for irrigation and increase wildlife habitat support.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Educate residents, the city staff and business owners about native plants and xeriscape practices.

### ► **TASK G: Improve and increase public access to greenspace.**

Physical, mental and emotional health has been shown to be improved by exposure to trees and natural greenspace. People are more likely to work to protect greenspaces when they are able to experience them. Greenspace benefits many of the goals outlined throughout this plan, so protecting and expanding it is vital to its success. Protection of Decatur's greenspaces is more likely to be supported by the public if there is access to those places.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Acquire and expand greenspace holdings when opportunities and resources are available. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 13E)**
- Expand trail networks into public greenspaces.
- Encourage the development of "Friends Of" greenspace groups.
- Utilize streams and greenspaces as outdoor classroom laboratories for schools and other institutions.
- Adopt a long-range maintenance schedule for greenspaces to assure that they are well managed. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 13D)**

## BUILDINGS & ENERGY

.....

In Decatur's case, buildings – and the activities that take place in and around them – account for around 74 percent of the energy used in the community. There are many things that can be done in the built environment, both with existing building stock and with new buildings, to decrease their environmental footprint. Many of these things can be done at low to no cost, and increase comfort and decrease operating costs for years to come.

Decatur is largely built out, so mechanisms to help improve the environmental performance of existing building stock must be explored. However, new buildings (or significant renovations) should not be ignored.

## GOAL

## 4

**Increase the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings.****► TASK A: Use zoning and building codes to ensure more energy efficient development.**

Georgia's energy code is already one of the best in the country. However, there are opportunities to go above and beyond in a way that benefits homeowners and tenants. Examples of more stringent energy efficiency standards include ASHRAE 189 and IGCC.

Additional green building practices, such as promotion of transit-oriented development, water efficiency, and reuse/recycling of construction materials can be promoted through an updated zoning and/or building code.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Continue expedited permitting for green developments.
- Update energy codes and building codes to require or incentivize green development in the Unified Land Development ordinance.
- Support the redevelopment of surface parking lots with mixed use developments. **(STRATEGIC PLAN 9C)**

**► TASK B: Create an energy efficiency education program targeted towards businesses.**

Education is a powerful tool to demystify the process of saving energy. The commercial sector in Decatur is responsible for about 40 percent of emissions. Targeting educational efforts to this sector has the potential for significant energy reductions.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Create a Green Restaurant Certification.
- Develop a Kilowatt Crackdown for Businesses.

**► TASK C: Use retro-commissioning as a tool to increase the efficiency of existing building stock.**

Retro-commissioning is the application of the commissioning process to existing buildings. Retro-commissioning is a process that seeks to improve how building equipment and systems function together. Depending on the age of the building, retro-commissioning can often resolve problems that occurred during design or construction, or address problems that have developed throughout the building's life. In all, retro-commissioning improves a building's operations and maintenance (O&M) procedures to enhance overall building performance.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Educate private property owners on the benefits of retro-commissioning their buildings.
- Explore creating a revolving loan fund to help building owners and tenants perform retro-commissioning on their facilities.



### ► **TASK D: Use and promote widespread energy efficiency and water conservation retrofits.**

Different from retro-commissioning, retrofits involve actually replacing systems such as lighting or HVAC within a building. Payback periods vary by project, but many – such as lighting and HVAC – have a fairly quick payback period.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Educate private property owners on the benefits of retrofits in their buildings.
- Explore creating a revolving loan fund or providing grants to help building owners and tenants perform retrofits on their facilities.
- Facilitate a connection between technical experts and property owners who need assistance with retrofits.

### ► **TASK E: Encourage preservation of historic buildings as identified in the Decatur Historic Resources Survey.**

Preserving the energy embodied in historic structures has long been a goal of the City of Decatur. It is commonly said that the greenest building is one that's already built. This goal addresses the need to encourage and incentivize adaptive reuse and restoration of historic structures while ensuring that the true cost of demolition is addressed.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Provide incentives for adaptive reuse or restoration of historic resources as opposed to demolition.
- Implement a fee structure for demolition permits that reflects the real impact to the community, with historic structures having a higher value as a community resource.
- Institute Pay as You Throw or other strategies to reduce construction waste.

