



“One touch of nature makes
the whole world kin.”

- William Shakespeare

**Joint DeKalb County/Municipal
Greenspace Program**



Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

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Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Executive Summary

Provide a brief synopsis of the document.

A team led by Assistant County Administrator, Morris Williams, III has developed the Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program. Team members included: the county's two super district commissioners, Judy Yates, District 6 and Lou Walker, District 7; municipalities; representatives from the Planning, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Communications, and GIS Departments and citizens who attended two public meetings.

The team created goals that begin with the protection of sensitive lands within our county. These lands have largely inherent qualities that make them of public value and significance. We estimated acres and mapped them. We set goals for their protection. They include the 500 year flood plain plus 100 feet, wetlands, riparian corridors plus 75 feet, rock out crops, steep slopes and erodible soils, forests, historical sites, and agricultural lands.

As an urban county, greenspace that can be created as part of the development pattern is also critical to our quality of life and how we view our world. Greenspaces can encompass and reinforce the protection of sensitive lands and relate more to human uses. Therefore, we created greenspace categories that are intended to be inclusive of and protect sensitive lands and our precious waters while encouraging significant public awareness, access and enjoyment of the outdoors. The visibility and availability of these spaces are key to general understanding and value of the natural infrastructure and systems on which our communities depend. These categories include parks, nature preserves and civic spaces. They may be owned and managed by a government entity, a foundation or trust, a community group or individuals. But they must be designated and have periodic audits.

We view this report as an outline that will be followed to establish a dynamic program; a program to be guided by the stakeholders that form an *Initiative for a Green DeKalb*. This group consisting of community, business and governmental representatives will develop policy recommendations, promote the creation of greenspace and monitor the management of the program.

DeKalb County consists of 173,393 acres, 20% of which would be 34,680 acres. **We have identified a goal of protecting 37,775 acres (22%).** Clearly DeKalb County and its municipalities are not in a position to purchase and manage such a massive amount of property; the power of this program lies in the development of a plan, the leveraging of opportunities and the coordinated efforts of many individuals and institutions.





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Introduction

Make a brief statement about the county's program. Include name of department or office and person responsible for coordinating the program and full address.

JOINT DEKALB COUNTY/MUNICIPAL GREENSPACE PROGRAM:

DeKalb County envisions itself as a dynamic urban community, laced with greenspaces. These spaces create an urban environment that encourages people to be connected to the underlying natural fabric on which their community has developed and connected to each other as a community. There are attractive, convenient routes people use to walk or ride bicycles to reach nearby destinations. There are parks and open spaces that can be conveniently reached without having to use automobiles, that become gathering places for children to play and adults to meet or relax. Our creeks and rivers are celebrated, appreciated, valued, and enjoyed because they have become an integral part of our image of our community. There is great synergy to be achieved by overlapping the goals of environmental protection and quality of life-- indeed you cannot have one without the other. Therefore our greenspace program strives to identify, plan and create a structure that supports the achievement of this vision.

We wish to emphasize protection of our natural resources while to the greatest extent practical making them accessible to our citizens. We wish to link our neighborhoods with destinations in such a manner that people are able to relate to each other as humans and celebrate the outdoors.

The county is already heavily developed. Our program will have to be aggressive in its goals. We will, on an on-going basis, inventory and track opportunities, establish an ambitious overreaching plan, coordinate and promote the implementation of this vision. **The Georgia Greenspace Program provides an important method of achieving this vision.**

DeKalb County has made a conscious decision not to be specific with property lists as a part of the application. As outlined herein, DeKalb intends to create a program and modify departmental business processes to incorporate greenspace opportunities into operational areas such as:

- ◆ Rezoning review
- ◆ New development review
- ◆ Surplus property review
- ◆ National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program
- ◆ Historic property inventory review
- ◆ Public works applications
- ◆ Public safety applications
- ◆ Physical plant management activities

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE:

We have followed the format presented in the Department of Natural Resource's Guidance Document dated July 27,2000. Text from the Guidance Document is in Italic.





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

COMMUNITY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

NOTIFICATION OF INTENT:

On July 19,2000 DeKalb County notified the Department of Natural Resources of its intent to participate in the Greenspace Program.

PUBLIC MEETINGS:

DeKalb County held public meetings on August 30th and Sept 21st.
See appendix A – “Public Meetings” (power point presentation, invitee list and handouts)

POINT OF CONTACT:

Morris Williams, III
Assistant County Administrator
1300 Commerce Drive, Suite 600
Decatur, GA 30030
404-687-3586

ALTERNATE:

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Director of Parks and Recreation
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COUNTY DESCRIPTION:

Give a brief narrative description of the county, including the total acreage and the total population. Provide the county’s base acreage for greenspace.

Describe areas within the county and/or participating municipalities that are most rapidly growing or redeveloping. Describe the types of land-use changes that are occurring in areas identified as most rapidly growing or redeveloping.

