



DeKalb County

Leading the Way to Sustainability

In 2009, DeKalb County was one of the first communities to be certified under the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities Program. The county raised its commitment to being green in 2014 when it was certified as a Green Community at the Silver level. The following measures have been implemented by DeKalb County to reduce its environmental impact and promote sustainability. These measures received points for certification.

Green Building



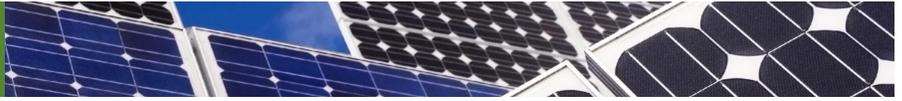
- » Opened the Gregory A. Adams Juvenile Courthouse in 2007 as a Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building. Since that time, the county has continued building LEED certified facilities, including the Porter Sanford Performing Arts Center, Sanitation Administration Building and Central Transfer Station, Hairston Library, and Tucker Library.

Energy Efficiency



- » Became an Energy Star partner in April 2009. As part of its Energy Plan for the Future, the county has partnered with SL King Technologies and Southface to assess and improve the energy performance of its facilities.
- » Adopted a lights out/power down policy for all county employees and facilities to ensure all non-emergency building lighting and electronic equipment are turned off when not in use and at the end of the work day.
- » Installed an Energy Star rated cool roof on the Gregory A. Adams Juvenile Courthouse in 2007. Educational facts about the environmental features of the courthouse are on the walls and doors throughout the building. Since 2007, DeKalb County has installed 15 cool roofs, saving an estimated 921,000 kWh in electricity each year through reduced cooling loads.
- » Continues to retrofit exit signs from incandescent to LED. To date, the county has been able to save 229,194 kWh per year with a total estimated cost savings of \$18,000 annually.

Green Power



- » Captures methane landfill gas at the Seminole Landfill to produce electricity, natural gas, and compressed natural gas (CNG) at a single landfill, the first in the U.S. to do so. To date, the landfill's Renewable Energy facility has generated in excess of 146,00 megawatts of electricity, has the capacity to produce 2.1 million gallons of transportation fuel annually, and provides compressed natural gas to 41 solid waste vehicles. The operation has the environmental equivalent of taking 30,000 cars off the road every year and will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 17,000 tons
- » Became a Certified EPA Green Power Partner. The county purchases approximately 848,000 kWh of renewable energy each year to power its Juvenile Justice Center.

Water Efficiency



- » Has six sites where rainwater is captured and used for irrigation via rain barrels and underground detention ponds. It is estimated that the county saves 102,000 gallons of potable water per year by using captured rainwater.
- » Completed an audit with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and is in compliance with the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan, Wastewater Management Plan and Watershed Management Plan.

Trees & Greenspace



- » Contains an estimated 10,350 acres of permanently protected greenspace in the county, which equates to approximately 20 acres of greenspace per 1,000 residents.
- » Adopted a Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Plan in November 2000 that sets a goal of protecting 22 percent of county land as greenspace. Since DeKalb County's greenspace program was initiated, it has protected more than 3,500 acres through acquisition; 573 of those were acquired since the county's last submission for Green Communities certification in 2009. Priorities for acquisition include preserving sensitive natural resources and wildlife corridors, protecting stream and river banks, filling voids in the park and greenspace system, and providing connectivity through greenway corridors.
- » Adopted landscaping and grounds maintenance standards with organic and drought-tolerant landscape practices for government facilities.
- » Promotes community gardens in the county through its Garden in the Parks Program that permits community gardens to be created in certain parks across the county. To date, community gardens have been established in 12 county parks.

- » Supports local farmers markets by providing free compost and mulch to farm vendors and market locations. The county's Extension Services and the University System of Georgia partnered to provide an Organic Farming Workshop for local community farmers markets. Lou Walker Senior Center partners with Atlanta Urban Farms to provide the seniors of the center an opportunity to purchase fresh, organic fruits and vegetables. The market is also open to the public.

Transportation & Air Quality



- » Gives preference for purchasing hybrid, fuel-efficient and low emission vehicles via its Green Fleet policy. The county has reduced its overall fleet size primarily through the reduction of under-utilized vehicles and the establishment of vehicle pools. The number of vehicles declined from 3,745 to 3,137, a reduction of 16 percent. From 2009 - 2011, the county's combined fuel consumption declined by 10 percent. The county has purchased 41 dedicated CNG and 93 propane alternative fuel vehicles since 2009. CNG is used in refuse collection vehicles, high occupancy commuter vans, and administrative vehicles. Propane is used in vehicles across multiple departments and the county is in the process of converting nine public safety vehicles from gasoline to propane bi-fuel.
- » Adopted a policy for no-idling of county vehicles to prevent county vehicles from idling more than five minutes. In addition to the no idle policy, the county has a pilot project in 60 vehicles to track fleet vehicle locations and monitor speeds and idle time. The program has resulted in a significant drop in long-term idling, thus increasing fuel efficiency. For heavy trucks in DeKalb's fleet, excessive idling is managed by installation of automatic idle shut off equipment, which shuts off the vehicle after five minutes of idling.
- » Provides propane and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fueling stations for its fleet vehicles. Fuel for the CNG station is produced at the county's Seminole Road Landfill.
- » Incorporated a Complete Streets policy through the county's Community Transportation Plan update to ensure that travel facilities will be safe for all users of all ages and abilities.
- » Monitors street light signals in the county's traffic control center and via desktop applications. The county's Advanced Traffic Management System plan sets a goal of installing signal new timing or confirming existing timing every two to four years. The county revisited 49 out of 63 existing signal systems within the past three years. Annual fuel savings of 228,700 gallons was achieved in the six traffic signal systems for which detailed model data was available.
- » Has 37 schools that participate in the county's Safe Routes to School program, a movement to improve the health and well-being of children in grades K-8 by making it safe, convenient and fun to walk or bike to school. The county Transportation Division does walking audits of the schools that participate in the SRTS program. From the audit assessment the county may upgrade signals, improve sidewalks, implement traffic calming measures, or upgrade intersections upgrades.
- » Incorporates bicycle and pedestrian friendly policies and planning within its Community Transportation Plan. The chapters devoted to pedestrians and bicyclists address existing levels of services for these users, priority networks, and a list of recommended improvements and policies.
- » Encourages shared parking via the county's Zoning Code Update (ZCU). The update includes ratios for determining the maximum allowable parking spaces for a property and a section devoted to shared parking.

