

Leading the Way to Sustainability

In 2010, the City of Decatur was one of the first communities to be certified under the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities Program. The city reaffirmed its commitment to being green in 2014 and again in 2018, when it recertified as a Green Community at the Platinum level. The city has implemented — and received points for — the following measures that reduce its environmental impact and promote sustainability.

Green Building

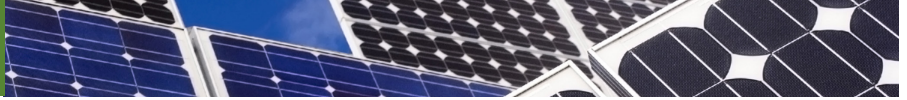
- » Requires all new city-owned buildings greater than 5,000 square feet to be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified.
- » Achieved LEED certification at five municipal facilities: Fire Station #1, Fire Station #2, Decatur Recreation Center, Decatur Public Works Building, and the Beacon Municipal Center.
- » Requires all new city-owned buildings that are not LEED certified to achieve ENERGY STAR or EarthCraft Light Commercial certification.
- » Requires all local government building renovations to be ENERGY STAR certified or follow LEED guidelines.
- » Adopted the Green Building Incentives Policy to serve as guidance for the Planning, Zoning, and Inspections Department. This policy provides incentives for building permits which include green building certifications for market rate buildings and for affordable and workforce housing.

Energy Efficiency

- » Conducted energy audits on 100% of its facilities. As a result, many buildings have been renovated to meet LEED standards. In addition, the city has entered most of its buildings into the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager utility tracking system.
- » Works with DeKalb County and Georgia Department of Transportation to install new energy-saving LED traffic signals within the city.
- » Adopted a lights-out/power-down policy requiring employees to switch off lights, equipment, and electrical and electronic devices when not in use.

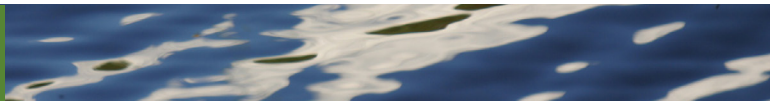
- » Installed ENERGY STAR rated cool roofs on Fire Station #2, the Decatur Recreation Center, and the Decatur Public Works building. Fire Station #1 has a combined cool roof and green roof. Signage inside the buildings educates visitors about cool roofs and their benefits.
- » Retrofitted its holiday light display with LED lights. The Beacon Municipal Center has incorporated LED outdoor lighting as well as fixtures within the building. The city also equipped its public works facility with sun tubes, retrofitted the Decatur Conference Center Parking Garage with LED lighting, and worked with Georgia Power to upgrade 1,300+ streetlights to LED.
- » Has an active inspection program for residential and commercial compliance with the Georgia energy codes.

Green Power



- » Installed solar panels on the roofs of Fire Station #1 and Fire Station #2 to provide solar water heating. Fire Station #1 also includes a geothermal heat pump system. The system eliminates bulky HVAC condensers and cooling towers, and instead utilizes the constant temperatures of the earth for cooling and heating the building.
- » Adopted the Green Building Incentives Policy to encourage the installation of solar photovoltaics on new construction projects.

Water Efficiency



- » Audited government-owned buildings for water leaks and opportunities to improve efficiency. Improvements included installing water bottle filling stations and water-saving aerators on faucets.
- » Installed a large-scale rainwater and grey water system at Fire Station #1. A 5,000-gallon cistern collects rainwater from roof surfaces and stores it for non-potable usage, primarily for washing fire trucks. A greywater system collects and treats water from showers and lavatories to use for flushing toilets.
- » Installed demonstration green infrastructure projects for stormwater runoff and infiltration at Glenlake Park and North McDonough Street. Each location has educational signage.
- » Completed an audit with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and is in compliance with the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's Water Resource Management Plan.
- » Encourages new residential subdivisions and homes to use water more efficiently by offering expedited plan review for projects that achieve WaterSense certification.

