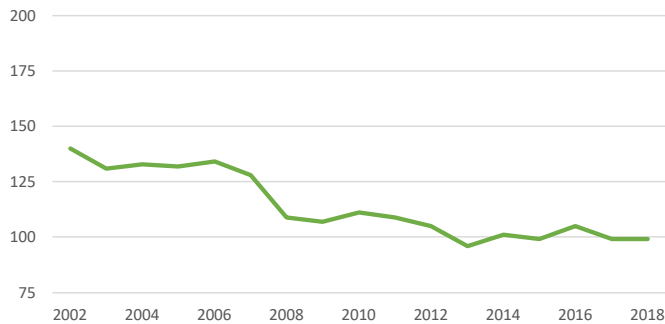# 2020 Regional Sustainability Dashboard

WATER

Water Withdrawal in Metro Atlanta
(gallons / day / person)

Source: Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District

Metro Atlanta is a global leader in water conservation and stewardship and has implemented one of the most aggressive regional water conservation programs in the United States.

Despite growing by over 1.3 million residents (over 20%), water withdrawals in the metro Atlanta region dropped 10% since 2000. Per capita water consumption has dropped by over 30% since that same year.

Regional planning efforts through the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District continue to move the region in the right direction. While conservation remains important, metro Atlanta must continue investing in new and existing water infrastructure.

AIR

Air quality in the metro Atlanta region has improved substantially in the last two decades.

The average annual ambient air quality in metro Atlanta meets the 2012 Federal Standard for particulate matter (PM 2.5). Currently, a seven-county region of metro Atlanta is a marginal nonattainment area for the EPA's latest (2015) 8-hour ozone levels.

More efficient vehicles, increased commute alternatives, and alternative and efficient sources of power generation continue to improve air quality in the region.

These improvements in air quality have major public health impacts: researchers at Georgia Tech estimated that cleaner air prevented over 55,000 emergency department visits between 1999 and 2013.*
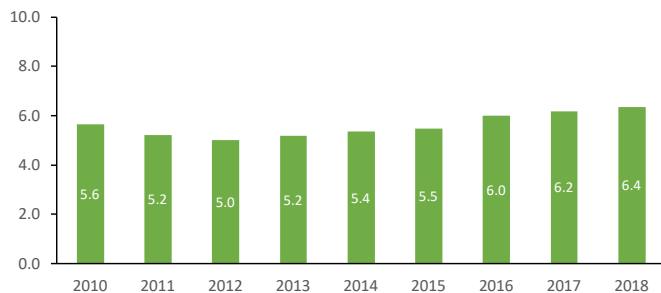
Annual Metro Atlanta Air Quality
(particulate matter 2.5 µg / m³)
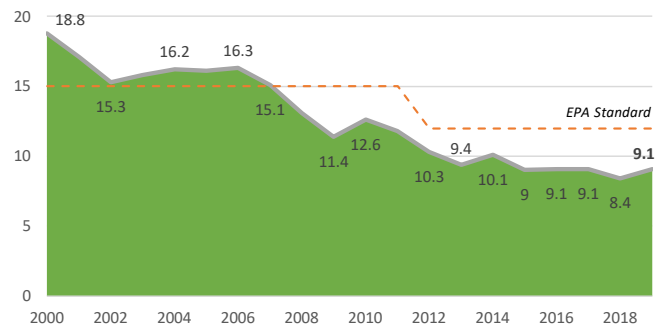
Source: US EPA and Georgia Environmental Protection Division
*Source: Abrams et al. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2019.01.052

WASTE

Municipal Solid Waste Generation in Metro Atlanta
(lbs / day / person)

Source: Georgia Department of Natural Resources

From 2010 to 2012, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) generation in metro Atlanta was on a downward trend. However, since 2013, the trend has reversed.

