

Climate Conscious Community

A Greener Greater Atlanta Designation

OVERVIEW + PREREQUISITES



August 2020
Atlanta Regional Commission
Natural Resources Group

Overview

What is the Climate Conscious Community designation?

The Climate Conscious Community (CCC) designation is built on existing Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) program initiatives but refocuses these initiatives through the lens of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction. CCC requirements guide local governments on lessening their climate impact through policies and operations and engage their citizens and businesses to do the same.

Why are we adding this designation?

The issues of climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience have become a major topic for citizens, businesses, and other community stakeholders over the last decade. Heightened concerns about public health, infrastructure, ecosystem functions, and more make the list of reasons why this topic has emerged. The CCC provides actionable pathways for local governments to address climate concerns.

How do designated communities benefit?

ARC staff will support designated CCCs through ongoing technical assistance. Technical assistance is provided in several ways:

1. Monthly Green Matters newsletters that discuss example projects across metro Atlanta and provide supplementary implementation resources
2. Access to quarterly Network+Knowledge events to discuss environmental topics with other local governments and field experts.
3. Project-specific support on an as-needed basis, such as data and resource gathering, facilitation of regional partnerships, grant application and administrative assistance, etc.

By being a designated CCC, a local government demonstrates responsibility for their environmental footprint and responsibility to reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, many CCC actions revolve around data-driven efficiency that results in economical and resource savings. This contributes to a positive image of where people want to live, work, and play. By setting the example, a CCC is attractive to businesses and citizens who prioritize a healthy future – environmentally and economically – for all.

Who is eligible?

Any county or city government within the 10-county Atlanta region can be designated if they meet the requirements and participate in the annual update meetings.

How does a community become designated?

Submission for a CCC designation occurs annually on January 31. ARC staff decisions on whether a local government's submission is approved or denied will occur no later than March 1 of the same year. A local government must submit the following:

- (1) Prerequisite Documentation – found in this document for each Prerequisite
- (2) the Module Implementation Form(s) – found at the beginning of each Module document

How does a local government maintain their designation?

Once a local government's Prerequisite Documentation and Module Implementation Form(s) are approved by ARC staff, the local government then becomes an Active CCC. An approval triggers the implementation timeline that is associated with the local government's chosen Module(s). A local government must be actively implementing one or more Modules in order to maintain their Active status. The only exception is if a local government has already completed all available Modules.

The local government will meet with ARC staff annually. In-person meetings will occur every other year (beginning the first year), and over-the-phone in alternate years. Discussions will include, but are not limited to, progress updates on Prerequisites and Module Requirements implementations.

A local government may lose their Active CCC status and become an Inactive CCC with the following scenarios:

- (1) Failure to meet annually with ARC staff
- (2) Failure to finish Module implementation in the required timeline
- (3) If a local government finishes a Module and does not submit a Module Implementation Form for a new Module the following January

Submit Prerequisite Documentation & Module Workbook

January 31

ARC Staff Decisions

March 1

	Building Module	Transportation Module	Waste & Recycling Module
PART I	<p>Requirement 1 Utility Tracking & Benchmarking</p> <p>Requirement 2 Auditing & Efficiency Upgrade Schedules</p> <p>Requirement 3 Building Policies & Protocols</p>	<p><i>RELEASE DATE</i> <i>DECEMBER 2020</i></p>	<p><i>RELEASE DATE</i> <i>JUNE 2021</i></p>
PART II	<p>Option 1 Above-and-Beyond Energy & Plumbing Codes</p> <p>Option 2 Building Performance Standards Ordinance</p> <p>Option 3 Retro-Commissioning Ordinance</p>	<p><i>RELEASE DATE</i> <i>DECEMBER 2020</i></p>	<p><i>RELEASE DATE</i> <i>JUNE 2021</i></p>

Modules can be completed in any order the local government prefers.

Modules can be done one at a time or concurrently.

Parts I and II of each Module will be separate documents released at the times noted above.

Each Module has a timeline associated with it based on the contents of Part I and Part II.

PREREQUISITES

In total, there are **fifteen** required Prerequisites. This interdisciplinary list was chosen to involve a spectrum of local government departments in climate practices. Implementation of prerequisites will be discussed during annual update meetings.

