



GWINNETT COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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GwinnettCounty.com

Nicole L. Hendrickson, Chairwoman

Kirkland Dion Carden, District 1

Ben Ku, District 2

Jasper Watkins III, District 3

Marlene M. Fosque, District 4

Official

Informal Presentation Minutes

Tuesday, November 1, 2022 – 3:00 PM

Present: Nicole L. Hendrickson, Kirkland Carden, Ben Ku, Jasper Watkins III, Marlene M. Fosque

1. Support Services

Gwinnett County Sustainability Commission Annual Report 2022

Gwinnett County Sustainability appointees Dr. Marshall Shepherd and Krupesh Patel provided a review of the Gwinnett County Sustainability Commission Annual Report. Dr. Shepherd and Krupesh Patel highlighted survey takeaways, public priorities and offered recommendations to further Gwinnett County's progress. No official action taken.



SUSTAINABLE Gwinnett

2022 Report to the Gwinnett County Commission

Presented by the Gwinnett County
Sustainability Commission



Context For This Report

The **Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners** approved a Resolution creating the Gwinnett County Sustainability Commission (GCSC) on **April 20, 2021**



Inaugural Commission Members



Laura Hernandez, Chair - Chairwoman's Appointment, **Daniel Hilton, Vice-Chair** - District 1, **Krupesh Patel** - District 2, **Dr. J. Marshall Shepherd** - District 3. Not pictured: Inaugural District 4 appointee **Venus Singh**.



Recently Appointed:
Dr. James Nolan - District 4

Purpose of The Commission

- Reviewing and considering the environmental sustainability needs of Gwinnett County now and in the future based upon existing and projected growth patterns.
- Reviewing and assessing environmental sustainability options for Gwinnett County, including those suggested by members of the community.
- Reviewing and assessing the feasibility of differing environmental sustainability options in Gwinnett County.
- Reviewing and assessing options for reducing Gwinnett County's environmental impact through its buildings, fleets, and practices.
- Providing public education and outreach on sustainability issues and encourage the community to reduce its environmental impact.



Starting From A Strong Pedigree

Gwinnett County was the first county to achieve **Platinum level certification in the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities program.**

Since 2009, 20 jurisdictions in the 10-county region have been certified as Green Communities. Cities and counties earn certification by implementing practices and policies in 10 categories ranging from energy efficiency and green building to transportation and water efficiency.



How Gwinnett Compares To Our Peers on Sustainability

Platinum	Gold	Silver	Bronze
330-495 points	280-329 points	230-279 points	175-229 points
Gwinnett County Cobb County City of Norcross City of Decatur City of Roswell City of Woodstock	City of Alpharetta City of Chamblee City of Dunwoody City of Sandy Springs	Douglas County City of Douglasville City of Milton	City of Peachtree Corners DeKalb County Fulton County Cherokee County

ARC benchmarking, the Internal Sustainability Team, and the Sustainability Commission are critical steps and positions Gwinnett County to hold a front leading position on sustainability, transparency and diverse stakeholder involvement, **but there is more to be done.**



Overview of GCSC Initial Activities

In its first year, the GCSC initiated orientation sessions to learn more about County's sustainability infrastructure, progress, and opportunities, introductory briefings were provided on a variety of topics, including:

- Progress of the Environmental Sustainability Team, a staff group that was appointed by, and reports directly to, the County Administrator, in the areas of:
 - Green Building, Energy Efficiency, and Green Power
 - Water Efficiency and Conservation
 - Sustainable Sites, Trees & Greenspace, and Land Use
 - Transportation & Air Quality
- 2020 Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Drawdown Georgia
- Gwinnett County Water Tower
- Ready for 100
- The Ray
- The structure for an Office of Sustainability within other local governments



Public Sustainability Survey

Beginning in January 2022, the GCSC began partnering with staff on a plan to gather public input for the County's first sustainability survey. GCSC members assisted with:

- Reviewing public input gathered in past County planning exercises
- Providing feedback on topics on which more public input may be needed
- Strategizing approaches to gather diverse and inclusive feedback
- Reviewing and revising survey questions
- Promoting the survey
- Tabling at the Multicultural Festival
- Analyzing survey results

The survey was open to the public between May 9 and July 11, 2022, and more than 1,500 responses were received.