Trees & Greenspace



- » Ensures that all residents within the city live within a half mile of a park.
- » Adopted a No Net Loss of Trees policy for all city-owned property. The site plan for the Fire Station #2 renovation was developed in order to save old-growth trees. As part of the cemetery improvement capital project, all trees on the property were identified, hazardous trees were removed, and the city prepared a long-term tree replacement plan that will result in a net increase of trees. The city also replanted more trees at City Hall than were removed for safety concerns and relocated 16 trees from the Hampton Inn construction site to Glenlake Park.
- » Has a greenspace plan that includes a plan for connectivity of greenspace through the use of greenways and protection of stream corridors. The Decatur Cemetery, Dearborn Park, Oakhurst Community Garden, and the Woodlands are connected through on- and off-street trails. The city also purchased 77 additional acres at the former site of the United Methodist Children's Home and developed the Olympic Place Pocket Park and Trail.
- » Built a green roof on Fire Station #1 that decreases stormwater runoff and increases energy efficiency while providing an attractive outdoor space. The green roof also acts as a model for future private construction or renovations.
- » Adopted organic and drought-tolerant landscaping practices at all city facilities to improve environmental quality while reducing maintenance requirements and costs over time.
- » Designated as a Tree City USA Community for the past eight years. To maintain this designation, the city must have a tree commission, a community tree ordinance, a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2 per capita, and an annual Arbor Day observance and proclamation.
- » Completed a Community Forest Master Plan and Street Tree Canopy Assessment as a first step in its program to sustain Decatur's community forests. As a result of plan recommendations, the city hired a full-time arborist and updated its tree ordinance in 2014.
- » Supports several community gardens with financial and in-kind support, including: Decatur's Kitchen Garden, Oakhurst Garden, Scott Garden, Sugar Creek Community Garden, Tanyard Creek Community Garden, and Umurima Wa Burundi (Burundi Women's Garden). Created guidelines to streamline the process for new community garden proposals.
- » Provides support to the Decatur Farmers Market in a number of ways, including dedicating staff time for the market advisory board and providing communication and outreach assistance.

Transportation & Air Quality



- » Adopted a Green Fleet policy that gives preference to alternative fuel or hybrid vehicles. The city fleet currently has five hybrid vehicles.
- » Adopted a policy that prohibits city fleet vehicles from idling for more than two minutes unless it is essential for work. All drivers of city vehicles must sign and agree to this policy.
- » Incorporated a complete streets policy through the Community Transportation Plan to ensure that travel facilities are safe for all users. Complete streets were incorporated into repairs on West Ponce de Leon Avenue and West Trinity Place. These streets now include new intersection crosswalks, on-street parking, and bicycle lanes.
- » Hired a consulting firm to create optimal signal timing for four traffic corridors and provide daily monitoring of the city's traffic signals. The city works with DeKalb County to implement signal timing changes and is currently working on the Downtown Decatur Signal Retiming Project.
- » Administers a robust Safe Routes to School program that includes all eligible Decatur City elementary and middle schools, as well as College Heights Preschool and two private schools. An average of 55 percent of students participate in International Walk and Roll to School Day each year, which is promoted through the Decatur FOCUS and other social media.
- » Installed bicycle racks at existing and new community facilities. The city's bicycle parking ordinance ensures that adequate bicycle parking is available at private community establishments.
- » Adopted a Community Transportation Plan that incorporates bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly policies and planning. The chapters devoted to pedestrians and bicyclists address existing services for these users, as well as priority networks and a list of recommended improvements and policies. In 2016, the city partnered with the PATH Foundation to implement bicycle and pedestrian connections to regional destinations.
- » Designated a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community by The League of American Bicyclists since 2012.
- » Designated a Silver-level Walk Friendly Community by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration since 2011.
- » Updated the city's shared parking ordinance to reduce parking minimums and set parking maximums. A new mixed-use apartment development will share parking among a ten-story office building, a 230-unit apartment complex, and 10,000 square feet of retail. The parking garage includes 305 parking spaces. Under the previous ordinance this development would have required 510 parking spaces.
- » Became electric vehicle (EV) ready by installing two city-owned EV charging stations, taking an active role in promoting opportunities for EV charger grants, hosting educational meetings, and reaching out to private property owners to help facilitate EV charger installation. Participating parties include Agnes Scott College, Kroger, DeKalb County Maloof Building, the Alexan, The Place on Ponce, and Georgia Sierra Club.

