

SUSTAINABLE DECATUR





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Acknowledgements

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This plan summarizes the work conducted for the City of Decatur. A special thank you to the following individuals and groups who participated in the planning process and provided invaluable feedback that helped mold the plan. Without your support, expertise, and input, this plan would not have been possible. Additional thanks to all the citizens of Decatur who participated in the community workshops and provided input on the project website.

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Acknowledgements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

SUSTAINABLE DECATUR

Decatur has long valued its natural, agricultural and historic heritage. From the creation of Lake Decatur to the revitalization of downtown and historic neighborhoods there is a proud tradition of stewardship in Decatur. In 2009, the City of Decatur took an innovative step by using a portion of the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant to take a strategic view of the opportunities to explore energy efficiency from a whole-systems approach. In February 2010, the City of Decatur retained Teska Associates, Inc, and Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) to help guide the sustainability planning efforts. The team was assisted through the outreach assistance of Homer L. Chastain & Associates, LLP. The Sustainable Decatur Plan is intended to coordinate a comprehensive approach to achieve environmental, economic, and social impacts to improve the livability and quality of life in Decatur.

This Sustainable Decatur Plan was truly “authored” by the Sustainable Decatur Sustainability Team and four Working Groups. The Sustainability Team was created to guide the process, and provide necessary policy and direction decisions. The Working Groups studied the issues related to water, energy, land, waste/recycling, and made recommendations regarding strategies, goals, and projects for each topic. Both the Sustainability Team and the Working Groups were formed from a collection of City, Macon County and neighboring municipal staff and officials, business leaders, non-profit leaders, and other community stakeholders. While some of the recommendations will be the responsibility of the City of Decatur, the City’s role is more of a catalyst than the sole agent of change. For Decatur to be a truly sustainable community there must a joint vision of accountability for individuals, organizations, and businesses to work together to implement change.



Vision

The Decatur area promotes economic prosperity, social and community well-being, and environmental stewardship for generations to come.

We welcome the world to join our region to seek innovative, marketable, and environmentally sound public and private actions, strong collaboration to improve the community, and involve residents who are stewards of their city and environs.



Wildflowers sprout up on the banks of Lake Decatur.

Principles

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The principles of the Sustainable Decatur Plan are directly linked to the Vision Statement in order to form the backbone of the recommendations of the Plan. Thus, the vision statement and the principles provide the framework upon which sustainable goals, strategies, and actions were formed. The following is a list of principles that Sustainable Decatur believes in:

- A sustainable Decatur will provide economic opportunities, social and community well-being, and stewardship of our environment.*
- We will develop partnerships among the business community, residents, community leaders, municipalities, county, state and federal government that are necessary to achieve a sustainable community.*
- We will protect and restore water, land, and air to preserve biological diversity, increase environmental health, and protect a natural resource base for future generations.*
- We will utilize community and natural resources efficiently by recognizing the interconnections between quality of life, land use, transportation, energy, water, affordable housing, air quality, waste, economic development, and the natural environment.*
- We will foster community awareness, responsibility, involvement, and education as key elements of successful policies, programs, and projects.*

Water



Energy



Land



Recycling



Richland Community College in Decatur is working to restore native grasses via the Prairie Restoration Program.

2030 Goals

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The Plan sets long-term planning goals for the year 2030, as well as shorter-term goals for the year 2020 that frame the recommendations of the implementation strategies.




-  The Decatur region will be served with a sustainable water supply to meet current and future needs.
-  Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be utilized in 50% of new development by 2030 to filter stormwater and reduce runoff.
-  Energy consumption in Decatur will be reduced by 25% in households and 10% for commercial and industrial use by 2030.
-  Renewable energy sources will account for 25% of all electricity usage by 2030.
-  Bicycle, pedestrian and transit trips will increase by 25% by 2030, while vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita will be decreased by 25% by 2050.
-  New development in the “urban core” will account for 60% of the all new development by 2030.
-  Community supported agriculture and urban gardening will increase in acreage to 300 acres by 2030.
-  Waste going to landfills will be reduced by 50% by 2030.