The Atlanta
Journal-Constitution

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Gwinnett County is conducting a survey on environmental sustainability



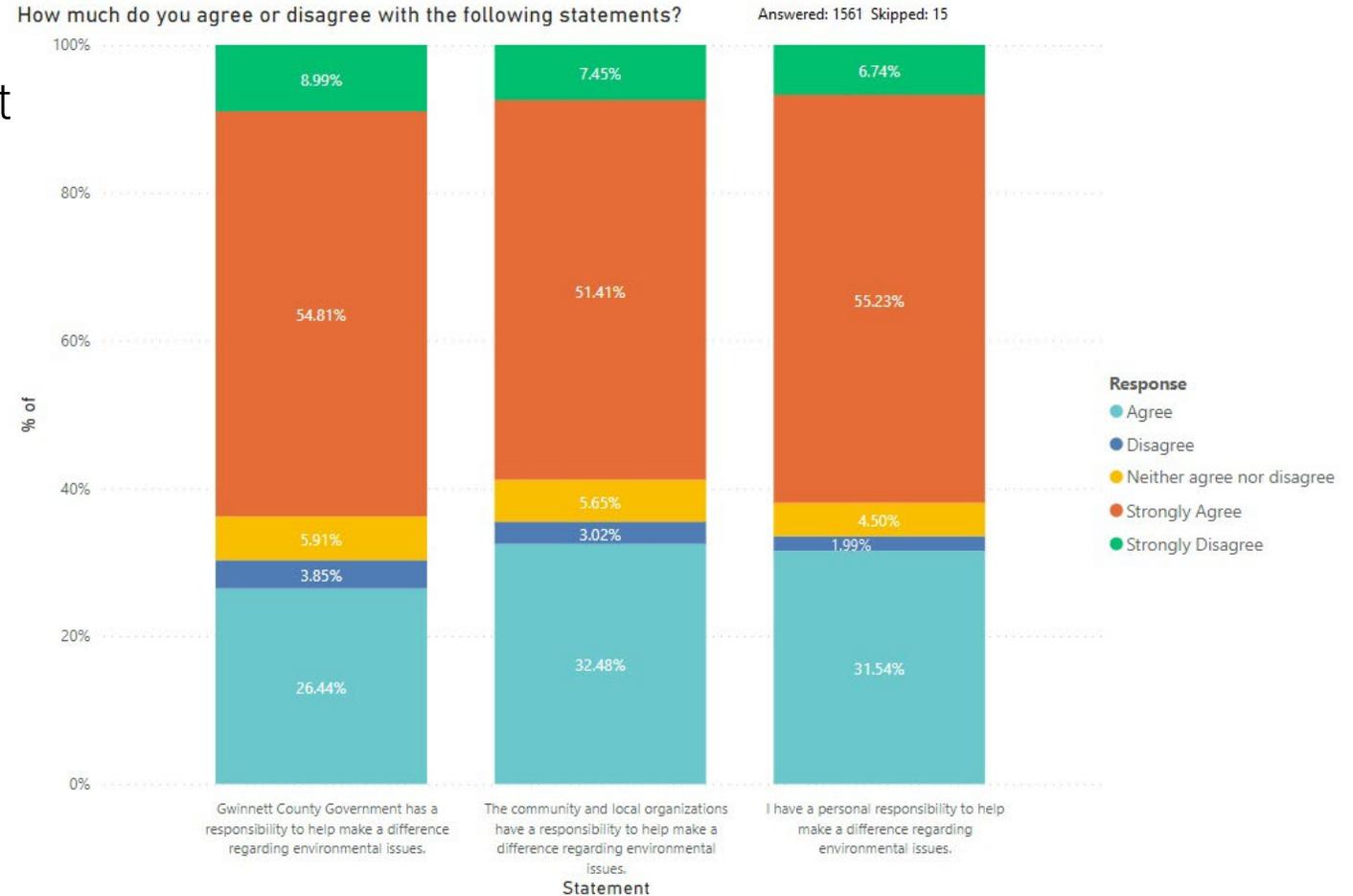
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Survey Results and Highlights

- **60% or more** of respondents believe that we face dire environmental challenges that are a threat to global well-being, but are optimistic about solutions.
- **~1 in 5** respondents acknowledge serious challenges but believe current actions are adequate to address them.
- **More than 75%** of the respondents have some level of agreement that Gwinnett County government, local communities, and individuals, respectively, must collaboratively address these issues.



