



Atlanta:
Power to Change

The Mayor's Charge

During his first year in office, Mayor Kasim Reed set the goal for Atlanta to become one of the top ten sustainable cities in the nation. Achieving this goal will improve the quality of life of Atlanta's citizens by enhancing the environment, while at the same time, supporting job creation and long-term economic growth. Mayor Reed has charged that Atlanta city government adopt a culture dedicated to environmental sustainability through innovative leadership. As laid out in this plan, Mayor Reed is committing to continual improvement in sustainability practices and to lead by example through the development and implementation of policies and activities that support environmental sustainability.



What Does it Mean to be a Sustainable City?

Though “sustainable” is the new “green,” the term itself means different things to different people. For the City of Atlanta, working to be more sustainable means reconciling the city’s developmental goals with its environmental limits over the long term. In order to do this, all city government operations are being filtered through the lens of ensuring that current levels of consumption can be maintained in perpetuity. Implementing the Power to Change plan, the City of Atlanta’s Division of Sustainability is working with all city departments to balance Atlanta’s economic growth with environmental protection while being mindful of social justice.

Atlanta’s sustainability initiative officially began in February 2008 with a plan focused on internal government and municipal facilities operations. Best practice research showed that Atlanta city government was already implementing more than a third of what needs to be done through programs such as greenspace acquisition, LEED certified construction and renovation, lighting retrofits and building efficiency improvements, reducing paper use, transportation alternatives and water conservation. Thanks to help from the Georgia Institute of Technology and ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability), Atlanta was the first city in the state to determine its municipal carbon footprint, and by 2010, Atlanta reduced it by 12.5 percent. This surpassed a 2012 goal by five and half percentage points that was set when Atlanta joined the U.S. Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement in 2006.

Under Mayor Reed, the Division of Sustainability was able to secure four federal and state grants totaling \$28 million that will be leveraged up to \$164 million in improvements and at least 25 new projects. Substantial progress has been made by many city departments in environmentally sensitive areas such as reduced energy use, water pipe leak repairs and reduced gasoline use by municipal fleet. Due to a concerted effort by the Department of Watershed Management, for instance, most major municipal facilities now recycle, including City Hall and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. In fact, more than 50 percent of the plan laid out in 2008 has been achieved.

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Accomplished	55%	Developed 18%	Opportunities	27%
<p>Projects in good standing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$28M in grants funding leveraged to \$164M in impact • 12.5% ghg reduction • 23% fossil fuel reduction • 16% natural gas reduction • 25% reduction in energy use at City Hall • 13% decrease in water use at HJAI airport • 25 new projects 		<p>Projects in Progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Greenspace • Removal of barriers for private onsite renewable energy • Water conservation retrofits in municipal facilities 	<p>Investigation and incubation stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Greenspace • Removal of barriers for private onsite renewable energy • Water conservation retrofits in municipal facilities 	



From #19 to a Top-ten Sustainable City

The City of Atlanta is currently ranked 19th among the SustainLane U.S. City Rankings. The SustainLane Rankings is a proprietary, peer-reviewed, leading national survey that ranks the most populous U.S. cities in terms of their sustainability practices. The survey benchmarks each city's performance in 16 areas of urban sustainability, from Air Quality and City Commuting to Natural Disaster Risk and Tap Water Quality¹. It then gives each city an overall ranking based on the combined performance in the 16 areas.

Says the 2008 report of Atlanta: Hotlanta? How about Greenlanta? The city leads the south-east in LEED-registered buildings—over 140 projects are currently seeking certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. It also has a “no net loss” policy for its trees.

Atlanta in the 2008 Sustainlane Rankings

3rd	Green (LEED) Building
11th	Local Food & Agriculture
11th	Metro Transit Ridership
17th	City Commuting
17th	Water Supply
18th	Natural Disaster Risk
18th	Energy & Climate Change Policy
21st	Green Economy
22nd	City Innovation
29th	Solid Waste Diversion
34th	Housing Affordability
37th	Knowledge Base & Communications
40th	Water Quality
42nd	Air Quality
42nd	Planning & Land Use
45th	Metro Street Congestion

Rankings out of 50.