DeKalb County is situated immediately east of the City of Atlanta and encompasses within its borders a small portion of the corporate limits of Atlanta. DeKalb’s population of 610,000 (ARC population estimate for 2000) ranks second among Georgia’s counties and is the most ethnically diverse in the state. DeKalb is also second in the number of businesses and workers. Approximately 15% of the population lives in the incorporated areas that include the City of Decatur (the county seat), seven smaller municipalities and a part of the City of Atlanta. The county has a land area of approximately 173,393 acres.

DeKalb County is experiencing moderate growth in its southern and eastern areas. This growth is occurring principally as single-family detached housing in subdivisions with a density of 4 to 6 units per acre. This development is replacing rural residential development at a variety of densities. Development is such that DeKalb County no longer has a significant amount of rural or vacant land. Most of north and central DeKalb has been developed for many years. At the present time this part of the county is experiencing in-fill development and redevelopment with cluster housing, townhouses, and apartments. In-fill occurs on small previously undeveloped parcels within existing developments. Redevelopment replaces low-density housing and older apartment complexes. Housing is typically replaced with a similar form of housing at a much higher density (i.e. three houses on five lots are replaced with 20 houses; apartments at 10 per acre are replaced with 24 apartments per acre).

The largest example of commercial expansion is the construction of the new Mall at Stonecrest and associated major activity centers south of I-20. This complex will include a super-regional mall that is currently under construction in the more rural SE part of the county.





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CITIES:

List each municipality that is participating in the program and the percentage of its population, compared to the entire count.

Include as an appendix to the grant application report a certified copy of each resolution adopted by the county's governing body and by each participating municipality that authorizes the establishment of a Community Greenspace Trust Fund for each such jurisdiction.

Cities within DeKalb County:

DeKalb municipalities are experiencing the same infill development as the county. A brief highlight of each city within DeKalb County is provided below:

Atlanta-

The City of Atlanta serves as both the capital of the State of Georgia and the county seat for Fulton County. In addition, many southeast regional headquarters are located here. It was officially incorporated as "Marthasville" in 1843 and became "Atlanta" in 1845. Geographically, approximately one third of the city is located within DeKalb County. This portion consists largely of early suburbs that developed in the early 20th century. Estimated current population is 427,500 with approximately 34,000 located within DeKalb County.

Avondale Estates-

Avondale Estates occupies one square mile in central DeKalb. It is a planned city developed on the trolley line in the 1920's. Incorporated in 1927, its current estimated population is 2,162.

Chamblee-

Chamblee occupies 3.4 square miles in the north end of the county. Incorporated in 1908, its current population is estimated as 7,503.

Clarkston-

Clarkston occupies .7 square miles in central DeKalb. It was incorporated in 1882, its current population is estimated as 5,911.





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Decatur-

Decatur serves as the county seat of DeKalb County. It occupies 4.2 square miles in central DeKalb. It was incorporated in 1823; its current population is estimated as 17,414. Its collaborative initiatives with the Decatur Downtown Development Authority and the Decatur Business Association have resulted in a resurgence of housing, restaurants and small shops.

Doraville-

Doraville occupies 3.6 square miles in north DeKalb and it was incorporated in 1871. Its current population is estimated as 8,377.

Lithonia-

Lithonia occupies .8 square miles in southeast DeKalb. It was incorporated in 1855; its population is estimated as 2,712.

Pine Lake-

Pine Lake occupies .4 square miles in east DeKalb. It was incorporated in 1937, and the current population is estimated as 789.

Stone Mountain-

Stone Mountain occupies 1.0 square miles in northeast DeKalb. It was incorporated in 1847, its 1999 population is estimated as 7,168.

Cities are eligible for funds per the following chart:

DEKALB MUNICIPAL POPULATIONS			
CITY	US CENSUS*	% of County	CITY POPULATION AS \$
Atlanta-in-DeKalb	34,269	5.771	\$190,746
Avondale Estates	2,162	0.364	12,031
Chamblee	7,503	1.263	41,745
Clarkston	5,911	0.995	32,887
Decatur	17,414	2.932	96,910
Doraville	8,377	1.411	46,637
Lithonia	2,712	0.457	15,105
Pine Lake	789	0.133	4,396
Stone Mountain	7,168	1.207	39,894
Total Municipalities	86,305	14.533	\$ 480,352
Unincorporated DeKalb	507,545	85.467	\$2,824,897
Total DeKalb	593,850	100.000	\$3,305,249

*US Census Bureau – unadjusted counts 1998

DeKalb's Community Greenspace Program outlines the creation of a task force called *The Initiative for a Green DeKalb* that will include representatives to be identified by each of our municipalities.