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Survey Results and Highlights

Individual Perspectives

Most Engagement

- Curbside Recycling (75%)

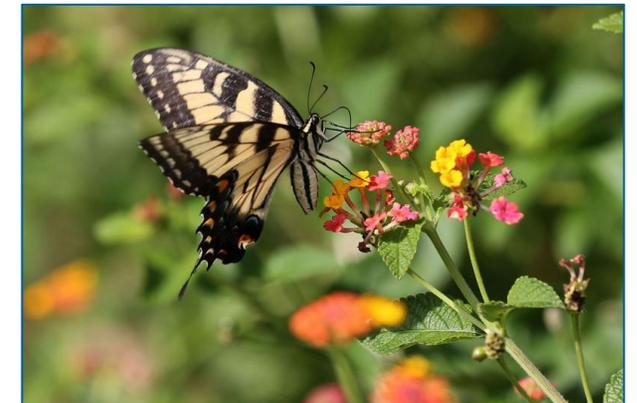
Most Familiarity

- Gwinnett County Transit but NO interest in using it (55%)
- 40% of respondents have used the Gwinnett Trails System

Least Familiarity

- Harvest Gwinnett Community Gardens and water conservation classes.
- Other initiatives with room for growth and greater exposure include glass recycling drop-offs, recycling events, and household hazard waste collection events.

This feedback indicates an opportunity for broader marketing and communication of these important initiatives.



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Key Survey Takeaways

- Respondents may exhibit a **limited perspective** or understanding of the breadth of sustainability activities.
- People are supportive of environmental or sustainability initiatives but are **more likely to participate if an initiative or behavior change is convenient to their lifestyle.**
- ~50% of respondents are, at a minimum, **open to the possibility** of purchasing an electric vehicle (EV).
- 80% of respondents are also **willing to make some personal changes** to tackle environmental challenges.

NOTE:

The “average” respondent did not reflect the diversity and breadth of communities in Gwinnett County. Gwinnett County is one of the most diverse counties in the nation, but **this survey under-sampled men, younger people, a broader range of income levels, and non-white racial groups.**

Gwinnett County boasts a diversity index of 80.9% (meaning that if two people are picked at random in Gwinnett County, there is an 80.9% chance that the two would be of a different race or ethnicity) making it the **most diverse county in the southeast.** *Source: ESRI Community Analyst, 2021*

The Public's Priorities

In one question of the public opinion survey, respondents were asked to share an idea or ideas to enhance environmental sustainability in Gwinnett County. **936 free-response ideas and comments were received.** To conduct a thorough analysis of this important feedback, the GCSC analyzed the comments both by hand and by machine learning using topic modeling. As identified by both analyses, the top sustainability priorities for Gwinnett's stakeholders are:

1. Expanding recycling access and outreach.

The need to improve recycling education, restore convenient (ideally curbside) access to glass recycling, and expand access to hard-to-recycle and hazardous material recycling were topics mentioned the most frequently—at least 300 times.

2. Curtailing overdevelopment and the loss of trees and greenspace.

Anger at perceived overdevelopment and loss of trees and greenspace was expressed more than 200 times. The public is concerned about deforestation, habitat loss, and degradation of Gwinnett's scenic beauty as a result of extensive new construction and wants to see better utilization of existing infrastructure.