Source: Sustainlane. Data was collected on a city-basis except for four categories, due to availability. Regional public transit ridership, roadway congestion, and metro area sprawl (a subcomponent of the planning category) data were collected on a metropolitan area basis. Air quality data was gathered on a county-wide basis.

Atlanta's plan to achieve the top-ten city ranking is to continue successful and funded programs and undertake new projects and policy initiatives that have been successful in benchmark cities. All city departments will continue to develop their own sustainability plans that target their biggest “wins” and that are aligned with greenhouse gas reduction goals. The Division of Sustainability will work with city leadership to encourage policy development and reform in select areas. Division staff will develop and grow education

¹ For a full list of the performance areas, please visit www.sustainlane.com

and training programs in key action areas to employees and the Atlanta community, and will work to communicate its progress by tracking its success and sharing it within Atlanta city government and the greater Atlanta community. Specific measurements include:

- **Transportation:** Expand public transit, including the continued development of the Atlanta BeltLine² and the implementation of the Atlanta Streetcar³.
- **Fleet Fuels:** Reduce petroleum fuel consumption 10 percent by 2015 by those municipal departments with the greatest levels of fuel usage. Ensure 15 percent of city fleet is using alternative fuels by 2012.
- **Climate Change:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the City of Atlanta's jurisdiction 25 percent by 2020, 40 percent by 2030, and 80 percent by 2050.
- **Water Conservation:** Reduce system leakage 50 percent by 2015.
- **Water Quality:** Restore and maintain water quality standards by enforcing regulations, complying with federal, state and local laws and coordinating watershed protection strategies throughout city government.
- **Waste:** Reduce, reuse and recycle 30 percent of the city residential waste by 2013, 50 percent by 2015, and 90 percent by 2020.
- **Greenspace:** Provide a minimum of 10 acres of greenspace per 1,000 residents. Protect and restore the city's tree canopy to 40 percent coverage. Create and maintain a park system that is developed sustainably. Implement landscaping and facility renovations that reduce energy demand and maintenance costs.
- **Energy:** Reduce energy use for existing municipal operations 15 percent by 2020, 40 percent by 2030, and 80 percent by 2050. Make renewable energy five percent of total municipal use by 2015.
- **Local Food Systems:** Bring local food within 10 minutes of 75 percent of all residents by 2020.

Atlanta's Challenges and the Most Impactful Opportunities

Atlanta's sprawl growth pattern and dependence on cars continue to be our most significant obstacles to top tier sustainability ranking. However, the city has all the elements in place to shift the paradigm. Atlanta is home to dozens of sustainable development industry and thought leaders who are leading by example in the way of green building and design. City planners are working to create more dense, transit-oriented development, and bureaucratic hurdles are being removed to encourage sustainable development in the private industry. Progress is being made with regional and state partners to improve the city's transportation infrastructure, and changes in the city's demographic is becoming evident as more people are moving back into the city.

To compete with leading cities like New York City, Seattle, and Chicago that are legislating green building ordinances, developing electric vehicle infrastructure and implementing pedestrian-only zones, the city must be aggressive in reversing its years of sprawl. Cutting-edge projects like the Atlanta BeltLine and new transit projects like the Atlanta Streetcar will help. Additionally, Atlanta recently launched its first comprehensive

² The Atlanta BeltLine is a \$2.8 billion redevelopment project that provides a network of public parks, multi-use trails and transit along a historic 22-mile railroad corridor circling downtown. More information at beltline.org.

³ A public-private partnership has secured federal funding to build a streetcar network, the first proposed leg being a Downtown circulator. More information at georgiatrainsconnector.com.



transportation plan, Connect Atlanta, which will ensure that the city continues to lead the region in efficient, effective and affordable transportation. The Department of Planning and Community Development, which is implementing Connect Atlanta, is also implementing Project Greenspace, a long-term plan for growing and managing Atlanta's greenspace system that will connect people with public spaces, nature preserves, parks, plazas, and streetscapes.

