



# City of Suwanee

## *Leading the Way to Sustainability*

In 2009, the City of Suwanee was one of the first communities to be certified “Green” under the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Green Communities Program. The city reaffirmed its commitment to being green in 2013, when it recertified as a Green Community at the Bronze level. The following measures have been implemented by the City of Suwanee to reduce its environmental impact and promote sustainability. These measures received points for certification.

### **Green Building**

- » Requires all new city-owned buildings greater than 5,000 square feet to be LEED certified.
- » Suwanee City Hall was LEED certified in April 2010. It was the first city hall in Georgia and the 21st in the country to obtain LEED certification.
- » Requires all local government building renovations to be Energy Star certified or follow LEED guidelines.

### **Energy Efficiency**

- » Energy Star purchasing policy to purchase energy-efficient equipment and appliances.
- » All traffic signals within Suwanee have been retrofitted to LED by the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation.
- » Adopted a lights out/power down policy requiring employees and maintenance staff to turn off lights and all other non-essential electronic equipment when not in use. Many employees never turn on their workspace lights due to the fact that 93 percent of the working space in City Hall is lit by natural light.
- » Suwanee City Hall has an Energy Star rated cool roof. Brochures, signage and guided tours in the building educate residents about the cool roof and the building’s other environmental features.
- » Zoning ordinance addresses light pollution and energy efficiency for outdoor lighting through restricting wattage, requiring enclosed bulbs and downward pointing lighting. Also, energy is conserved by having all city street and park lights on timers so that the lights only come on after the sun goes down.

# Water Efficiency



- » Requires all new city-owned buildings to install high-efficiency plumbing fixtures such as WaterSense certified toilets, urinals and faucets.
- » The city's 2,500 gallon rainwater cistern is located at the Harvest Farm Community Garden. Collected rainwater is used to water the 70-plus garden plots.
- » Completed 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



- » Nine percent of the city's land area, or 40 acres per 1,000 residents, is protected greenspace.
- » Adopted a Recreation and Open Space Needs Assessment that has a focus on greenways. Passive greenspace and trails throughout the city connect the community. For instance, the Suwanee Creek Greenway connects to the new Town Center and City Hall as well as other multi-use and park trails. The Brushy Creek Greenway, is in the early construction stage and will allow pedestrians to walk from north of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to Town Center once complete.
- » Landscaping policy at government facilities requires minimal chemicals, native and drought tolerant plants, integrated pest management practices and more. Preserving and enhancing the natural environment is a focus for landscaping of government properties in Suwanee. For example, all 13 median islands on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard contain native and drought tolerant plants.
- » Designated as a Tree City USA Community for the past 23 years. To maintain this designation, the City of Suwanee 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.
- » Buffer, Landscape and Tree Preservation Requirements in the zoning code facilitates shade coverage in parking lots by requiring one overstory tree for every seven parking spaces and at least 200 square feet of contiguous soil space per tree.
- » Harvest Farm is Georgia's largest organic community garden, featuring 76 raised beds. Located in Suwanee's White Street Park, the garden serves as an educational resource for the community, offering classes and educational events related to gardening, organic living and sustainability. The city provides heavy maintenance to the park as well as water to supplement that which is collected in a 2,500 gallon cistern onsite.
- » Hosts a farmers market in Town Center Park from May through October. The city manages the 45-vendor market by selecting farmers and coordinating setup and cleanup.

# Transportation & Air Quality



- » Green fleet policy that gives a preference for purchasing hybrid, fuel-efficient and low emission vehicles. Suwanee is transitioning its fleet to more fuel efficient vehicles and owns three hybrid pickup trucks.
- » Adopted a no-idling policy to prevent city vehicles from idling more than three minutes. Signs provided by the Clear Air Campaign remind employees of the policy.
- » Adopted a complete streets policy to assure that new roadway construction and existing roadway improvement projects on City of Suwanee roadways include consideration for adequate infrastructure, where appropriate and feasible, for bicyclists, pedestrians, users of public transit of all ages and abilities, and the physically disabled.
- » Main roads in Suwanee, such as Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and McGinnis Ferry, are monitored and synched via the Gwinnett County Intelligent Transportation System and Traffic Control Master Plan.
- » Updated its Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in April 2011. The update re-evaluated and ranked sidewalk and bike lane improvement projects. A number of projects have been completed or are in the planning or construction phase.
- » Zoning code parking requirements have maximum parking requirements by use type and allow adjacent parcels to share parking facilities if peak usage is at different times.

# Recycling & Waste Reduction



- » Adopted an environmentally preferable purchasing policy to consider all phases of a product's life cycle; reduce waste by increasing product efficiency and effectiveness; and purchase products that include recycled content and contain less environmentally harmful substances. The city replaces disposable products with products that are re-usable wherever practicable.
- » Recycling program at local government facilities for paper, aluminum cans, plastics and cardboard. The city has also started recycling in Town Center Park during bigger events.

## Land Use



- » Offers incentives that support smart growth, such as its Suwanee Downtown Master Plan and the Planned Mixed Use Zoning District, which allows the maximum density to reach 20 units per acre, rather than eight. Recently, Davis Development took advantage of that density increase and is constructing 335 multi-family units on 19 acres in the Suwanee Gateway.
- » Analyzed the city for potential redevelopment areas and employs a variety of revitalization strategies for reuse of buildings and greyfield redevelopment. For example, the Downtown Development Authority has partnered with a private developer to repurpose historic Pierce's Corner, a 1910 building located on Main Street in historic Old Town Suwanee. The developer plans to reuse the former general store as a mixed-use structure.

## Innovation



- » The Comprehensive Landscape Inspection Program was developed to enforce the city's tree ordinance, which includes a continual maintenance clause for trees and landscapes. Properties with approved landscape plans are researched and inspected to insure landscape plan was fulfilled and is being maintained. More than 100 commercial, office, and industrial properties have been inspected with results showing that a significant number of trees had not been planted. After notification letters were sent out more than 900 trees were planted.
- » For years the city's fleet refueled at the Gwinnett County filling station in Buford, wasting an incredible amount of fuel and time. The city developed an agreement with the two local QuikTrip stations to allow fleet vehicles to refuel within the city limits. In just two short years, the city saved almost 50,000 miles of driving and 5,000 gallons of gasoline.
- » The Suwanee Municipal Court and city council meetings have gone paperless. The court, which was the first in the State of Georgia to go paperless, uses software that prevents the need for nearly 52,000 pieces of paper a year. The city also noticed that a large amount of paper was being used for City Council workshops and meetings. Now, all agendas, minutes and supporting documents are presented to Mayor and Council on iPads, with an estimated paper savings of 30,000 pieces of paper per year.

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