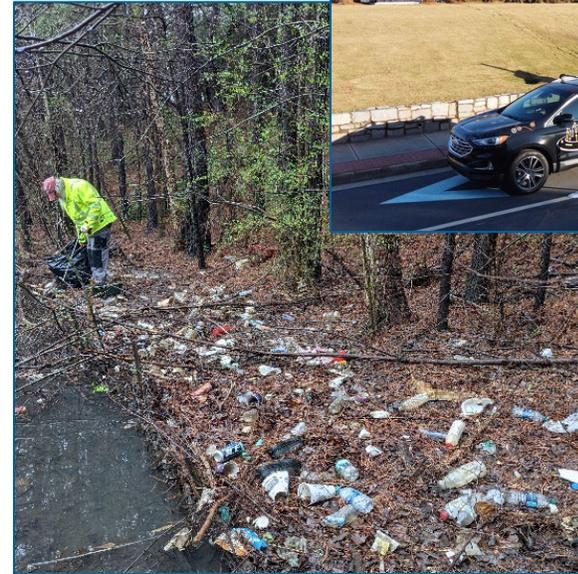
The Public's Priorities (Continued)

3. Increasing green transportation options to reduce traffic and emissions.

Receiving more than 160 mentions, more sustainable ways of getting around town are highly desirable. Stakeholders want less congestion, more effective public transportation, and better electric vehicle, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure.

4. Enhancing public outreach on sustainability.

Many ideas and comments (approximately 150) referred to a need for greater community engagement on sustainability issues—from enhancing education on pro-environmental behavior to making information more transparent and accessible to increasing enforcement penalties for problematic behavior such as littering, dumping, or unlawful outdoor burning. Stakeholders would like to see the County engaging Gwinnett's cities and business community on sustainability.



Comments related to Public Priorities

Expanding recycling access and outreach.

- “Curbside glass recycling!!! Program to get landscaping companies to switch from gas to electric mowers and tools. Commercial building ventilation certification on public display (like restaurant health scores)”
- “Provide more glass recycling drop off locations. Perhaps partnering with retailers could be an option, such as Home Depot, Lowes, or grocery stores.”
- “I want to compliment you on creating more glass recycling drop areas - it's way more convenient now”

Curtailing overdevelopment and the loss of trees and greenspace

- “Stop building without any roads (infrastructure) to support the traffic that new construction brings.”
- “Stop new housing projects.”
- “Tree ordinances prohibiting removal of healthy trees”
- “Re-forest as quickly as possible. The incredible amount of clear cutting to make way for large residential/commercial developments and industrial use is removing the CO2 removing benefits of those large acreages of trees. Please look for opportunities to re-forest and continue to require owners to maintain mature trees and replant within these properties”

Comments related to Public Priorities cont

Increasing green transportation options to reduce traffic and emissions

- “We need rail (Marta) out to Gwinnett. I work in Midtown and would take the train every day if I didn't have to drive to Doraville to do it”
- “Complete walking/biking trails throughout Gwinnett”
- “Make Gwinnett the epitome of safe and pleasant walkability”
- “If I could use public transit in a way that was efficient and workable in my life; if there were sufficient bus runs near my house - I would love to use public transit”

Enhancing public outreach on sustainability.

- “More safe, bike friendly paths. Add a subway/marta rail station near Suwanee Town Center/expand rail networks significantly. Also, greatly expand public bus services (frequency/stops). More community public park litter collection days/personal for litter collection. Specifically teach environmental and sustainability classes in elementary, middle and high school. Promote more renewable energy usage (geothermal, solar, wind, biowaste, hydropower, etc) via government subsidies, etc. Expand recycling of glass and other resources. Reuse old, deteriorating strip malls and other buildings instead of tearing down forests.”
- “Continued/increase access to sustainability workshops and events for youth and training for youth leaders (e.g., Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, church groups, after school programs).”
- “Increase recycling education and awareness. We fight about what can/can't be recycled in our home.”
- “Education. Educating residents on the importance of sustainability. Provide data to show changes in GC; whether good or bad. Offer public events that are advertised more. Make the tasks like recycling less of a hassle or at least perceived to be less.”