Recycling & Waste Reduction



- » Adopted an environmentally preferable purchasing policy to purchase products that are recyclable, reusable, contain recycled materials and/or contain less environmentally harmful substances. Wherever practical, environmentally preferable products will be included in contract specifications and life cycle costs will be considered.
- » Provides comingled recycling in government buildings that includes paper, cardboard, metal containers, polystyrene cups, all plastics and all glass. Recycling bins are located near copiers and fax machines, in break rooms, and at employees' desks.
- » Provides recycling in government facilities for non-traditional items like electronics, ink and laser toner cartridges, cell phones, and batteries.
- » Provides curbside recycling to county residents including paper, cardboard, metal containers, polystyrene cups, all plastics, and all glass. More than 72,000 tons have been collected and recycled since 2005, with participation rates nearly tripling since that time.
- » Offers recycling services for commercial businesses through the County Sanitation Division. Recycling is provided for mixed paper, cardboard, plastic, aluminum and glass. To date, nearly 400 businesses participate in the program.
- » Provides regularly scheduled recycling drop-off events for items such as electronics, cell phones and batteries. There are permanent recycling drop-off locations for electronics at Seminole Road Landfill and for cell phones at three county libraries. To date, the county has prevented more than one million pounds of recyclable electronic scrap from entering the landfill.
- » Offers biannual Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection events for local residents. During its most recent event, 38,000 pounds of paint, 450 gallons of fuels, 5,000 pounds of pesticides, 75 pounds of mercury, 250 pounds of fluorescent bulbs, and 820 pounds of lead acid, alkaline, and lithium batteries and were collected and diverted from the landfill.
- » Provides curbside yard debris collection for county residents. More than 165,000 cubic yards of debris are collected and processed into compost and mulch annually. Compost is available free of charge to DeKalb residents and county supported community improvement projects.

Land Use



- » Built county facilities at several brownfield sites. The county cleaned up \$100,000 worth of ash at a former incinerator site and built the solid waste transfer station onsite to LEED standards. Most recently, the county has begun cleaning up a former five-acre brownfield site along Briarcliff Road in order to turn it into much needed neighborhood park space. The county will also be building its North DeKalb Senior Community Center on a remediated brownfield as soon as the cleanup is complete.
- » Built county facilities at greyfields. The County Fleet Maintenance Facility is located at a former car dealership and service center. Additionally, the DeKalb County Voter's Registration and Elections, Cooperative Extensions Services Group and the Tax Commissioners Office are located in a former big box facility.
- » Redeveloped an abandoned Toys-R-Us site into the county's South Police Precinct, choosing to use a previously developed property rather than an undeveloped piece of land.
- » Contains several overlay districts and Livable Centers Initiatives in the county providing for mixed use, transit oriented development, traditional neighborhood development, redevelopment, open space and other smart growth practices.
- » Encourages the private redevelopment of brownfield properties along 17 major corridors through planning, advocacy, and economic incentives provided by the county's Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund.

Education



- » Shares information about the county's sustainability initiatives with employees through regular Natural Resource Management Office newsletters. Signage is used to remind employees about the Lights Out/ Power Down and No Idling policies.
- » Created a comprehensive GreenFocus website (www.co.dekalb.ga.us/greenfocus/index.html) to educate and inform citizens about programs that promote conservation, reduce environmental impact, grow the green economy and improve quality of life in the county.

Innovation



- » Uses an Ozone System for laundry at the county jail. The system converts oxygen (O₂) to ozone gas (O₃), which serves as a disinfectant for the laundry. This has resulted in an annual savings on natural gas usage, water and sewer, and chemicals of approximately \$18,000 per year. Since installation, the county has saved a total of \$80,500. Each pound of laundry now uses approximately 84 percent fewer gallons of hot water and 35 percent fewer gallons of total water.
- » Adopted the Inefficient Plumbing Fixtures Replacement Plan Ordinance in 2008. It was the first ordinance in Georgia that requires structures built prior to 1993 to replace inefficient plumbing fixtures with low flow plumbing fixtures prior to obtaining new water service after the sale of a property. Since its inception, nearly 56,000 properties have had low flow plumbing fixtures installed upon resale.
- » Created new granite pool habitats for two critically imperiled plant species: the federally threatened pool sprite (*Amphianthus pusillus*) and the federally endangered black-spored quillwort (*Isoetes melanospora*) at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve. Currently these plants are vulnerable and the protected habitat at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve is vital for the recovery of the species. Staff members from Davidson-Arabia Mountain and the Georgia Botanical Garden have removed soil from existing pools for sterilization and relocation to the newly excavated pools. Plant samples will be collected from existing populations on the mountain, grown at the Georgia Botanical Gardens and later planted into the new granite pool habitats. Educational signage and guided tours highlight the program's value in protecting these species. The effort is funded through a \$10,000 grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

For more information on all the certified communities, visit the Certified Green Communities webpage at <http://atlantaregional.com/environment/green-communities>.