1. Government Commute Options
2. Government ENERGY STAR Partner
3. Government Environmentally Preferable Purchasing
4. Government Green Infrastructure
5. Government No-Idling Policy
6. Government No Net Loss of Trees
7. Community Complete Streets Policy
8. Community Farmers Markets
9. Community Green Affordable Housing
10. Community Education
11. Community Parking Lot Canopy Requirements
12. Community Revitalization Incentives/Strategies
13. Community Shared/Reduced Parking
14. Community Smart Growth Incentives
15. Community Solar Ready

1. Government Commute Options

The local government discourages employees from driving alone by offering and subsidizing alternatives, such as a vanpool or carpool program, or subsidizing transit at a greater value than parking. The local government also offers incentives to reduce employee commutes during peak hours such as compressed work weeks, telecommuting, and/or flexible work schedules. To meet the intent of this Prerequisite, the local government must offer its employees one primary option and three secondary options.

Primary Options

- At least \$30 per month towards a transit pass or vanpool pass to each employee who commutes using transit or a vanpool. If the local jurisdiction offers a parking subsidy more than \$30/month, this option's value must be greater than that of the parking subsidy.
- At least \$30 per month to each employee who carpools with two or more passengers. If the local jurisdiction offers a parking subsidy more than \$30/month, this option's value must be greater than that of the parking subsidy.
- A significant telecommuting or compressed work week program that reduces by at least 5 percent the number of employee commuting trips.

Secondary Options

- Active participation in a regional air quality program through a local employer service organization or Georgia Commute Options (GCO)
- Active participation in carpool, vanpool and biking partner matching, such as through Georgia Commute Options
- Pre-tax transit subsidy or vanpool subsidy deducted from employee paycheck
- Transit benefit of less than \$30 per month
- Vanpool benefit of less than \$30 per month
- Shuttles from transit stations
- Preferred parking for carpools and vanpools
- Reduced parking fees for carpools and vanpools
- Employer-provided membership in a car-sharing program
- Secure bicycle parking or lockers
- Having an employee commuting awards and recognition program

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the employee manual, policy, or other official document that explains the trip reduction programs and incentives offered to employees

Examples

Georgia – City of Norcross: telecommuting, preferred parking, bicycle parking, recognition program

Georgia – City of Chamblee: \$30 per month incentive, participation in Georgia Commute Options, bicycle facilities, recognition program

Georgia – City of Roswell: compressed work week, telecommuting

Resources

[Georgia Commute Options](#)

Association of Pedestrian & Bicycle Professionals – [Essentials of Bike Parking](#)

2. Government ENERGY STAR Partner

A local government is an ENERGY STAR Partner in accordance with the ENERGY STAR Partner guidelines outlined in the *Organizations that Own/Manage/Lease Buildings or Plants* section of the ENERGY STAR website. This includes sending in the ENERGY STAR Partner letter, creating an Energy Strategy for the Future, and promoting the ENERGY STAR Challenge. By becoming an ENERGY STAR Partner, the jurisdiction agrees to (1) measure, track, and benchmark energy performance, (2) develop and implement a plan to improve energy performance by adopting the ENERGY STAR strategy, and (3) educate staff and the public about the partnership and achievements with ENERGY STAR.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the submitted ENERGY STAR Partner letter
- ☐ Copy of the jurisdiction's Energy Strategy for the Future
- ☐ Educational materials used to educate staff and the public about the partnership and ENERGY STAR

Examples

[Georgia](#) – Cities of Alpharetta, Atlanta, Chamblee, Conyers, Doraville, Duluth, Dunwoody, Milton, Norcross, Peachtree Corners, Roswell, Sandy Springs, Woodstock

[Georgia](#) – Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, Rockdale County

Resources

[ENERGY STAR](#)

3. Government Environmentally Preferable Purchasing

The local government has a policy in place that includes environmental considerations for purchasing good and services for use by the local government. Environmentally preferable goods are products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. Examples of products that can be included are green cleaning products, products made from recycled materials, and recyclable products.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the policy with date of adoption
- ☐ Description of how changes have been incorporated into existing purchasing policies
- ☐ Description of the procedure to ensure employees know about the policy

Examples

Georgia – Cobb County’s Environmental Attributes for Purchasing Consideration

Georgia – City of Roswell’s [Purchasing Ordinance](#)

Resources

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – [Sustainable Marketplace](#)

National Association of Counties

[Green Purchasing Webinar](#)

[Environmental Purchasing Programs: Buying Green to Save Some Green](#)

[Green Purchasing in County Offices Factsheet](#)