Atlanta's Division of Sustainability plans to implement at least eight projects that are considered cutting edge and will provide catalytic improvements in the SustainLane rankings in at least six categories. Those projects include converting to LED streetlights; introducing a community garden ordinance; imposing sustainability requirements on all new affordable housing; and ensuring that all new parks, such as those that will be developed along the Atlanta BeltLine, are carbon neutral and use solar PV (Photovoltaic) energy. In 2011, the city will break ground on a new component of RM Clayton, a wastewater treatment facility that will use methane to power turbines and generate electricity onsite. This project alone will mean more than three percent of the energy powering city government facilities is renewable, pushing city operations closer to its goal of converting to five percent renewable energy by 2015.

Outside of government operations, the city is beginning to incentivize Atlanta citizens to join the effort. Utilizing stimulus dollars, Atlanta has launched a residential weatherization rebate program dubbed SHINE – Sustainable Homes in the New Economy, which will allow homeowners to receive up to \$5,400 in rebates with qualifying improvements and retrofits (see more information on page 5).

Living in a Top-ten Sustainable City

Being more sustainable as a city not only protects and preserves the environment, it makes economic sense for the city. It helps drive financial savings and efficiency and creates jobs. Becoming a top-ten sustainable city will increase Atlanta's competitive advantage for economic growth by positioning the city as a magnet for talent and for like-minded companies looking to relocate.

The effort to become a top-ten sustainable city will provide many benefits to Atlanta citizens, as well:

- Energy security will ensure multiple, reliable, affordable, local, and renewable energy sources.
- Improved air and climate quality will enhance citizens' health and stabilize contributions to climate change.
- Water conservation will ensure availability of high quality water.
- Land preservation will ensure plentiful natural lands and green spaces.
- Resource protection will eliminate wasteful resource uses and ultimately save the consumer money on utilities and other services.
- Improved transportation infrastructure and access to transit will relieve traffic congestion.
- Encouraging sustainable food systems and more pedestrian and outdoor activity will combat obesity.

While operational programs and policy development will lead to the most widespread reform, a campaign within Atlanta city government emphasizes the impact of personal action among its employees. Aiming to encourage employees to make small behavioral changes that can make a large impact in energy savings over time, this internal campaign has the power to change the city on a grand scale. With city government setting the example, every Atlanta resident should realize the *power to change* in their homes, their places of work, their schools, their places of worship, their recreational and leisure facilities, and anywhere and everywhere power is consumed.

“I believe the City of Atlanta should be a leading example of how a major urban municipality can take greater responsibility for efficient energy and water use, the conservation of green space, and the promotion of a healthier, cleaner and greener environment,” Mayor Reed said. “It is vital we take concrete, measurable actions around sustainability now to protect the future of our city. I look forward to working with the Atlanta City Council, city employees, business leaders and our residents to make Atlanta a top-ten sustainable city.”

Turn off your monitor when you are away from the computer for more than five minutes.

Set sleep mode on your computer and shut it down each night.

Turn out the lights every time you leave an area.

Unplug laptops, phone chargers and adapters when not in use.

Recycle and double-side all copies.

Turn down the heat overnight or when you are away during the winter.

Turn up the air conditioning overnight or when you are away during the summer.

Close curtains and blinds each night to prevent heat from escaping.

Learn about the Power to Change program.



ready. set. reduce.

Additionally, the City of Atlanta has a number of resources that can make the change easier for its residents:

- Water conservation kits and rebates on low-flow toilets are available through the Department of Watershed Management. More information is at atlantawatershed.org.
- Single family home residents can request a free 95-gallon recycling bin from the Department of Public Works by calling (404) 330-6333 or emailing a request to publicworks@atlantaga.gov.
- Homeowners can apply for SHINE – a residential weatherization program offering rebates toward qualifying improvements. For information on how to qualify, call (404) 588-5982 or email shine@atlantaga.gov.



sustainable homes in the new economy





For more information on the Atlanta Division of Sustainability,
please visit: www.atlantaga.gov/mayor/sustainability.aspx
or call 404.330.6100.



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