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This group will recommend program policies and advise on expenditure destinations. Each municipality has been asked to confirm its approach to the greenspace program in one of the following manners:

1. **Creation and administration of a municipality's own Greenspace Program.**
A municipality may elect to develop and administer its own greenspace program. This requires that a separate Trust Fund be established and that the governing body officially adopts by resolution its own program for the funds, as defined by the greenspace legislation.
2. **Creation of a Municipality's own Greenspace Trust Fund.**
Participate in DeKalb County's program but create a municipality's separate Greenspace Trust Fund for funds allocated by formula.
3. **Participation through DeKalb County.**
A municipality may elect to work through DeKalb County to hold and administer the Greenspace funds. In this case, DeKalb County works with specific municipalities to expend, at a minimum, that municipality's prescribed funding share in a fashion supported by that municipality's governing body.
4. **No participation.**
A municipality may choose not to participate in the Greenspace Program. Any funds prorated by the State to a municipality that elects-out of the program will be spent as the county deems most beneficial to the county's citizens.

Cities have elected to participate in the DeKalb Greenspace Program as follows:

	Create and administer own program	Participate through County but Create and Administer Municipality's own Trust Fund	Participate Through DeKalb as part of County Program	Not Participate
Atlanta	X			
Avondale Estates			X	
Chamblee			X	
Clarkston			X	
Decatur		X		
Doraville			X	
Lithonia			X	
Pine Lake			X	
Stone Mountain			X	

The City of Atlanta has developed a plan that is compatible with DeKalb County's. However, it wishes to administer its own funds.

See Appendix B – Resolutions and Municipal Documentation





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND GOAL:

County Goal for Greenspace Protection

State the county's goal for permanently protecting at least 20 percent of the county's geographic area in greenspace. Briefly describe the most important methods by which the goal will be achieved.

DeKalb County has set a goal of protecting a total of 37,775 acres or 22% of the county's land area as greenspace. We defined greenspace protection in two tiers:

The first tier – **Sensitive Lands** – Refers to land with inherent qualities such as flood plain, rock outcrops, etc. and can be mapped. These lands are targeted for protection within the greenspace categories. We have established goals for each type of land with inherent values that total 30,726 acres.

The second tier – **Greenspace Categories** - addresses our ability to create greenspace areas that are not resource dependent. Civic spaces such as open field areas, parks, squares, greenway trails and boulevards in addition to nature preserves and environmental protection areas. It includes the sensitive lands, but provides for opportunities to create non-resource dependent greenspaces. Our goals for these categories total 37,775 acres or 22% of the county's land area.

Potential sources of greenspace include:

- Protection of sensitive lands
- Creation of greenspaces as an integral part of property development or re-development
- Conversion of existing developed properties
 - We will seek out and evaluate opportunities such as brown-fields, urban tract assemblages, surplus county properties, obsolete land uses and/or abandoned land.





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An overview of our goals is provided as follows:

	Existing or Potential Total	Existing Protected	Permanent Protection Goals	Notes: County contains 173,393 acres, 20% = 34,680 acres
Types of land with inherent values:				
Sensitive Areas:				
? 500 year Flood Plain plus 100 ft.	21,500	5	15,476	50% of the 500 yr. Flood plain plus 100 Feet; FEMA buy outs, parks, Nature preserves, easements
? Wetlands** = total 4,800	1,300		650	50% Outside of flood plains:
? Riparian Corridors plus 75 ft.**	11,000		5,500	50% Outside of flood plains, lakes + 75'
? Rock outcrops	2,000		1,000	
? Steep slopes/Erodible Soils	53,600		5,000	10% or 5,000 which ever is less
? Mature Tree Groves / Forest			1,000	
? Historical/Archeological Sites	5,200	45	600	Locations will not be published
? Pasture Lands/Open Fields/agricultural*	7,500	0	1,500	
TOTAL	96,100	50	30,726	
Greenspace Categories:				
Parks:*				
? Passive Open Space / Parks (non-government)	TBD	TBD	5,000	Includes subdivisions, apartments, land trusts, foundations, etc; Joint ownership, conditional zoning, easements; incentives
? Passive Open Space / Parks (government) ²	7,400	743	15,000	Existing 10-00 L&WCF less rec. centers, athletic complexes, Nat Preserves Goal: Designate 2,000 existing acres as permanently protected county P&R Comp Plan add 2,000 acres by 2010 less 400 excluded uses plus 11,400 acres in additional park land; purchase, donation and designation
? Nature Preserves/Env Protection(non-government)	TBD	TBD	5,000	Includes subdivisions, apartments, land trusts, foundations, etc; Joint ownership, conditional zoning, easements; incentives
? Nature Preserves/Env Protection (government)		550	10,000	Donation, purchase and designation
Civic Spaces: *				
? Public Squares/Community Commons	100		1,000	Decatur sq., campus quads.
? Boulevards	Olmsted & Freedom Parks		1,200	Greenspace associated with roads. (Unpaved areas must exceed, 2.5 x paved areas, in any 1-mile segment.)
? Greenway Trails	58		662	Average 42' wide, 130 miles
TOTAL	7,400	1,293	37,862	
<p>* Can be created given opportunity ** Overlaps with flood plain- based upon GIS blue line unless site inspection reveals a needed revision TBD= To Be Determined All numbers are estimates</p> <p>All numbers are acres unless otherwise noted</p>				





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Consistency of Comprehensive Plan with Greenspace Program

Either describe those components of the county's and any participating municipalities' comprehensive plans that are consistent with the community greenspace program; or describe amendments to the comprehensive plans which the county and any participating municipalities have adopted or in the process of adopting to ensure that the comprehensive plans are consistent with the community greenspace program.