2020 Goals

Water

-  **Goal 1:** Decatur will ensure that it has an adequate water supply to allow for both population growth and economic development.
Indicator 1: Increase water supply capacity by 10,000 acre feet
Indicator 2: Dredge portions of Lake Decatur by 2,887 acre feet over next 5 years
Indicator 3: Improve Lake Decatur water quality by reducing nephelometric turbidity (NTU)
Indicator 4: Decrease domestic water usage per capita by 10%
-  **Goal 2:** Improve stormwater quality and reduce runoff by implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Indicator 1: Reduce citizen response system reports of flooding by 25%
Indicator 2: Increase annual expenditures for capital improvement projects to reduce flooding
Indicator 3: Provide capital improvements to address stormwater for at least a targeted 116 acres
Indicator 4: Retrofit at least 116 acres existing development with Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Indicator 5: Achieve at least 50% of new development to be designed with BMPs
-  **Goal 3:** Promote environmentally responsible and efficient conveyance & treatment of wastewater to meet long-term needs.
Indicator 1: Increase lineal feet of sewer rehabilitation from 11,000 to 50,000 ft annually
Indicator 2: Reuse at least 2.5 million gallons per day of municipal treated water
Indicator 3: Reduce number of sanitary overflows to zero
Indicator 4: Reduce number of consumer response for sewer overflows to zero

Energy

-  **Goal 1:** Decatur will be conscious of building energy usage and utilize all technologies and techniques to increase efficiency
Indicator 1: Reduce average consumption per household by 25%
Indicator 2: Reduce commercial average consumption per household by 10%
Indicator 3: Reduce industrial average consumption per household by 10%
Indicator 4: Reduce energy usage for municipal-owned buildings by 10%
-  **Goal 2:** Decatur will reduce total and average household Vehicle Miles Traveled
Indicator 1: Reduce Vehicle Miles Travelled (vmt) by 15%
Indicator 2: Increase transit usage per population by 15%
Indicator 3: Increase % of population within ¼ mile of bus route from 80% to 90%
Indicator 4: Increase % of streets with sidewalks from 38% to 45%
-  **Goal 3:** Decatur will investigate and utilize renewable energy opportunities, when available and cost effective, to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels
Indicator 1: Increase wind energy production to 75% of the electric utility's renewable energy portfolio
Indicator 2: Increase solar energy production to 6% of the electric utility's renewable energy portfolio
Indicator 3: Consume 25,000 tons of perennial grass energy grasses in Decatur and Macon County
Indicator 4: Export 50,000 tons of perennial grass energy grasses

2020 Goals (cont.)

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Land

- Goal 1:** Decatur development practices will focus on urban infill and revitalization.
Indicator 1: Increase permits for significant additions/renovations for urban development from 48% to 65% of development of all permits
Indicator 2: Increase new single-family construction within urban core from 39% to 50% of new development
Indicator 3: Decrease the amount of street pavement per housing unit of new development by 10%
Indicator 4: Increase the number of landmarked properties to 12 structures on national historic property list, 2,500 parcels in national historic districts and 1,000 parcels in local historic districts
- Goal 2:** New development and redevelopment in the Decatur area will incorporate all appropriate Sustainable Neighborhood Design and Practices.
Indicator 1: 25% of new single family developments will utilize conservation design practices
Indicator 2: Achieve at least 50% of new development to be designed with BMPs
Indicator 3: 100,000 sq. ft. of public property will use natural landscaping
- Goal 3:** Decatur will promote sustainable agriculture practices, and be a national leader in urban/neighborhood and community supported agriculture.
Indicator 1: 200,000 sq. ft. of dedicated urban/neighborhood agriculture
Indicator 2: 15,000 acres of Macon Co. agriculture using alternative crops
Indicator 3: 300 acres of Community Supported Agriculture

- Goal 4:** Develop and promote a market for the sustainable production of bioenergy
Indicator 1: Create market conditions to create demand for 10,000 acres of perennial grass.

Waste/Recycling

- Goal 1:** Reduce waste at the source
Indicator 1: Increase single family recycling participation rate from 15% to 30%
Indicator 1: Increase total weight of recycled materials from 1,430 to 3,148 tons
- Goal 2:** Embrace beneficial reuse
- Goal 3:** Reach our region's full potential for recycling.
Indicator 1: Increase total weight of recycled materials for schools, commercial, and industrial uses from 1,128 to 2,258 tons
Indicator 2: Increase total yard waste
- Goal 4:** Encourage use of recycled products.
Indicator 1: Seek a 50% reduction in waste going to landfills

BUY LOCAL AT THE DECATUR FARMERS MARKET

Who knew an ear of corn or fresh tomato could improve your health, your community and the environment, all at the same time? Buying local Decatur foods is a simple way to do all three. Local food doesn't suffer the "jet lag" of produce trucked across the country. It puts more money back into Decatur's economy and saves a whole lot of gas.