Georgia Department of Natural Resources – [The Sustainable Office Toolkit](#)
[Responsible Purchasing Network](#)

4. Government Green Infrastructure

The local government has installed a demonstration green infrastructure project on government property or public right-of-way. The objective of the project is to reduce stormwater runoff while allowing for the natural infiltration and filtering of water from storm events. The demonstration project must provide onsite educational materials about green infrastructure. The educational materials can include plaques or pamphlets and should explain the benefits of installing green infrastructure, what materials the project used, and how green infrastructure could be used by residents and businesses.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Photos of the project and onsite education materials

Examples

Georgia – Fulton County's [John's Creek Environmental Campus](#)

Georgia – City of Alpharetta's [Rock Mill Park](#)

Georgia – City of Atlanta's [Green Infrastructure](#)

Georgia – Gwinnett County's [Environmental and Heritage Center](#)

Resources

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – [Green Infrastructure Website](#)

Georgetown Climate Center – [Green Infrastructure Toolkit](#)

5. Government No-Idling Policy

The local government has adopted a policy or ordinance regarding local government vehicle idling times. The policy restricts the allowed time that local government vehicles may idle when not directly engaged in the line of duty. The local government has a procedure to ensure employees are educated about the policy or ordinance.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the policy/ordinance with date of adoption
- ☐ Description of the procedure to ensure all employees are educated on the policy

Examples

Georgia – [City of Chamblee](#)

Georgia – [City of Dunwoody](#)

Georgia – Douglas County

Resources

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – [Compilation of State, County, and Local Anti-Idling Regulations](#)

U.S. Department of Energy – [Idling Reduction for Personal Vehicles](#)

American Transportation Research Institute – [Compendium of Idling Regulations](#)

6. Government No Net Loss of Trees Policy

The local government has a policy or ordinance stating that there will be no net loss of trees on government property. This policy can determine no net loss using either canopy coverage or the “diameter at breast-height” (DBH) method. The officially adopted policy or ordinance could also include benchmarks for increasing canopy density or DBH measurements. Additionally, clear guidelines are to be established regarding which trees are suitable for replacement and their necessary size.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the policy/ordinance with date of adoption
- ☐ Copy of the community’s tree coverage goals (no net loss, increasing coverage, etc.)
- ☐ Example where the policy was followed

Examples

Georgia – [City of Chamblee](#)

Georgia – [City of Norcross](#)

Resources

Friends of Urban Forests – [No Net Loss of Trees Key Component of Tree Ordinances](#)

7. Community Complete Streets Policy

The local government has adopted a policy to require complete streets elements.

Complete streets are defined as streets designed and operated to enable safe access for all users and all modes; this includes ensuring that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street. A functional complete streets policy should include the following elements:

- Definition of “all users” to include pedestrians, bicyclists, transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles
- Applicability to both new and retrofit projects and covers all roads with noted exceptions
- Clear guidelines for exceptions and a procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions
- Makes use of the latest and best design criteria, and directs implementation of complete streets in a context-sensitive manner; this is best done through adoption of complete streets-friendly Street and Roadway Design Guidelines; or could be done through designating several “typical street” design templates
- Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy

Required Documentation

- ☐ A copy of the policy/ordinance with the date of adoption
- ☐ Description of how the policy will be or is actively implemented
- ☐ Revised Street Design Guidelines or “typical street” design templates, if applicable; or an implementation example of a corridor designed to the complete streets standards

Examples

Georgia – City of Suwanee’s Complete Streets Policy

Washington – [City of Seattle’s Complete Streets Ordinance](#)

Resources

Smart Growth America’s [National Complete Streets Coalition](#)

[Elements of Complete Streets Policies](#)

[Case Studies, Guides, Toolkits, Model Policies, Reports, and more](#)

Georgia Department of Transportation’s [Design Policy Manual: Chapter 9 – Complete Streets Design Policy](#)

Active Transportation Alliance – [Complete Streets Policies](#)

8. Community Farmers Markets

The local government has partnered with a local citizen group or nonprofit organization to establish one or more farmers markets in the jurisdiction. Through this partnership, the local government designates space, provides a cover or shade, provides free parking close by, or other actions to facilitate the success of the farmers market.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Description of each farmers market, including: goods offered, dates and times of operation, location, who it is operated by, how the local government supports it, and contact information for the coordinator

Examples

Georgia – [City of Douglasville](#)

Georgia – [City of Suwanee](#)