The DeKalb County Board of Commissioners met on June 27, 2000 and adopted several new objectives that promote greenspace acquisition and protection. These objectives are adopted as follows and have been incorporated into the 1996 DeKalb County Comprehensive Land Use Plan as amended:

- “Establish a coordinated county 20% Greenspace Program that incorporates the applicable Objectives, Policies and Action Strategies of this section.” (VIII. Goals, Objectives, Policies and Action Strategies: I Natural and Historic Resources pursuant to the Georgia Greenspace Act.)
- “Develop land use ordinances and policies that will permanently preserve 20% of the county's geographic area as greenspace as defined by the Georgia Greenspace Act and assure that this section is consistent with the greenspace program.” (VIII. Goals, Objectives, Policies and Action Strategies: VII. Land Use).

There are numerous references to greenspace protection in the Comprehensive Plan and the entire adopted Comprehensive Plan is environmentally based. There is also a land use classification on both required maps denoting Parks and Greenspace. One of the primary adopted goals is for the county to:

- “Provide for the appropriate use and management of land, air, water, soils, forest, mineral, wildlife and other natural, archaeological and historic resources.”

This goal restates some of the primary missions of the Georgia Greenspace Program.

The Comprehensive Plan encourages protection of greenspace and the environment in a number of goals, objectives, policies and tasks in the adopted Short-Term work program. These would be compatible with the greenspace program. Some highlights include:

- Create “*The Initiative for a Green DeKalb*” a committee charged with developing a plan for a countywide greenway system. Staff from Planning, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Public Works will work with a cross section of citizens including neighborhood leaders, hotel/tourism managers, environmental planners, developers, city representatives, DeKalb Delegation members and non-profit organizations to discuss and design the plan. (1996, I-21)
- Protect and maintain natural, undisturbed buffers near streams and in ground water recharge areas surrounding springs and the headwaters of streams.
- Develop nature preserves for the protection of significant ecosystems such as: water corridors, Arabia Mountain, and Fernbank Forest.





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- Achieve efficient use of multi-purpose open space, which helps to define development concentrations, serve as buffers between dissimilar developments and/or protects sensitive natural areas.
- Develop additional parks for active and passive recreational use and develop a plan for linkage.
- The plan calls for nature parks, nature preserves and green belts in a number of locations around the county.
- The flood plain areas along portions of streams such as: North Fork of Peachtree Creek and Henderson Mill Creek are quite wide and impose significant limitations on development. The Comprehensive Plan recommends the use of some of these flood plain areas as buffer zones between disparate land uses.
- Tributaries of the South River (Sugar Creek, Doless Creek, Doolittle Creek, Conley Creek, Pole Bridge, and Entrenchment Creek), cover substantial portions of the area with their 500-year flood plains. While most types of development would be inappropriate for these areas, they could provide the basis for a set of open space corridors for public and private recreational uses.
- Develop additional park areas along Cobb Creek, Conley Creek, South River, River Road, and Flakes Mill Road.

Virtually all of the comprehensive plan's goals and objectives for development and redevelopment of the county call for environmental protection and for encouraging parks and open space development. The greenspace grant program is consistent and necessary to accomplish these goals.

In addition to the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan, the county has accepted the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Strategic Plan which outlines goals and strategies for the protection of greenspace and a Master Plan for Greenway Trails.

Map 1 -- Greenway Corridors with on-street bike routes and destinations

See Appendix C -- DeKalb County Comprehensive Landuse Plan.
DeKalb County Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Strategic Plan
DeKalb County Greenway Trails Master Plan





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UNPROTECTED LANDS:

Indicate on a map publicly owned land that is not permanently protected but on which the county desires to obtain a greenspace protection status.

DeKalb County has located on a map all county owned (1,000+) properties. The county intends to establish a process and program for identification of unprotected lands with input from Departments, Stakeholders, Partners and Elected Officials.

Map 2 -- County owned properties
See appendix D -- County owned properties

It is our intent to review and assess our existing properties to create a database of sites that meet one or more goals of the Georgia Community Greenspace Program. In order to accomplish this we will need to establish protection mechanisms that create a “permanently protected status,” adopt guidance policies and research qualifying properties. Once this process is complete, we will be able to report on and map properties to be submitted for greenspace protection status.

The county intends to develop and then confirm, with input from all partners, the Goals, Inventories, Process and Procedures for the Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program. The process will include nomination procedures, surplus property review and recommendation, new development greenspace recommendation, standards for greenspace within residential development, private and charitable donation procedures, revitalization/beautification project recommendation procedures, property buyout review i.e. FEMA, FAA, etc.

For economic, privacy and political reasons, the county has chosen not to report and map specific properties for protection status. Citizen, stakeholder, and partner participation are a high priority for the county.