Decatur Farmers Market

Cross-Cutting Projects

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Four cross-cutting projects provide a framework for implementing sustainability in Decatur:

1 | Public Education Campaign – a citywide campaign to promote sustainable techniques through outreach, workshops and education efforts by means of a variety of media and partnerships. The public education campaign should include outreach, marketing and community involvement in all aspects of the plan. Key components include:

- *Understanding the value and conservation of water.*
- *How to save money by investing in energy efficiency.*
- *How to preserve the environment by reducing, reusing, and recycling.*

2 | Urban Core Demonstration Project – a concerted effort with local citizens to provide outreach and education to improve an existing neighborhood. A variety of sustainable strategies will be implemented varying from the use of rain gardens and home energy audits to rapid expansion of recycling efforts and reclaiming vacant land for community gardening. Targeted strategies will show cumulative changes in a specific geographic area and allow the City to gather data to show improvements over time: capital cost reductions, property value increases, energy savings per household, reduction in flooding incidents, water quality improvements, recycling rate improvements and waste reduction. Key actions include:

- *Recruiting community leaders to develop a neighborhood plan that will incorporate multiple aspects of sustainability – from creating community gardens and urban greening efforts, to reducing flooding through the use of BMPs to reducing waste, to encouraging new infill development.*
- *Work with the public education campaign to target a direct outreach effort throughout the urban demonstration area.*
- *Target public and private fundraising to provide resources for energy audits and retrofits, installation of BMPs, and reuse of vacant lots for urban greening.*



The Sustainable Decatur website is an interactive tool to use for public outreach and education.



Infill development and quality neighborhoods are priorities of Sustainable Decatur.

Cross-Cutting Projects

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3 | Newly Developing Area Demonstration Project – working in partnership with landowners in a developing area to demonstrate Best Management Practices (BMPs), energy saving appliances, and green building techniques. The purpose of this focused project is to not only create a model area built with sustainable development and subdivision techniques but also to show that a market in Decatur exists for this type of development. Key actions include:

- Recruit landowners and/or developers to work together with the City and other agencies to create a demonstration project in a newly developing area
- Promote compact, viable, and sustainable neighborhood patterns
- Promote the use of conservation design and green building to preserve natural spaces and reduce energy consumption
- Utilize naturalized stormwater management to reduce capital costs and promote infiltration of stormwater
- Target energy programs such as renewable energy generation and smart meters in new development

4 | Economic Development and Green Jobs – an emphasis in sustainable development to promote commercial and industrial development; education and workforce training; and growing green jobs and skills. Key actions include:

- Market education partnerships and work to retain students to live in Decatur post-graduation
- Market Decatur as a city for entrepreneurship
- Utilize Farm Progress Show as a vehicle to market and attract investment in sustainable technology in Decatur
- Build sustainable bioenergy production and market
- Attract new green building
- Work with industry to efficiently utilize energy and water while growing economic activity



Conservation Design Examples | Teska Associates, Inc.



Strategies & Projects

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The City must be an active partner in planning and implementation of the various strategies.

The final report includes over 90 individual projects. Based on input from the Sustainability Team and Working Groups each project was given a priority ranking and timeframe in order to better assist the City and its partners in identifying and allocating resources to accomplish the goals of the Plan. While all the projects are worthy of the City and its partners attention, it was important identify a few key priority projects to start within the next year. Identification of a few key projects and completion of them in an aggressive timeframe will build greater momentum in completing all the projects of the Plan. These projects are:

Water | Water supply, stormwater, and wastewater are all a part of a seamless system of the water cycle. As such it's imperative for Decatur to plan for water supply, manage stormwater, and treat and reuse waste water.