## GOAL

# 5

**Increase the use of clean energy sources.**

### ► **TASK A: Explore starting a municipal electric utility.**

Currently, all Decatur residents and business must use Georgia Power as their electric utility provider. Greater choice in sustainable options may be available by identifying other providers or using other sources of energy. Though not a small task, controlling the electric utility would provide Decatur residents with much greater flexibility around the sources of their electricity.

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Explore starting a municipal electric utility.
- Research other utility providers in the southeast and their sustainability programs.

### ► **TASK B: Facilitate opportunities for individual homeowners and businesses to generate clean energy on-site.**

Based on our current landscape and climate, the two most promising technologies are solar water heating and solar electric (photovoltaics).

#### **Identified Strategies:**

- Research providing innovative financing mechanisms (such as on-bill financing for energy efficiency or renewable projects) to Decatur residents and businesses for using clean energy.
- Research current zoning and building ordinances to remove any barriers to using solar power.

# TRANSPORTATION

---

Transportation accounts for around a third of Decatur's greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions come from trips originating in Decatur, ending in Decatur, or transiting through the city. While the city has little impact on those trips that transit through Decatur, it should continue to look at mobility solutions that reduce the environmental footprint of travel originating or ending in the city.

Technology is moving very quickly in the automotive arena to increase efficiency and uptake of clean energy sources. Hence, what is written today may not hold true for the 10-year scope of this plan. Automotive technology isn't the only solution to Decatur's transportation needs. Support infrastructure for walking and biking are key, as is promoting opportunities to avoid travel altogether (such as teleworking).

As with buildings, GHG emissions can capture much of the change over time in Decatur's transportation footprint. However, vehicle miles traveled (regularly measured by the Georgia Department of Transportation) and bike/walk censuses can also help measure progress over time.

## GOAL

## 6

## Increase the opportunity for using alternative transportation.

### ► TASK A: Increase the mode share for energy efficient transportation.

There are a number of ways to increase the use of energy efficient transportation, including (but certainly not limited to):

- Transit
- Biking
- Walking



Decatur is currently working on educational and encouragement programs, like Walk for Lunch, that increase the numbers of pedestrians and cyclists, and should continue this work.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Create parking incentives for hybrid and/or alternative fuel vehicles.
- Promote bike sharing programs (such as the Decatur Yellow Bike program that was active several years ago).
- Promote telecommuting – both for its staff and for businesses within the city. The Clean Air Campaign is a natural partner in this effort.
- Promote carpooling and vanpooling.
- Continue the Safe Routes to School program.

### ► TASK B: Continue to implement the recommendations of the community transportation plan. (STRATEGIC PLAN 14A)

The City of Decatur is committed to becoming an “active living community,” where sidewalks and streets are designed to encourage walking and biking. To ensure that all transportation improvements in the City incorporate features for safe travel facilities for users, the City Commission adopted The Community Transportation Plan, on April 7, 2008. Complete Streets are defined as streets with safe travel facilities for all users. Ensuring that Decatur continues to implement these recommendations is critical to the sustainability of our community. By offering alternative transportation methods, and making active living choices more attractive, Decatur can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles and work to ensure better air quality.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Update parking standards to allow shared parking. (STRATEGIC PLAN 14H)
- Reconstruct all existing corridors and intersections to make them Complete Streets.
- Consider establishing an internal shuttle system.



*Just about everything in Decatur is easily reached on foot. The recently adopted “Walk There Decatur” program uses signage that includes QR codes to provide directions to different destinations via smartphone, and an estimated number of minutes required to walk. For instance, it takes just 24 minutes to walk from the Oakhurst business district to the cemetery office.*



## GOAL

## 7

## Reduce the environmental impact of current transportation systems.

### ► TASK A: Support the installation of alternative fuel source stations in public or semi-public places.

One of the most significant impediments to clean energy use in vehicles is the lack of fueling infrastructure. Though there have been millions of flex-fuel vehicles, capable of running on both gasoline and ethanol, sold over the past decade, most go their entire life powered exclusively by gasoline due to the lack of ethanol availability. The city should not presume to pick a “winning” fuel technology. However, making provision for infrastructure is key to ensuring Decatur’s viability for the coming century.