Indicate on a map and give a narrative description of areas of the county and any participating municipalities that are designated for protection. Describe how land is to be preserved, whether by fee-simple acquisition, conservation easement, ordinance, or other means.

The county has identified its 500-year flood plain and other types of land it wishes to protect as passive open space parks, nature preserves/environmental protection areas or civic spaces. (See Goals page 9). It will depend upon the opportunities presented by specific sites as to the most appropriate protection mechanism. In addition to the general categories of land, we have an extensive list of properties needing protection and have received numerous site nominations. We will develop evaluation criteria to prioritize sites throughout the county for acquisition or other means of protection. In addition, we will develop policies that promote the creation of greenspace focusing on the tools outlined in this document.

Map 3 -- Potential greenspace schematic





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

PROTECTED LANDS:

Indicate on a map and on a table of acreage all existing permanently protected greenspace within the county that is currently owned by each federal agency; the State of Georgia; the county; municipalities; conservation organizations; and private individuals. The Department has provided in Appendix D the state-owned acreage that is managed as heritage preserves.

Indicate on a map and on a table of acreage all permanently protected lands that are in fee-simple ownership, in conservation easements, and in agreements that require no net loss of comparable greenspace, and indicate the total acres available for public access.

There are no known federal or state properties within DeKalb County that qualify as permanently protected greenspace. The existing county and municipal properties that are protected by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Limitation of Use Covenant that meet the state's criteria for permanently protected greenspace are listed as follows and have been mapped:

Table of Known Protected Sites as of November 2000

Site Name	Owner	Total Acreage	Greenspace Acreage	Greenspace Percentage
Bessie Branham Park	City of Atlanta	6.50	4.23	65.08%
Brownwood Park	City of Atlanta	13.20	7.56	57.27%
Springdale Park	City of Atlanta	4.50	2.15	47.78%
Wesley Coan Park	City of Atlanta	16.50	9.56	57.94%
Friendship Park	City of Clarkston	14.00	13.45	96.07%
Ebster Park Pool	City of Decatur	2.60	0.52	20.00%
McKoy Recreation Park	City of Decatur	8.50	5.10	60.00%
Mead Road Park	City of Decatur	1.00	1.00	100.00%
Oakhurst Park	City of Decatur	11.30	6.80	60.18%
Flowers Park	City of Doraville	1.50	1.50	100.00%
Honeysuckle Park Improvements	City of Doraville	20.00	3.05	15.25%
Randolph Medlock Park	City of Stone Mountain	10.30	0.05	0.49%
Arabia Mountain	DeKalb County	522.00	522.00	100.00%
Blackburn Park	DeKalb County	49.00	39.34	80.29%
Browns Mill Park	DeKalb County	54.00	17.84	33.04%
Bruce Street Park	DeKalb County	4.00	4.00	100.00%
Cedar Park	DeKalb County	3.00	3.00	100.00%
Dearborn Park	DeKalb County	7.00	7.00	100.00%
Dunwoody Park	DeKalb County	35.00	35.00	100.00%
Fork Creek Mountain Park	DeKalb County	35.00	35.00	100.00%
Forty Oaks Park	DeKalb County	10.00	10.00	100.00%
Gregory Mosely Memorial Park	DeKalb County	8.00	8.00	100.00%
Hairston Park	DeKalb County	33.00	33.00	100.00%
Henderson Park – Phase I	DeKalb County	114.00	97.69	85.69%
Lithonia Community Park	DeKalb County	53.00	44.26	83.51%
Lynwood Park	DeKalb County	17.00	9.06	53.29%
Mason Mill Park	DeKalb County	111.00	89.49	80.62%
Murphey Candler Park	DeKalb County	135.00	106.64	78.99%





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Redan Park	DeKalb County	65.00	25.39	39.06%
Shoal Creek Park	DeKalb County	18.00	13.24	73.56%
Wade Walker Park	DeKalb County	175.75	141.77	80.67%
Total Permanently Protected Greenspace			1,296.69	

See Map 4 – Known Protected Sites as of 11-2000

DeKalb County does not currently have a complete inventory of lands owned by conservation organizations and private individuals. It is our intent to research and create a database of additional properties owned by governments, private entities such as conservation organizations and private individuals that meet those requirements. Once this process is complete, we will be able to develop a full inventory, report and map.

LOCAL LAND-USE ORDINANCES, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS:

Include a copy of the county's and any participating municipalities' most recently adopted existing and future land-use maps (with legends) and plans contained within the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan.

The DeKalb County Comprehensive plan is included on disk.

Map 5 -- Land Use 1996
Map 6 -- Land Use 2015

Identify existing local land-use ordinances, policies and regulations that will further the preservation of greenspace.

DeKalb County amended its zoning code in 1999 and is currently rewriting the Land Development Code to enhance environmental protection. The environmental protection provisions directly protect stream valleys/floodplains. While ordinances themselves do not permanently protect land, they do provide incentives that encourage land to be identified and set aside in perpetuity.