Energy | Establishing energy strategies and projects are vital to the city's long term viability. Understanding energy and how it is consumed is important for two reasons: one part consumer, and one part environmental:

- *Rising energy costs: The cost to produce energy from natural gas, and oil is rising. A reduction in consumption of these sources of energy means fewer dollars spent on energy bills. This bottom-line result is meaningful all the way from the household level, the small business, the school district, to the municipal government.*
- *Energy in buildings / transportation accounts for the highest greenhouse gas emissions: Nationwide, over 90% of all emissions are a result of the consumption of energy in buildings (electricity and natural gas) and transportation energy (oil, petroleum, gasoline). A significant reduction of energy consumption in buildings and by transportation will result in a reduction in emissions as well.*

Land | Decatur's recent Comprehensive Plan promotes urban infill and redevelopment because such development supports Decatur's existing residential base, reduces the need for costly new infrastructure, provides economic development opportunities, and builds on the sense of community. A central core strategy is to rebuild the market in the urban core through public and private actions. As a community, we need to ensure that homeowners and businesses will receive a return on their investment in the urban core. Through a variety of techniques, leadership from the public and private sector, cooperation among neighborhood groups, and incentives for private sector investment, the development market for infill can be rebuilt over time.



Carpooling, recycling, turning off unnecessary lights and switching out old appliances are among the simple but meaningful acts that reduce our environmental footprint.

FILL ME IN! WHAT IS URBAN INFILL

Urban infill is defined as new development that is sited on vacant or undeveloped land within an existing community, and that is enclosed by other types of development. The term "urban infill" itself implies that existing land is mostly built-out and what is being built is in effect "filling in" the gaps. The term most commonly refers to building single-family homes in existing neighborhoods but may also be used to describe new development in commercial, office or mixed-use areas.

Strategies & Projects

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While infill and redevelopment should be encouraged and promoted, we recognize that in order for Decatur to grow both in population and jobs land will be developed outside of the urban core. However, this new development does not have to occur at the expense of environmental protection. For newly developing land a goal is to make it more resource and environmentally-friendly, by incorporating specific sustainable development techniques and green buildings.

Waste/Recycling | The very essence of recycling is about sustainability, as the common understanding of recycling is the use of waste as a resource to manufacture new products and reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfills. Reducing landfill waste includes three components:

- *Reduce the amount of trash thrown out (landfill)*
- *Reuse products as much as possible*
- *Recycle items that can be resourced into new products (paper, glass, cardboard, etc. . .)*

Implementation

Like all planning documents, the Sustainable Decatur Plan will prove useful only to the extent that a sustained implementation effort is maintained and achieved. Achieving measurable success in Decatur will be a long-term effort, requiring a partnership between the City and various interests. For Decatur to be a truly sustainable community there must a joint vision of accountability for individuals, organizations, and businesses to work together to implement change.

Adoption of this Plan does not signal the end of the planning process in Decatur. Rather, it signals the beginning of a process of continuing implementation whereby the Plan serves as a guide for both public and private decisions affecting the future of the community. The final section of the document is a detailed Implementation Plan – identifying every goal, strategy and project/action, lead entity, the timeframe, the priority level, and participating partners.

The Plan is a living document that is a guidepost for action. Through implementing these projects, Decatur will be a more livable, economically competitive, and dynamic community for years to come.



Promote infill development in the urban core and conservation development in newly developing areas.



Decatur will be switching to a single stream recycling approach that is an easier “all-in-one” approach for participants. Recycling participation often rises quite dramatically.

Strategies & Projects

* A full set of over 90 action plan steps are included in the final chapter of the plan.

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Key Water Strategies and Projects

Strategy	Project	Action Steps
Improve Drought Preparedness	Develop a drought preparedness plan	-Work with State Water Survey to draft detailed drought preparedness plan.
Expand public water supply to provide a sustainable source for the future.	Develop use of shallow aquifer	-Support City's effort to expand water capacity by determining efficient, sustainable means to ensure adequate water is available to support the population and economic development.
	Work with ADM on water supply enhancement	
	Proceed with plans for Lake Tokorozawa.	
Maintain capacity and quality of Lake Decatur and its watersheds.	Reduce silt and continue to dredge Lake Decatur to maintain capacity	-Continue dredging effort to sustain Lake Decatur as a vital supply of water. -Work with agricultural community and property owners to reduce runoff and sedimentation into Lake Decatur.
Incorporate the use of BMPs to manage stormwater in order to reduce runoff and improve water quality	Update Stormwater Management Ordinance	- Review and update stormwater management ordinance. - Work with County, Mt. Zion, and Forsyth for consistent codes.

