City of Alpharetta

Leading the Way to Sustainability

In 2010, the City of Alpharetta 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 2018 when it recertified as a Green Community at the Gold level. The city has implemented — and received points for — the following measures that reduce its environmental impact and promote sustainability.

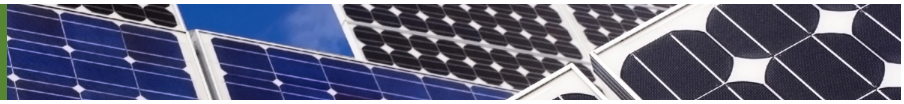
Green Building

- Requires all new city-owned buildings greater than 5,000 square feet to be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified, with exceptions for buildings for which certification costs exceed $25,000.
- Requires all local government building renovations to be ENERGY STAR certified or follow LEED guidelines.
- Offers incentives for developers building LEED, EarthCraft, and ENERGY STAR certified projects, including expedited plan review, processing and permitting, and building and site inspection. Eight buildings, including the AdvancED building, have received LEED certification and utilized the city's green building incentives.
- Offers incentives for affordable and workforce housing entities to build green housing developments by offering expedited plan review, processing and permitting, and expedited building and site inspection for LEED, EarthCraft and ENERGY STAR certified projects.

Energy Efficiency

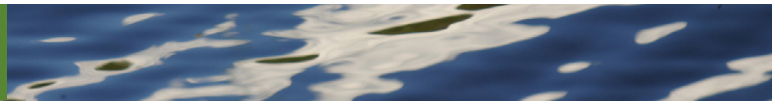
- Adopted an ENERGY STAR purchasing policy to procure energy-efficient equipment and appliances.
- Retrofitted all its traffic signals with new LED signal light inserts, saving the city approximately $2,500 per month in energy consumption.
- Adopted a lights-out/power-down policy requiring employees and maintenance staff to switch off lights and all other non-essential electronic equipment when not in use.
- Adopted a Night Sky ordinance to limit excess lighting, which unnecessarily wastes energy and degrades the nighttime visual environment. The Carrington Academy is an example of a recent development that meets the regulations by providing energy-efficient, full cut-off lighting fixtures.

Green Power



- Offers expedited plan review, plan processing, and inspections for the installation of new solar power systems that are a minimum of 1 kWh and meet certain design criteria.

Water Efficiency



- Captures rainwater at Rock Mill Park for irrigation to establish new plantings. At Webb Bridge Park, rainwater is pumped from a retention pond to irrigate its ball fields. Onsite rain barrels provide water for the landscaping at the Public Works Department and Cogburn Park. At the Old Rucker Road Community Farm, rain barrels are used to water both landscaping and garden patches.
- Developed Rock Mill Park with environmental features such as a green roof pavilion, low-impact development, rain gardens, and native drought-tolerant plants. The park has won numerous awards for its use of low-impact development and stormwater best management practices. Educational materials are displayed throughout the park to inform visitors of these unique features and explain the benefits of proper stormwater management.
- 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.
- Partnered with multiple organizations to actively educate citizens of all ages about water via the following community events and others: The Water Drop Dash 5k and Kids' Fun Run, the Northern Children's Water Festival, essay contests, Adopt-A-Stream, and Project WET. The city has offered ten education and outreach programs and 13 public participation and involvement activities since 2014.
- Offers expedited plan review, processing and permitting — including expedited building and site inspection — for developers building new WaterSense-certified homes.

Trees & Greenspace

- Adopted a No Net Loss of Trees policy for all city-owned property and has dedicated over $500,000 to replanting contracts since 2014.
- Created the 2035 Comprehensive Land Use Plan that includes a future greenspace plan with greenways, a goal for 20-percent of city land to be protected greenspace, and requirements for open space and tree protection. The city officially adopted the North Point Activity Center Livable Centers Initiative, which expands the greenspace inventory and connects greenspaces through the Alpha Loop and Big Creek Greenway projects.
- Built a demonstration green roof pavilion with hands-on education at Rock Mill Park. There are demonstration tables near the green roof to educate visitors on its benefits, materials, and plants.

- Has a comprehensive landscape management policy that includes guidelines for integrated pest management and drought-tolerant landscapes.
- Designated as a Tree City USA Community for the past 28 years. To maintain this designation, the city has 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.
- Encourages 50-percent shade coverage in parking lots through landscape development standards that require a minimum of one canopy tree for every eight parking spaces, and a minimum of 200 square feet of contiguous soil space per overstory tree. The Atwater shopping complex and TD Ameritrade office building are recent developments that meet these regulations by providing adequate overstory trees per number of parking spaces.
- Donated land, provides water and maintenance, and facilitates community donations for the Alpharetta Community Garden. Residents who lease a plot for a season are provided with soil and three complimentary starter plants. The city also owns the Old Rucker Road Farm and Community Garden, which includes an education pavilion and plots, with future plans for individual plots, an orchard, and school and camp programs.
- Provides the location and publicity assistance for the Downtown Alpharetta Farmers Market that is held Saturday mornings from April through October.