The regulations deny the opportunity to construct foundations within floodplains and seek to provide buffers by denying development within a designated distance of a stream in the county. These floodplains/buffers are recognized as being important for protection of wildlife, and helping maintain clean air and water.

The county's Zoning Ordinance and Land Development Ordinance both provide for buffer zones. Under conditional zoning these buffer zones may be required to be "undisturbed." The "undisturbed" feature means that the strip(s) of land are to be protected during development. The DeKalb County Land Development Ordinance currently specifies that no less than 25' from the natural edge of vegetation along a stream (wrested area) be protected.

Supplementing "buffer zones" in the zoning ordinance are requirements that a tree protection plan be developed for each property proposed for development and construction. While protection of trees alone does not create greenspace, the tree protection zones are often on the perimeters of the property resulting in buffer zones having better protection.





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The county's conditional zoning process permits parts of property to be permanently protected from development. Outstanding natural areas can be and occasionally are reserved from development. Unlike restrictive covenants that expire, conditional zoning does not expire and can only be removed by a vote of the Board of Commissioners.

The county has environmental overlay district protection in the zoning ordinance. The first of these is to be the Arabia Mountain Overlay District. These environmental overlay districts provide for flexible approaches to site plan approval that permit protection of outstanding greenspace and viewsheds. Other potential environmental overlay districts include the Yellow and South Rivers.

Describe how the county and any participating municipalities are currently using existing tools to further the preservation of greenspace.

DeKalb County and its municipalities use environmental, zoning and development controls to protect stream valleys and streams, steep slopes and trees. The collective impact of these mechanisms is to protect land that should not be built upon and which can become a part of the county's greenspace network.

Describe how the county and any participating municipalities will commit to use existing tools for permanently preserving greenspace.

The greenspace program provides added incentives for the county to evaluate its tools for the creation and protection of greenspace. The county will create a study group of experts to review current tools, research what tools have been used elsewhere, evaluate what is possible for DeKalb County and recommend initiatives that will support our vision for a green DeKalb.

Rezoning and/or development proposals would be reviewed and priority candidates for greenspace designation identified. With this information it will be determined which of the available tools are appropriate for a specific site and strategies for its protection pursued. If current tools are inadequate this will be noted as a problem area requiring further action.

The county is reviewing a draft subdivision ordinance that will encourage the creation and protection of greenspace.





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Describe additional tools the county and any participating municipalities will use to achieve the county's goal.

Tools:

Tools that will be evaluated for protecting specific sites include:

- Acquiring land
- Acquiring conservation easements on privately owned land to protect natural, historic or recreational resources, or to protect agricultural or forestry land uses
- DeKalb County will aggressively pursue the creation of greenspace through means of conversion. We will seek out and evaluate conversion opportunities from the areas such as brown-fields, urban tracts assemblages, surplus county properties, obsolete and/or abandoned land and through the application of a conservation easement overlay on new developments.
- Permanently protecting lands that are owned by local governments by:
 - Placing permanent protective easements on conservation, preservation and recreational lands which do not currently qualify as permanently protected
 - Entering into contractual arrangements to ensure that, if the protected status is discontinued, such land will be replaced by other greenspace of equal or greater monetary and resource protection value
- Identify methods used elsewhere that ensure greenspace will remain forever in uses which further the goals of the Greenspace Program

Funding:

Sources of funding that will be investigated:

- Special-purpose local option sales taxes to fund greenspace protection
- Storm water utility to help fund the acquisition of greenspace for permanent protection
- Identifying opportunities to receive gifts of land in fee-simple or of conservation easements
- Identifying private, state and federal sources of funds which can be used to protect greenspace within the local jurisdiction

Development Regulations:

Local regulatory tools will be investigated.

- Performance-based zoning, such as conservation zoning, to supplement prescriptive zoning
- Identify and promote incentives for greenspace protection
- Provide for environmental overlay zones within the existing zoning ordinance
- Consider a transferable development rights program
- Amend subdivision regulations and land development code to specify the protection of steep slopes, wetlands, or flood plains and to encourage setting aside recreational greenspace
- Provide for connections and linkage of greenspace within new or re-developments
- Establish a mitigation land bank program





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Barriers to Achieving Greenspace Goal:

Describe legal and structural barriers that will prevent the county and any participating municipalities from achieving its greenspace protection goal.

- A land development code which allows over development.
- Lack of a county-wide plan, zoning and development review procedures that identify and encourage creation of greenspace
- Lack of understanding, promotion and coordination of greenspace goals
- Prohibitive land costs
- Open Space areas protected by ordinances, zoning conditions or identified as needed in planning studies are not identified on future land use maps and therefore not “caught” in the development review process.
- Lack of policies and procedures that facilitate the identification and protection of greenspace.
- There is no mechanism for tracking greenspace properties.
- Lack of state enabling legislation that encourages counties to require greenspace as part of development.

Describe how the county and any participating municipalities will remove or mitigate legal and structural barriers that would prevent them from achieving their goal.