The GCSC's Priority Recommendation

The GCSC strongly recommends the creation of a new Director of Environmental Sustainability position in the County Administrator's Office to lead Gwinnett County's progress on important sustainability matters going forward. (Submitted by the GCSC on August 18, 2022 as a standalone recommendation and reiterated in its annual report.)

- There is precedent both in the metro Atlanta region and among counties of our size nationally for leadership and staff dedicated to sustainability.
- Fulton County has a Sustainability Division managed by an Energy & Sustainability Manager who is charged with overseeing and executing the county's robust [Sustainability and Resilience Plan](#).
- Athens-Clarke County has had a [Sustainability Officer](#) in place since 2017, and that leader is supported by one staff member.
- The City of Atlanta has a [Mayor's Office of Resilience](#), with a Chief Sustainability Officer supported by a team of almost 10 people.
- A county of comparable size to ours outside of Georgia—Fairfax County, Virginia—has an [Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination](#) that leads the cross-organizational development and implementation of the County's environmental, energy and climate policies and programs.

Other GCSC Recommendations

Recycling & Waste Reduction

- Invest in improving recycling education.
- Establish staffed recycling drop-off centers.
- Restore convenient access to glass recycling.
- Take action to reduce single-use plastic.

Overdevelopment & Loss of Trees and Greenspace

- Evaluate and pursue relevant opportunities to mitigate tree and habitat loss as a result of overdevelopment.

Green Transportation

- Assess County carbon emissions using the new Drawdown Georgia Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Tracker and align with Drawdown Georgia solutions strategies.
- Prioritize the development of bike- and pedestrian-friendly corridors and increase access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

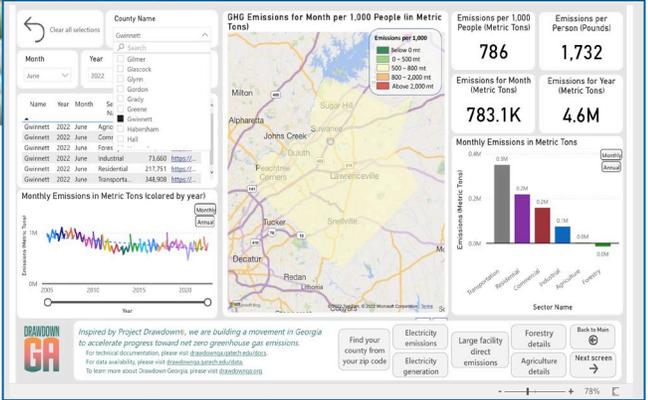
Public Outreach

- Launch a business-focused sustainability survey.
- Add a GCPS student seat to the GCSC.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Georgia Election 2022 Voter Guide Opinion Sports AJC Events EPaper Newsletters

Fulton County plans to eliminate single-use plastics

Month	Year	County Name	GHG Emissions per 1,000 People (Metric Tons)
Guinnett	2022	June	786
Guinnett	2022	June	1,732
Guinnett	2022	June	783.1K
Guinnett	2022	June	4.6M



Thank You For Your
Time and Leadership
on Sustainability!

Acknowledgments

Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners

Nicole Love Hendrickson, Chairwoman
Kirkland Dion Carden, District 1
Ben Ku, District 2
Jasper Watkins III, District 3
Marlene M. Fosque, District 4

Gwinnett County Government Environmental Sustainability Team

Green Building, Energy Efficiency, and Green Power
David Mogge, Deputy Director, Department of Support Services

Sustainable Sites, Trees & Greenspace, and Land Use
Marcus Canada, Section Manager, Department of Planning & Development
Mark Patterson, Deputy Director, Department of Community Services

Water Efficiency and Conservation
John Butler, Outreach Manager, Department of Water Resources

Education and Outreach

Jeanie Donaldson, Division Director, Communications Department

Environmentally Friendly Purchasing

Schelley McWhorter, Purchasing Associate, Department of Financial Services

Transportation & Air Quality

Tom Sever, Assistant Director, Department of Transportation
Ron Adderley, Deputy Director, Department of Support Services

Recycling & Waste Reduction

Susan Paul, Division Director, Department of Support Services

Other Key Support Staff

Carol Speight, Program Analyst, Department of Support Services