Georgia – [City of Woodstock](#)

Resources

Georgia Department of Agriculture – [The Georgia Farmers Market Guide](#)

Farmers Market Coalition – [Growing Local Food Systems](#) (case study)

British Columbia Association of Farmers Markets – [Farmers Market Impact Toolkit](#)

9. Community Green Affordable Housing

The local government has an ordinance or policy that offers incentives specifically for affordable and workforce housing entities to seek green building certifications like Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Homes, EarthCraft House, EarthCraft Multifamily, and ENERGY STAR. Affordable housing is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as housing that costs no more than 30 percent of a household's monthly income, including the monthly mortgage payment and housing expenses for a homeowner. These incentives can be expedited review process, reduced or waived development fees, density bonuses, or other incentives.

Required Documentation

- ☐ A copy of the official ordinance/policy with date of adoption
- ☐ Documentation on how the incentive will be or is actively implemented

Examples

Georgia – [City of Alpharetta](#) (see *Green Construction Summary*)
Georgia – [City of Peachtree Corners](#) (see *Green Policy Document*)
Georgia – [City of Woodstock](#) (see *Sustainability Policy Document*)

Resources

[EarthCraft](#)

[ENERGY STAR](#)

[LEED for Residential Design & Construction](#)

10. Community Member Education

The local government has a public awareness and outreach program to educate citizens on the Prerequisites and Modules that the local government is implementing to create climate awareness and a culture of responsibility. The program may include brochures, newsletters, press releases, workshops, local access channel promotions, and/or other means. Outreach may be tailored to targeted groups. For example, incentives offered for Community Green Affordable Housing may be targeted to developers.

At least one example of education materials for each of the other 14 Prerequisites is required, as well as at least one example of education materials for the current Module being implemented. Education materials will be programmed for release every other year at minimum, beginning the January after a local government's Active designation in July.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Description of program, including: messaging cycle timelines, any applicable audience targeting, etc.
- ☐ Digital copies of materials used for each Prerequisite and Module(s), preferably as PDFs
- ☐ The below table filled out with the names of each document for all Prerequisites and applicable Module(s)

Prerequisites & Modules	Document Name
Community Complete Streets	
Community Farmers Markets	
Community Green Affordable Housing	
Community Parking Lot Canopy Requirements	
Community Revitalization Incentives/Strategies	
Community Shared/Reduced Parking	
Community Smart Growth Incentives	
Community Solar Ready	
Government Commute Options	
Government ENERGY STAR Partner	
Government Environmentally Preferable Purchasing	
Government Green Infrastructure	
Government No Idling Policy	
Government No Net Loss of Trees	
Building Module	
Transportation Module	
Waste Module	

Examples

Georgia – [City of Chamblee](#)

Georgia – [Gwinnett County](#)

11. Community Parking Lot Canopy Requirements

The local government specifies in their landscape and development standards requirements for shade coverage in parking lots, at a minimum. The policy is equivalent to or exceeds the shade requirement in two of the following ways:

- 50 percent canopy coverage will be obtained in parking lot after 15 years
- There will be at least one overstory tree for every eight parking spaces
- There will be at least 200 square feet of contiguous soil space per overstory tree
- No parking space shall be more than 40 feet from a tree

Required Documentation

- ☐ A copy of the policy with date of adoption
- ☐ An example location where the policy has been implemented

Examples

Georgia – City of Dunwoody's [Parking Lot Interior Landscaping standards](#)

Georgia – City of Chamblee's [Off-street Surface Parking Lot Planting Requirements](#)

Resources

National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council – [Guidelines for Developing & Evaluating Tree Ordinances](#)

City of Sacramento – [Parking Lot Tree Shading Design & Maintenance Guidelines](#)

12. Community Revitalization Incentives/Strategies

The local government has conducted an analysis of its jurisdiction to identify potential areas for the reuse of buildings, restoration of greyfields, and redevelopment of brownfields. This analysis is published and readily available to the public. Additionally, the local government has developed incentives and/or other revitalization strategies to encourage redevelopment on these identified sites. These incentives and revitalization strategies must be promoted to developers.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the published analysis of potential buildings for reuse, greyfields for restoration, and brownfields for redevelopment
- ☐ Copies of the revitalization incentives/strategies and how they are implemented

Examples

Georgia – City of Kennesaw's [Sustainable Development Incentives](#)