The Board of Commissioners, DeKalb Legislative Delegation, and legal experts will meet regularly with internal staff and staff from municipalities to discuss the legal and structural barriers to achieving the greenspace goals and work jointly to implement strategies. As our plan is developed we will identify changes in state and local laws that will promote our ability to permanently protect greenspace.

We will also work with community groups to advance these goals.

At present, counties and cities do not have the legal authority in Georgia to enter into long-term commitments that would “hold” greenspace until it can be fully acquired. The county will seek voluntary commitments from property owners who may be intending to market desirable greenspace property at some future time.

High quality greenspace that is threatened with development will be acquired on a priority basis using county and greenspace funds. County funds may have to be temporarily diverted from other programs to provide funding ahead of the regular budget process. This will have to be approved by the Board of Commissioners.





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

At this time DeKalb County needs to:

- Establish the Initiative for a Green DeKalb and create study groups to recommend policies that will guide our program.
- Create an organizational structure to manage the program.
- Create a plan:
 - A county-wide vision of interconnected spaces that provide connections, places to gather and enjoy life and protect the county's natural resources.
 - Articulate that vision on a county map with supplemental text identifying the types of land to be protected as opportunities occur.
 - Develop goals and strategies to achieve the vision
- Identify resources
 - Create the resources and processes that will implement the vision.

Source and Use of Funds:

Describe all sources of funds, including state appropriated funds, that will be used for community greenspace program.

Obtaining funds will be an ongoing activity. We will continuously evaluate potential sources such as grants, donations, and other funding programs, check-off programs, bond referendums, dedicated millage and SPLOST. Potential sites will be evaluated and ranked according to their appropriateness for methods of protection and funding opportunities.

Describe how the county and any participating municipality will fund the costs of planning for its community greenspace program.

Give a general description of how the county and any participating municipality will fund any necessary improvements, operations, maintenance and other stewardship activities for its community greenspace program.

The DeKalb County administration will review and consider departmental 2001 budget submittals regarding approaches to plan, manage and maintain a community greenspace program and will make a consolidated 2001 budget recommendation to the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners. It is anticipated that a program manager and administrative assistant will provide full-time coordination and support for the integrated efforts of other departments, the Initiative for a Green DeKalb and supporting consultant services.

Policy recommendations by the "Initiative for a Green DeKalb" will be presented to the county and municipal governments for their approval and adoption.





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Allocation of Funds to Municipalities

Using the instructions in Appendix C, the county should give the percentages of grant shares for the municipalities that lie wholly or partly within its jurisdiction. If grant shares were not distributed according to population percentages, describe the alternative distribution of shares between the county and participating municipalities.

See Chart page 7

Non-Participating Municipalities

List each municipality that is located wholly or in part within the county that elected not to participate in the program. Provide as an appendix a letter from each stating their reasons for not choosing to participate in the community greenspace program or documentation that the county has requested such a letter from each non-participating municipality

The City of Atlanta is developing its own program. DeKalb County will coordinate its plan with Atlanta and pass through their share of the funds to a Trust Fund that they will establish. Decatur wishes to create and administer its own fund but participate through the Joint DeKalb County/ Municipal Greenspace Program.

See Chart page 8

APPROACH

DeKalb County will take a progressive and aggressive approach to protecting greenspace as outlined below:

I. DeKalb County proposes to create and protect lands in the following categories:

Sensitive Areas (Types of land with inherent values):

- ◆ 500-year Flood Plain plus 100 ft.
- ◆ Wetlands
- ◆ Riparian Corridors plus 75 ft
- ◆ Rock Outcrops
- ◆ Steep Slopes/Erodible Soils
- ◆ Mature Tree Groves/Forests
- ◆ Historical/Archeological Sites
- ◆ Pasture Lands/Open Fields/Agricultural





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Greenspace Categories:

- **Parks**
 - ◆ Passive Open Space/Parks (non-government)
 - ◆ Passive Open Space/Parks (government)
 - ◆ Nature Preserves/Environmental Protection (non-government)
 - ◆ Nature Preserves/Environmental Protection (government)
- **Civic Spaces**
 - ◆ Public Squares/Community Commons
 - ◆ Boulevards
 - ◆ Greenway Trails

DeKalb County will establish a program that will receive nominations and donations of property and will with its partners/stakeholders/consultant inventory, nominate, rank, prioritize, acquire, manage, and review on an annual basis properties with potential for permanent protection.

***Please Note:**

The opportunity to create greenspace in conjunction with utility development and storm water management initiatives will be actively pursued. Nothing in this program will reduce the ability of DeKalb County from constructing and/or maintaining water/sewer/storm lines under any contract that could be entered into concerning greenspace.