Key Energy Strategies and Projects

Strategy	Project	Action Steps
Provide incentives for improving energy efficiency.	Develop an energy assessment or energy audit program for all sectors and identify options for providing assistance in the implementation of energy efficiency strategies (e.g. revolving loan fund; identify grant monies; etc.).	-Create online do-it-yourself energy assessment tool. -Create energy audit program that provides more specific energy efficiency strategies. -Identify range of financing options.
	Obtain energy audits for all public buildings and implement energy efficiency strategies.	-Audit all public buildings Create implementation plan for a mix of recommendations. -Publicly compare building consumption (e.g. Energy Star rating or by energy use intensity) for community education. -Consider method for ongoing building performance monitoring to track energy consumption and address issues when they arise.
Provide education on energy efficiency.	Develop energy efficiency campaign / education that Institute/encourage behavioral change as "a way of life/doing business" individually and collectively.	-Explain how energy efficiency benefits "me"—all sectors; all consumers (the homeowner; the business owner; the college student; facility managers, large industry etc...). -Develop K-12 educational component. -Leverage area higher learning institutions for assistance (Communications/marketing; education curriculum design).
Understand existing renewable energy opportunities and constraints.	Review current city ordinance and policies to ensure it supports renewable energy and doesn't hinder it.	-Review zoning ordinance, building code and property maintenance-related codes in particular for elements that would prohibit small scale renewable energy, unintentionally. -Research and consider on-site renewable policies for wind and solar.
Develop a market for sustainable bioenergy production.	Begin test projects of growing perennial bioenergy crops that utilize less water and fertilizer and test the impacts on water quality.	- Seek demonstration areas to test efficiency of various perennial grasses
Promote increased transit usage.	Develop educational campaign on the benefits of using transit.	-Create this program in conjunction with other programs such as carpooling, carsharing, and bicycling. At first, consider targeting particular audiences (e.g. student population.)

Strategies & Projects

* A full set of over 90 action plan steps are included in the final chapter of the plan.

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Key Land Strategies and Projects		
Strategy	Project	Action Steps
Develop a market for homes in urban core	Reduce risk for urban infill development by developing financial and partnership programs to incentivize development and assist financially distressed properties.	<p>Create a Land Bank Program / Community Land Trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create land banking agency/community land trust, or utilize existing organization if possible -Identify funding sources -Identify properties for receivership/land banking / land trust -Outline program -If necessary, legally hand off property to non-profit housing developer. -Redevelop / improve lots
Support Neighborhood Planning and Improvement	Develop neighborhood plans to identify key projects that will increase homeownership, property maintenance, and quality of life to retain vibrancy of existing building stock.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Outlying purpose and goals of neighborhood planning program. -Identify area to target for neighborhood planning. -Recruit participants in neighborhood planning process. -Identify funding source. -Consider hiring outside assistance if necessary.
Promote, require, and incentivize techniques that preserve land, promote common open space, and natural stormwater management.	Amend zoning ordinance to allow "Conservation Design Development" as a permitted use in all residential zoning districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Amend zoning code to allow Conservation Development by-right. -Amend zoning code to add Conservation Development standards. -Amend subdivision code as necessary
Covert vacant and underutilized urban core properties into community gardens and urban agriculture uses.	Set aside areas of city Land that could be used for urban agriculture demonstration projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Choose one or more highly visible location. -Establish joint public/private partnership.

Key Waste/Recycling Strategies and Projects		
Strategy	Project	Action Steps
Increase recycling practices.	Improve existing residential waste and recycling collection procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve efficiency of waste collection - Promote use of recycling totes to encourage greater participation in recycling - Limit collection of yard waste and encourage composting at collection points in neighborhoods and at the county composting.
	Expand beyond residential recycling to include other sectors.	-Research the requiring of businesses to recycle as part of annual licensing (e.g. liquor licensing).
Increase community education and outreach for recycling, reducing waste, and reuse of products.	Develop and implement public education program utilizing local media, TV, newspaper, neighborhood organizations, websites and online social media (e.g. conscious shopping, recycling)	<p>Educational Programming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Benefits (individual/collective) of recycling -Educate consumers and businesses about need to reduce waste -Educate regarding financial and environmental costs of single use items and packaging -Involve schools (e.g. K-12 education; colleges)



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