Recycling & Waste Reduction



- » Adopted a purchasing policy that includes a preference for environmentally-preferable products. Office supply purchasing was consolidated to provide enhanced access to environmentally-preferable products and more control over purchasing. Provides reusable mugs and silverware in break rooms and, when necessary, uses bio-compostable cups and utensils.
- » Provides single-stream recycling program for traditional recyclable materials at government facilities. All employees have a small blue bin at their desk for recycling. Bins are also located in break rooms and near some entrances.
- » Has a recycling program for non-traditional items at government facilities such as ink and toner cartridges, batteries, cell phones, and electronics. There are boxes in break rooms for recycling ink and toner cartridges, and dedicated places in City Hall and Public Works for recycling electronics, batteries, and cell phones.
- » Purchases copier, fax, and, printer paper with at least 30-percent recycled content.
- » Provides curbside single-stream recycling to all single-family residents for aluminum, plastics 1-7, paper products, and cardboard. Requires all multi-family properties to provide recycling for their residents.
- » Offers curbside glass recycling for residents at a time when many communities no longer accept glass.
- » Expanded its recycling services to commercial-scale developments, opening more than 50 multi-family and commercial recycling accounts.
- » Hosts annual drop-off events at the city's public works facility for nontraditional recyclable materials such as batteries, cell phones, and electronics.
- » Collects residential yard trimmings from the curb and takes the material to be composted. The compost is made available to residents of the city and DeKalb County.

Land Use



- » Remediated a brownfield formerly occupied by a pest extermination company. The city's public works building and associated parking now occupy the site.
- » Preserves historic properties via a historic preservation ordinance and National Register Districts. Hosts an annual Old House Fair and recognizes excellence in historic preservation through the annual Decatur Design Awards program.
- » Encourages smart growth through a variety of zoning and incentives, including the creation of mixed-use zoning districts that encourage transit-oriented development and offering incentives for lifecycle housing. Two recent examples of this are the Avondale MARTA TOD, which provides affordable housing for seniors, as well as bicycle and pedestrian connection paths, and the East Lake MARTA Station LCI study.

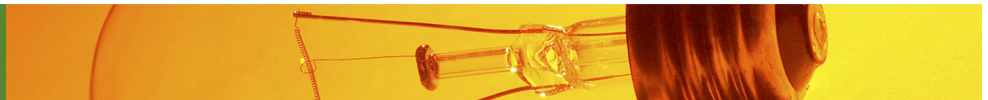
- » Maintains a listing of vacant properties. Works with landlords and potential tenants to fill and redevelop these properties. Conducted a survey of historic resources throughout the city and created a preservation plan with strategies and incentives to revitalize these areas.

Education



- » Created the citywide Decatur Grows Greener Environmental Sustainability Plan through extensive community input. The plan outlines 12 goals and several strategies the city should take to deepen its commitment to being good stewards of the environment and community resources.

Innovation



- » Established a Pay-as-You-Throw program in 1998 to encourage residents to recycle and reduce their solid waste. The program includes a strong public awareness campaign and enforcement.
- » Hosted training and advocacy courses in partnership with the Southface Energy Institute and American Public Works Association to promote sustainable and green building practices throughout the community. Courses taught residents, staff, builders, and realtors the importance of high-performance buildings in the urban fabric.
- » Became the first designated Bee City USA in the state of Georgia in 2016 as it committed to creating sustainable habitats for pollinators. The Willow Lane pollinator garden demonstrates a recent example of this commitment.

For more information on all the certified communities, visit the Green Communities webpage at <http://atlantaregional.org/greencommunities>.