Fueling infrastructure that should be considered includes:

- Biodiesel: perhaps the most compatible biofuel with current infrastructure, this would require little in the way of future action to implement.
- Ethanol: also largely compatible with existing infrastructure.
- Electricity: charging stations require access to high voltage and amperage electric lines. The city should consider areas of high trip destinations (such as the square) for charging infrastructure, and look at how it can fit into existing parking plans.
- Hydrogen: requiring new infrastructure, the city should look at permitting issues associated with this fuel.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Research opportunities and barriers for the establishment of alternative fuel source stations.

### ► TASK B: Reduce vehicle idling.

Decatur residents have voiced the need to establish anti-idling policies for some time. The city has implemented such a policy for its fleet, and the City Schools of Decatur has posted signs in school drop-off zones.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Study what mechanisms would work best for areas not covered by these actions to date.



## CONSERVATION & WASTE REDUCTION

---

While Decatur residents have fully embraced the concept of recycling, increasing recycling rates within the business and residential community will help us achieve the end goal of reducing Decatur's impact on the environment. Concurrently the city needs to work to reduce waste of resources by encouraging conservation and reuse.

## GOAL

## 8

**Minimize waste.****► TASK A: Create a promotional program to encourage citywide composting.**

Composting food scraps reduces waste and creates nutrient-rich fertilizer. According to the Georgia EPD, 12 percent – or more than 800,000 tons – of the waste sent to Georgia landfills each year is food waste, with approximately 48 percent of this coming from the greater Atlanta area. Food waste represents the largest single category of solid waste going into the state's landfills. As part of this initiative, existing compost collection sites could be opened to the public and more broadly advertised, or curbside composting could be implemented. Restaurants and other businesses that do not already compost could be encouraged to do so.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Consider partnership opportunities with other organizations/institutions.
- Increase communications to residents regarding composting basics and the benefits of individual residential composting.
- Consider the model ordinance and language provided through the Georgia EPD pertaining to composting.

**► TASK B: Expand the existing recycling options to include commercial properties and hazardous waste - like paint, motor oil and electronics.****(STRATEGIC PLAN 12J)**

Currently Decatur offers semi-annual recycling program for residents to encourage recycling of electronics. There are also local businesses that accept other materials such as motor oil, paint, and clothes hangers. The city would like to expand consumer awareness of these programs through mapping out locations and ongoing communications about these programs.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Propose an ordinance which requires all businesses to recycle. Consider city service as their first alternative.
- Update and reissue map for locations that take recyclable items such as batteries, paint, and clothes hangers.
- Explore opportunities for recycling or properly disposing of hazardous materials, partnering as appropriate with DeKalb County or similar events.
- Continue to support and promote twice-a-year electronics recycling days in the city.
- Work with event managers to ensure that permitted special events take efforts to minimize their environmental impact.

**► TASK C: Increase opportunities for recycling in public places.**

Decatur currently has several solar recycling bins and smaller bins. Residents have asked for more access to public recycling and this fits in with our plan to increase recycling rates both through the residential program and throughout the city's public and commercial spaces. The city will explore opportunities to increase the impact of these programs through private and public resources.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Co-locate recycling bins with trash cans.
- Explore opportunities with recycle vendors.
- Assess current trash bins and determine number of recycling bins needed. Consider combo cans in some instances.
- Incorporate plans to include recycling bins along with trash bins in all new installations/ streetscape.
- Continue to provide recycling at all public events sponsored by the city.



### ► **TASK D: Install additional pet waste bag stations in public places and in residential neighborhoods.**

Currently the city offers several dog waste stations that provide baggies and depository containers. Decatur will assess locations and needs for additional dog waste stations.

- Perform a census of current pet waste collections stations.
- Work with public works to determine need for locating additional collection stations.
- Educate city residents about the impacts of pet waste on streams.
- Monitor local streams for evidence of bacterial contamination.