II. The county will develop mechanisms for protecting lands that include:

- Verification that property is managed in a manner consistent with program goals
- That protected status is legally recorded
- That there be a periodic inspection or audit

To-date identified protection mechanisms include:

- Properties acquired or developed through federal programs such as:
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund
 - Federal Emergency Management Distraction "Buy-outs"
 Properties held in common ownership, such as common space owned jointly by all the individual property owners in a subdivision
- Properties that are subject to conditional zoning

Property that is designated as protected can be converted to a use inconsistent with the program only if all of the following conditions are met:

- The conversion will serve a public purpose; and
- A public meeting to which property owners within a one-mile radius of the affected property and interested organizations are invited; and
- The conversion is reviewed and recommended by *The Initiative for a Green DeKalb*; and
- Replacement with property of equal or greater value and utility or funds in excess of 110% of the appraised current market value will be contributed to the Community Greenspace Trust Fund





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

III. DeKalb County will develop procedures for:

- Establishing a base line
- Tracking and Mapping potential properties
- Tracking and Mapping protected properties
- Conversion of property to greenspace
- Nominating and evaluating properties
- Surplus property review
- Zoning/Rezoning applications and development permit review

IV. DeKalb County will establish a comprehensive greenspace plan.

- Create an Initiative for a Green DeKalb--a group consisting of staff, representatives from municipalities, a cross section of citizens and experts; who will recommend policy, promote the creation of greenspace and monitor the management of the program
- Identify and map opportunities and connections
- Publish and promote the plan with brochures, posters and presentations
- Create standards for the provision of greenspace

V. Tools

- Purchase of targeted lands
- Donations
- Easements

VI. Methods

- Conversion of property to greenspace
- Incentives through local, state and federal regulations
- Tax incentives

VII. Property Management Mechanisms

- Responsible entity:
 - Homeowner's Association
 - Land Trust
 - County Department
 - Municipalities
 - Institution
 - Corporation
- Technique:
 - Active paid staff management
 - Adopt-a-site volunteer groups
 - Periodic monitoring

VIII. Funding

- DeKalb County and the cities of Atlanta and Decatur have created Community Greenspace Trust Funds, which will receive moneys earmarked for greenspace.
- Other funding mechanisms could include:
Grants, donations, other funding programs, check-off programs, bond referendums, dedicated millage. HOST, SPLOST. Opportunities will be pursued and evaluated

Ten Year Strategy to Achieve Joint DeKlab/Municipal Greenspace Program Goal





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Year 1

- Establish Initiative for a Green DeKalb
- Develop Vision, Goals and Plan
- Establish structure, policies and procedures
- Create a legal “permanent protection” designation that can be applied to county-owned property
- Inventory tools, promote existing methods of protection
- Evaluate nominated sites. Determine if each is appropriate for inclusion in the greenspace program. Identify protection and management strategies that would be appropriate for each site and develop an action plan to secure the site.
- Establish mechanisms such as referrals to land trusts, and model agreements, etc.
- Create mechanisms that establish permanently protected areas that are owned and managed by non-governmental agents such as: homeowners associations, business groups, private individuals etc.
- Inventory existing protected properties
- Establish criteria for acquisition
- Establish criteria to qualify as protected and management strategies
- Create and fund positions or consultant contracts to coordinate, manage, promote and track greenspace initiatives
- Map and manage inventory and nomination/donation database
- Acquire property
- Establish greenspace checklist for site plan reviews.
- Create a pre-submittal review process for zoning and development that includes a greenspace review
- Identify specific projects and action plans.

Future strategies will be established by the Initiative for a Green DeKalb and approved by the BOC. However, a general outline follows:

Year 2

- Inventory
- Review and amend development regulations to support greenspace initiatives
- Promote the plan
- Develop a public awareness program
- Acquire properties
- Promote incentive programs
- Develop funding mechanisms
- Implement Strategies

Year 3

- Evaluate, revise strategies and implement
- Audit program to-date, identify what is working, what isn't; what has been achieved; what remains to be done.
- Possible funding initiative for the acquisition of greenspace
- Review tax policies for incentives
- Adoption of regulatory incentives

Year 4-5

- Implement

Year 6

- Evaluate, revise strategies and implement





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Year 7-8

- Implement

Year 9

- Evaluate, revise strategies and implement

Year 10

- Implement





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Maps:

Map 1 – Greenway Corridors with on-street bike routes and destinations

Map 2 – County Owned Properties

Map 3 – Potential Greenspace Schematic

Map 4 – Known Protected sites as of 11-2000

Map 5 – Land Use 1996

Map 6 -- Land Use 2015





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Appendix A – Public Meetings

- Invitee List
- Handouts- Agenda, Categories List, Property Nominations Form
- Power Point Presentation
- 8-31-00 Meeting Summary





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Appendix B – Resolutions and Municipal Documentation

- DeKalb Resolution:
Establishing a DeKalb County Trust Fund and accepting the program report
- City of Atlanta resolution
- City of Avondale Estates
- City of Chamblee
- City of Clarkston
- City of Decatur
- City of Doraville
- City of Lithonia
- City of Pine Lake
- City of Stone Mountain





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Appendix C – Comprehensive Plans

- Land Use Plan - See Disks
- Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Strategic Plan – Executive Summary
- DeKalb County Greenway Trails Master Plan – See Insert





Joint DeKalb County/Municipal Greenspace Program

Appendix D – County Owned Properties