Transportation & Air Quality

- Adopted a Green Fleet policy that gives preference to purchasing fuel-efficient and lowest-emission vehicles. Currently, Alpharetta has eleven Flex Fuel vehicles in its fleet.
- Adopted an anti-idling policy to prevent city vehicles from idling for longer than three minutes, unless in traffic or on routine stops.
- Established a traffic control center in 2005. As a result, peak travel time has been reduced by 21-percent. This has led to an annual estimated savings of 400,000 driving hours, 300,000 gallons of fuel, and a reduction in more than 3,000 tons of vehicle emissions.
- Has an active Safe Routes to School program for elementary and middle schools. The city has worked with the schools on speed enforcement and has completed a number of infrastructure projects to improve the walking and biking environment around the schools.
- Completed a bike plan and adopted bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly policies and standards to improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations throughout the city. Has been actively implementing its Alpha Loop and Big Creek Greenway multi-use trail plans.
- Encourages shared parking through the Unified Development Code, by offering a 25-percent reduction in required parking spaces in cases when multiple principal uses will not utilize space during the same hours. To consolidate parking, the Downtown Master Plan offers a ‘parking in-lieu fee’ for communal shared parking areas.
- Adopted a Unified Development Code that requires electric vehicle charging stations at developments with 100 or more parking spaces.

Recycling & Waste Reduction

- Adopted an environmentally-preferable purchasing policy to purchase products that are recyclable, reusable or contain recycled materials, as long as the purchase price does not exceed ten percent of the cost of a less-sustainable product. The product comparison includes lifecycle cost considerations when applicable.
- Provides a single-stream recycling program for traditional recyclable materials at city offices. All employees have a small blue bin at their desks for recycling paper, plastics, metal, and glass. Bins are also located in break rooms and near copiers.
- Collects electronics throughout the year for recycling at one of the city's biannual Electronics Recycling Event days. Cell phones, batteries, fluorescent lights, and ink cartridges are collected throughout the year and recycled through private vendors.
- Purchases paper with at least 30-percent recycled content for copy, computer and fax paper. The city saves more than 84 trees each year by using paper with recycled content.
- Provides curbside recycling to single-family residents for paper, metal containers, plastic, and corrugated cardboard. In order to increase residential curbside recycling rates, the city partners with hauler Republic Services and RecycleBank to offer residents incentives to recycle. Over 17,000 tons of material have been recycled since 2014.
- Elected to keep glass in its curbside recycling mix during a time when many communities no longer accept it.
- Requires all businesses to recycle a minimum of 25-percent of the solid waste that they generate, which results in an estimated 12,000 tons per year.
- Offers drop-off events for residents to recycle electronics, cell phones, and batteries. Over 80,000 pounds of materials have been recycled since 2010.
- Holds an annual household hazardous waste and paint collection day for residents to properly dispose of items like paints, thinners, stains, cleaning products, pool chemicals, and pesticides. Some of the collected items are even used as alternative fuels. Over 220,000 pounds of hazardous materials have been properly disposed of since 2014.

Land Use

- Built Maddox Park on the site of a remediated brownfield that was previously an auto repair and fueling station. The new City Hall and City Center project is a city-remediated brownfield site that was a former gas and service station.
- Located several local government facilities at previous greyfield sites, including the Crabapple Government Center and the Engineering/Public Works Departments. These were previously a vacant church and warehouse, respectively.
- Adopted a Historic Preservation Incentive ordinance in 2015 to encourage saving and repurposing

historic buildings. The Ben Manning house is a recent example of development that has taken advantage of this ordinance.

- Establishes smart growth development strategies and policies for the redevelopment of the North Point Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and Alpharetta Downtown Master Plan areas.
- Created the City of Alpharetta Downtown Plan/LCI and the North Point Activity Center LCI, to inform developers of the incentives available for redeveloping the downtown area. These incentives include, among other things, density bonuses, reduced impact fees, and parking reductions.

Education

- Implemented the EverGreen School Program that develops recycling and environmental curriculum and provides schools with educational resources and materials. The EverGreen School Program has reached over 3,000 students since 2014.

Innovation

- Has an active enforcement program for its 18-month landscape bond requirement on trees and landscaping planted under the Tree Ordinance requirements. City staff inspects newly-planted trees throughout the 18-month period. If any trees are unhealthy or dead at the final inspection, and the owner has not responded during this time, the city notifies the surety company that the bond is in default. The company then requests that the client replace the trees and city staff continues to inspect them until they are established and viable.
- Requires all new construction and major renovation projects to demonstrate how the project will reduce onsite water use by at least ten percent. Examples of implementation include the installation of cisterns to capture rainwater for irrigation and the installation of high-efficiency plumbing fixtures.
- Promotes composting to reduce yard wastes and other organics. Composting workshops and truckload sales of composting bins have provided approximately 1,000 composting bins to the public since 2010.
- Switched to an electronic plans submission system that provides an online application, plan submittal and review application for preliminary plats, construction plans, final plats, and as-builts. Since September 2013, the city has received nearly 2,600 projects electronically, saving 260,000 sheets of 24” x 36” site plan paper and 312,000 sheets of 8.5” x 11” paper.

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