## GOAL

# 9

### Reduce consumption.

#### ► **TASK A: Develop and incorporate best practices to discourage the use of disposable food and beverage containers, water bottles, and disposable plastic bags.**

Decatur can reduce overall consumption of plastic food service items and other disposable containers, which are currently not recycled on a regular basis. Decatur will explore options within the commercial and residential communities. The Decatur website and other communication tools will be used to educate Decatur residents and businesses on the principles of reducing consumption and explore other avenues such as government and business involvement in reduction programs.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Launch pilot with local businesses to educate the public on benefits of reducing use of disposable bags.
- Explore pilot education program regarding benefits of eco friendly containers.
- Review local health code policy regarding reusable vs disposable carryout and drink containers.

#### ► **TASK B: Educate and encourage the community to reduce consumption.**

Create ongoing messaging on smart consumption for Decatur residents and the business community.

#### Identified Strategies:

- Provide educational materials with citizens through list serves, Decatur Focus and school newsletters on a regular basis.
- Work with City of Decatur to engage residents through such vehicles as Decatur 101, city sponsored events, and other programs.
- Provide residents a cost/benefit evaluation of Pay as You Throw (PAYT) and the payoff of increased recycling and composting.



## EDUCATION & OUTREACH

---

The education and outreach efforts of the Environmental Sustainability Board involve ensuring effective and efficient communications with the city's key stakeholders and constituents through a variety of channels thereby ensuring they are aware of the city's sustainability initiatives, how they are able to support and participate in these activities as well as increase citizens' awareness on their own impact on the natural environment.

## GOAL

# 10

**Raise public awareness and engagement in the city's Sustainability Initiatives.**

► **TASK A:** Develop annual communications and outreach plans to ensure residents (individuals and businesses) are aware of key city programs and initiatives.

### Identified Strategies:

- Host and participate in key eco-focused events.
- Leverage city communications channels to ensure regular sharing of sustainability focused content.
- Create special "Green Insert" for Decatur Focus.
- Create annual Sustainable Decatur Progress Report to show progress towards goals outlined in the Decatur Sustainability Plan.
- Leverage neighborhood and other specialty group list serves and organization communications channels to share news and encourage participation in various green initiatives and events.

*This "Green Initiatives" insert to the Focus was published in June 2012.*



## GOAL

# 11

**Educate and encourage city residents and businesses to adopt more sustainable behaviors and practices.**

► **TASK A:** Continue educational programs to encourage individual participation in specific environmental sustainability programs like the **Kilowatt Crackdown**. (STRATEGIC PLAN 13C)

### Identified Strategies:

- Develop communications plans related to select sustainability programs and campaigns (e.g., "Break your Bag Habit" and other programs focused on helping individuals reduce, reuse, and recycle)

► **TASK B:** Host eco-focused education programs and support 3rd party events to engage residents/businesses/organizations.

### Identified Strategies:

- Ensure Decatur 101 and other city-managed engagement programs (e.g., Homeowners Workshops) contain sustainability focused content.
- Leverage city-affiliated organizations such as the Decatur Business Association as appropriate to distribute sustainability information.
- Provide venues for eco-focused organizations to gather.
- Support third-party events as appropriate.





► **TASK C:** Look for creative ways to recognize businesses and organizations that best exemplify sustainable principles.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Launch Green Restaurant designation program.
- Explore options/feasibility of launching other sustainability recognition programs/ awards to increase awareness by recognizing buildings, landscapes, businesses, and other activities that exemplify sustainable principles.

# GOAL 12

**Ensure Decatur is recognized for its leadership in its sustainability programs and initiatives.**

► **TASK A:** Identify and apply for sustainability awards and grants, and identify opportunities to share our story.

**Identified Strategies:**

- Continually explore opportunities for key eco-themed awards and grants (e.g., Atlanta Regional Commission Green Communities).
- Provide content as needed to present accomplishments at key civic/government conferences, etc.
- Promote grants and awards received through various communication channels, media and neighborhood/ group listservs.

This plan was created as a joint effort between City of Decatur staff and the Decatur Environmental Sustainability Board, with significant input from residents and members of the community.



### Environmental Sustainability Board

Seated: Gary Garrett, Steve Provost (co-chair), KC Boyce (chair), Ben Jordan. Standing: Tiffany Brott, Greg Coleson, Kristin Rowles, Jill Jordan and Tony Leung

# Decatur Grows Greener

Decatur Environmental Sustainability Plan