Georgia – Cherokee County's [tax credits](#) for job creation to promote the [Southwest Cherokee Corners Urban Redevelopment Plan](#)

Resources

Connect Our Future – [Brownfield/Greyfield Redevelopment Toolkit](#)

Chester County Planning Commission

[Adaptive Reuse](#)

[Brownfield & Greyfield Redevelopment](#)

[In-fill Development](#)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – [Brownfields Program](#)

13. Community Shared/Reduced Parking

A local government has development regulations that encourage shared parking, joint parking and/or reduced parking requirements for commercial and retail facilities within its jurisdiction. Shared parking is a parking facility that allows parking for patrons of two or more businesses based on different peak hours; whereas, joint parking is a common parking facility designed for simultaneous use by patrons of two or more businesses. Reduced parking means either a local government has decreased its original minimum parking requirement, or they have implemented a maximum parking requirement for facilities.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the parking regulation with date of adoption

Examples

Georgia – City of Alpharetta’s [Shared Parking](#)

Georgia – City of Atlanta’s [Shared Parking](#)

Resources

Victoria Transport Policy Institute

[Parking Management: Strategies for More Efficient Use of Parking Resources](#)

[Parking Management: Strategies, Evaluation and Planning](#)

City Lab – [Lessons From Zurich’s Parking Revolution](#) (Cap & Reduce Parking Strategy)

Planetizen – [San Diego Unbundles Parking Eliminates Parking Minimums and Sets Maximums](#)

14. Community Smart Growth Incentives

The local government offers incentives to developers to encourage smart growth in at least three of the following ways:

- a. Development and redevelopment in existing downtown areas
- b. Transit-oriented development
- c. Traditional neighborhood development
- d. Mixed use development
- e. Infill development
- f. One of the policy options offered in *Getting to Smart Growth* (Smart Growth Network)

Smart growth is described as development that benefits the economy, community, and the environment while incorporating the ten principles of smart growth. A completed Atlanta Regional Commission Livable Center Initiative (LCI) plan that has been adopted by the local government and that includes three of the smart growth principles could also meet the requirement.

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the policy/ordinance that establishes the smart growth incentives
- ☐ Description of the three smart growth policy options implemented through the incentives
- ☐ Description of how the incentives will be implemented

Examples

Georgia – City of Fayetteville’s Density Bonuses & Reduced Fees for Mixed-Use

Georgia – City of Milton’s [Form Based Code](#) & [Transfer of Development Rights](#)

Resources

[Smart Growth Online](#)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

[Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation](#)

[Getting to Smart Growth II: 100 More Policies for Implementation](#)

Atlanta Regional Commission

[Livable Centers Initiative](#)

[2009 Livable Centers Initiative: Indicators & Benefits Study](#)

Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ [Main Street Program](#)

15. Community Solar Ready

Solar energy photovoltaic (PV) cells require specialized installation and equipment, such as brackets, panels, and mounts and should have an appropriate inspection process. Defining where rooftop solar is allowed within the local jurisdiction and streamlining permitting processes reduces staff time and effort spent on permitting, technical documentation review, and more. These soft cost savings expedite normally time-consuming procedures. Creating a checklist for a building inspectors also allows for quality control of solar energy infrastructure and reduces future maintenance costs. Solar power reduces strain on local energy grids, lifting burden off electricity conveyance infrastructure, and promotes community resiliency. The local government has implemented one of the two below best management practices to enable residents to install solar power on their lots.

- Address solar in the zoning code, have a streamlined permitting process, and an inspection checklist
OR
- Participate in a solarize campaign or other bulk purchasing program

Required Documentation

- ☐ Copy of the zoning ordinance and inspection checklist, and description of the permitting process and solar guidelines given to permittees on best management practices
OR
- ☐ Copy of the adopted resolution pledging participation in a Solarize Campaign or PV bulk purchase program, a signed contract with a third-party provider, and the contact information for the local jurisdiction's program coordinator

Examples

Georgia – City of Atlanta's [Land Development Code](#)

Georgia – City of Dunwoody – [Solarize Dunwoody](#)

Georgia – City of Decatur & DeKalb County – [Solarize Decatur-DeKalb](#)

Georgia – Douglas County's [Criteria for the Use of Solar Energy Equipment](#)

Resources

International City/County Management Association – [Solar Energy Guidance](#)

U.S. Department of Energy – [SunShot Vision Study](#)

Solar Energy Industries Association – [Solar Policy Guidance](#)