Leading the Way to Sustainability

In 2010, the City of Woodstock 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 2015, when it recertified as a Green Community at the Gold level. The following measures have been implemented by the City of Woodstock 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 silver certified; if additional costs exceed 15 percent of the construction costs without certification, then LEED certified will be achieved.

» Requires all new city-owned buildings that are not LEED certified to achieve Energy Star or EarthCraft Light Commercial certification.

» Requires all renovations of city-owned buildings to be Energy Star certified if 25 percent or less of the occupied space is affected; LEED for Existing Buildings silver certified if between 25 and 50 percent of the occupied space is affected; and LEED for New Construction certified if greater than 50 percent of the occupied space is affected.

» Offers incentives of a reduction of 10, 25 or 50 percent off of building permit fees given in the form of refunds for buildings that earn green certification, depending on the type and level of certification, in addition to expedited plan review. These incentives are proportional to the size of the project, allowing developers to earn a larger reward than a set amount would provide.

» Offers incentives for building affordable green housing developments for workforce housing. Incentives include expedited reviews plus a 10 percent reduction in permit fees for projects that are EarthCraft House, EarthCraft Multifamily or Energy Star certified. The building permit fee is reduced by 25 percent for LEED for Homes Certified Projects.
Energy Efficiency

» Completed energy audits of all of the city’s buildings. The city uses Energy Star Portfolio Manager to track energy usage at all of its facilities.

» Joined the Energy Star partnership in 2011. As part of its Energy Strategy for the Future, the city has benchmarked all buildings to identify its most severely under-performing buildings and has begun implementing energy efficiency upgrades at Fire Stations #10 and #14.

» Adopted an Energy Star purchasing policy to purchase energy-efficient equipment and appliances. Because of this policy, the city’s IT department has made the decision to use thin clients for all new employee computers. The new computers have virtual servers and are significantly more energy efficient than PCs.

» Retrofitted all of its 117 traffic signals with new LED light bulbs. The upgrades use substantially less power than conventional incandescent bulbs and have a longer effective life.

» 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.

» Encourages the replacement of inefficient light bulbs with more energy efficient LEDs. The city has retrofitted to LED light bulbs in the city hall elevator. The next installation of LEDs will be at Fire Station #14.

» Enforces Georgia’s energy codes for residential and commercial construction projects by providing city inspectors with a detailed checklist.

» Adopted an outdoor lighting ordinance to reduce the amount of light pollution in the nighttime visual environment and conserve energy.

Green Power

» Installed 6.8 KW solar panel modules on the Chambers at City Center. Inside the building, an education nook has displays explaining the process and benefits of solar power. In addition, monitors provide real-time numbers on kWh capture and carbon dioxide equivalency emissions that have been prevented via the solar panels. Since installation, the solar panels have generated enough energy to power 30,000 homes.

» Offers expedited reviews for construction of new homes or businesses with a renewable energy source, including solar, wind or water, that is a minimum of 1 kWh, as well as a 10 percent reduction in building permit fees for a source that serves one building or a 10 percent reduction in site plan review fees for projects that serve multiple buildings.
**Water Efficiency**

» Completed water audits of all of the city’s buildings. The city uses Energy Star Portfolio Manager to track water usage at all of its facilities.

» Captures rainwater in a rain barrel at the Senior Center where it is frequently used to water the garden.

» 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.

» Offers an expedited planning and development review process and a 25 percent reduction in plumbing permit fees for developers building WaterSense certified new homes.

**Trees & Greenspace**

» Protected approximately 684 acres of greenspace in the city, which equates to almost 29 acres of greenspace per 1,000 residents. Over nine percent of the city’s land area is greenspace, including 15.6 acres of protected open space in the Woodview Subdivision, which was developed as a conservation subdivision.

» Adopted a no net loss of trees policy for all city-owned property.

» Adopted the Greenprints Project Master Plan as part of the Comprehensive Town Plan 2030 in June 2008. The plan is a comprehensive park, trail and open space initiative that establishes a foundation and framework for the creation of a citywide green infrastructure system. As a result of continuous plan implementation, the city currently has nearly 13 miles of the planned 60.6 miles or green infrastructure in place.

» Designated as a Tree City USA Community for the past 15 years. To maintain this designation, the City of Woodstock 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.

» Supports the Woodstock Community garden, which provides 24 plots for residents to rent annually for $25 each. The city owns the land and provides the shed, gardening tools, water spigots and hoses. A staff member from the city parks and recreation department manages the garden, and department staff till the property and deliver mulch.

