



Green Community Living

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By Robert Soens | 0 comments

As a 'green' home builder and renovator, I feel proud to live in a community like Decatur. Both the City of Decatur, and Dekalb County, have been officially recognized by the Atlanta Regional Commission in its Green Communities program. Certified Green Communities are recognized for setting an example in energy and water conservation, reducing waste, and protecting and restoring natural resources, among other efforts and initiatives.

There are many ways in which both our county and city governments participate and promote sustainable practices not only in their operations and service deliveries, but also in working with and supporting local groups both private and public non-profit in our community to improve the quality of the environment in which we live. Examples range widely, from smaller entities such as the gardening program at Decatur High School to the 'greening' of the Emory University Campus.

One of the exciting aspects of these developments is the easy access and numerous opportunities we as citizens have to involve ourselves and participate at many levels. As a long time resident of the City of Decatur, my participation began by simply choosing to live here, rather than in the suburbs, and in recycling. For many years I have been proud of our recycling program and at the same time frustrated that more communities don't have a similar program. It is nice to see that many communities are now catching up, but also that we continue to lead in so many ways.

The City of Decatur is unique among cities with it's Sustainability Board, and it's commitment to sustainable practices. It is also unique in the number of citizens actively involved in either working professionally at some level in the business of

'green' or simply participating in what would typically be considered 'green' activities, and in living a 'green' lifestyle.

A large number of the staff of the southeast's largest provider of 'green' building expertise, Southface Energy Institute, live in Decatur. A large percentage of our citizens bike or use public transport for their daily commute. Many participate in the annual electronics recycling day. An increasing number of families grow some amount of their food in organic gardens, buy food at the local organic produce market, or support local organic farming operations. As many in the community renovate and update their homes, a large percentage choose to perform energy efficiency upgrades and 'green' renovations. Several private homes as well as public buildings in the area serve as leading edge examples of trends in environmentally sensitive design and construction practices.

It is exciting to see the many ways in which we as citizens in this wonderful community can help the planet by 'greening' our lifestyles as we 'green' the city. And we will need to be willing to participate in a number of ways.

The metropolitan area of Atlanta is facing a huge challenge in it's supply and use of water. This year is clearly an anomaly in the amount of rainfall that we have had, setting a record for the previous 50 years. Water will continue to become a scarce and precious resource, as well as a political challenge for our elected officials. And it is just one example of the kind of challenges that we as a community will face, demanding that everyday citizens play a role in it's resolution. If you haven't already done so, you should consider installing water saving devices in your home, along with a rain harvest system.

I am confident that as a community, Decatur will continue to lead the way in finding more sustainable practices and lifestyles, and that we will see those ways integrated into the everyday life of our city and it's citizens. I look forward to exploring those opportunities with you.

Robert Soens is the award-winning owner of Decatur, Georgia-based Pinnacle Custom Builders, Inc. He serves on the executive committee of the Inner Atlanta Chapter of the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association, as chairperson of the Circle of Good Committee of NARI and is a board member of the Decatur Preservation Alliance.

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