» Supports the Woodstock Farmers Market, which is located downtown and is open every Saturday morning and Tuesday evening May through December. The city provides the location and publicity assistance for the garden.
Transportation & Air Quality

- Adopted a green fleet policy that gives a preference for purchasing alternative fuel, fuel-efficient and low emission vehicles.
- Adopted an anti-idling policy to prevent city vehicles from idling over three minutes unless in traffic or on routine stops.
- Adopted a Complete Streets policy to incorporate pedestrian and bike oriented streetscapes throughout the city.
- Reviews timing of traffic lights within the city limits and synchronizes all traffic lights that are within 1,000 feet of each other to reduce vehicle idle time and lower emissions. Works with Georgia DOT to synchronize lights along Highway 92.
- Participates actively in a Safe Routes to School program at Woodstock Elementary School. Public safety personnel assist with the Walk-to-School program by walking along with students and parents from nearby communities to the school. In addition, elementary school students are taken on a walking tour of the city twice annually.
- Adopted the Greenprints Project Master Plan, which serves as the city’s bicycle and pedestrian plan. It calls for over sixty miles of trails connecting greenspace, neighborhoods and activity centers throughout the city. The city also requires the installation of sidewalks in all new developments and as road infrastructure improvements are made.
- Adopted a parking ordinance that allows for shared parking, reduces the parking requirements for some uses and implements maximum parking requirements. Compared to other jurisdictions, the minimum requirements are quite low and more parking can be installed by meeting certain sustainability measures.
- Installed and/or assisted with the installation of six public electric vehicle charging stations. Three were installed in the downtown public parking lot and three were installed next to public parallel parking.

Recycling & Waste Reduction

- Adopted an environmentally preferable purchasing policy to purchase products that are recyclable, reusable or contain recycled materials. The product comparison includes life cycle cost considerations, when applicable.
- Provides recycling containers at city facilities for paper, plastic, glass and aluminum containers. Nearly 1,200 pounds of recyclable materials is collected from City Hall each month.
- Collects batteries, cell phones, electronics and florescent bulbs from employees throughout the year for recycling by private vendors. In 2015, the city recycled 308 pounds of batteries and 48 pounds of florescent lamps.
» Purchases paper with at least 30 percent recycled content for copy, computer and fax paper.

» Provides curbside recycling to single-family residents for paper, glass, metal, plastic and corrugated cardboard. For three years in a row, the city has won the Cherokee County Chamber’s Mayor’s Recycling Challenge for the most recyclable materials collected within the county.

» Offers annual drop-off events for residents to recycle electronics, cell phones, batteries and CFL lightbulbs. In 2014, 17,859 pounds of electronics were recycled at the city’s annual Earth Day recycling event.

**Land Use**

» Relocated the Office of Economic Development and the Parks and Recreation Offices to an underutilized portion of a shopping center in downtown Woodstock that had access and visibility challenges. One of the suites was previously vacant for two years.

» Adopted several plans and ordinances that gives incentives to encourage smart growth, including the Town Center LCI Plan, Downtown Masterplan and Form-Based Code. These plans encourage pedestrian-oriented development, mixed-use development and redevelopment of the downtown area.

» Engaged in many revitalization strategies. The city’s Urban Redevelopment Plan outlines parcels targeted for redevelopment. Research for an Opportunity Zone application resulted in an extensive survey of vacant buildings and buildings with the potential for reuse. Vacant properties are listed on the Cherokee Prospector website. The city recently partnered with Chattahoochee Technical College to redevelop a vacant historic elementary school.

**Education**

» Educates employees about the city’s sustainability efforts through training on the sustainability policy, distribution of handouts to employees, direct letters to staff, newsletters and sign placement.

» Provides citizens with information about the city’s sustainability efforts through social media, newsletters, brochures, signage and events. “Three Things Thursday” regularly features information on Facebook about the city’s sustainability initiatives.
» Rewrote its parking ordinance to encourage the use of sustainable parking lot best practices. Developers seeking parking spaces over the city’s maximum allowable amount can use one or a combination of environmentally-friendly structures to earn additional parking, while mitigating the impact of the additional spaces. Options include: installing electric vehicle charging stations; using permeable pavement; installing a rainwater harvesting and storage system; using paving materials with a high solar reflectance value; and building a solar parking canopy.

» Implemented a paperless agenda system for council and planning commission meetings. The city has saved 616,600 sheets of paper – the equivalent of 74 trees – by not printing agendas.

» Requires civic space be installed with each new development as part of the city’s Form-Based Code. Civic spaces must be designed as one of several civic area types, including plaza, square, park, sports field, ramble or community garden.

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