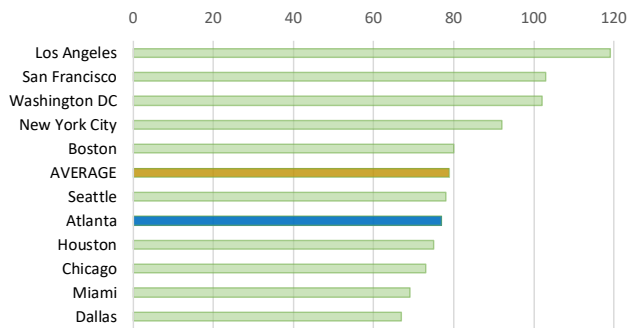Metro Atlanta and Georgia's MSW per capita are both higher than the national average of 4.51 pounds per day.

Local and state incentives and policy drivers are needed for widespread adoption of recycling and waste diversion practices in the region.

METRO ATLANTA CHAMBER

2020 Regional Sustainability Dashboard

TRANSPORTATION

Yearly Delay per Auto Commuter
(in hours, 2017)

City	
Los Angeles	
San Francisco	
Washington DC	
New York City	
Boston	
AVERAGE	
Seattle	
Atlanta	
Houston	
Chicago	
Miami	
Dallas	

Source: Texas A&M Transportation Institute, Urban Mobility Report 2019

In 2017, Metro Atlanta's traffic congestion was slightly less severe than the average of other Very Large Urban Areas, defined as over 3 million residents.

Over the last decade, metro Atlanta's yearly commuter delay has increased by 35%.

Addressing transportation issues on a regional level remains a top priority for our region. Policies promoting regional commute alternatives, better connectivity of public transportation systems and more efficient land-use patterns are important to address commuter mobility.

Since the 2014 Sustainability Dashboard, Clayton County has joined the MARTA system, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Transportation Funding Act of 2015 which provides over $1 billion annually in new funding for roads, bridges, and transit. They also created the ATL Authority for regional transit, and established limited dedicated funding for transit.
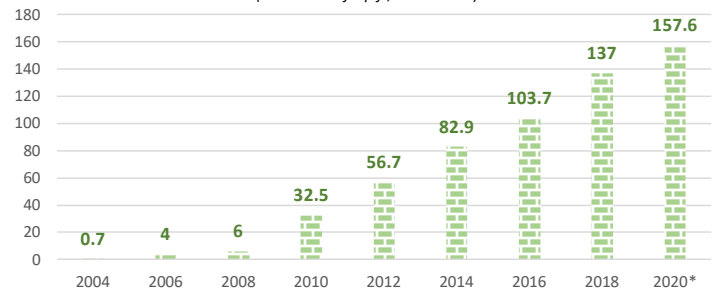
BUILT ENVIRONMENT

LEED, EnergyStar & EarthCraft certified buildings drive energy efficiency in the built environment.

The Atlanta Better Buildings Challenge led to development of over 100 million square feet of commercial space dedicated to saving 20% on water and energy by 2020 – and they succeeded. In 2018, the participants hit their goal with 20.4% below the baseline.

The Southface Energy Institute's EarthCraft green building certification program and Georgia Power's EarthCents program are examples of programs promoting energy efficiency in the region.
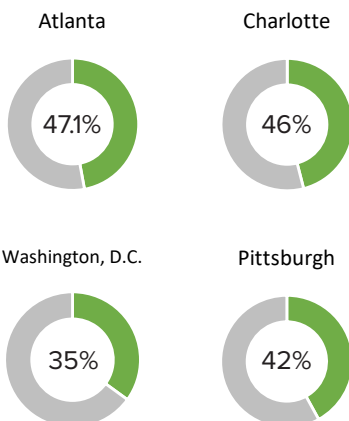
Growth of LEED Building Space in Metro Atlanta
(in millions of sq. ft, cumulative)

Year	Value
2004	0.7
2006	4
2008	6
2010	32.5
2012	56.7
2014	82.9
2016	103.7
2018	137
2020*	157.6

Source: US Green Building Council
*As of July 29, 2020

TREE CANOPY

Atlanta	Charlotte
47.1%	46%

Washington, D.C.	Pittsburgh
35%	42%

Metro Atlanta has the highest urban tree canopy profile in the country for any large metro area. It provides not only better air quality, but also noise reduction, habitat and shade.

Despite metro Atlanta having the highest percentage of urban tree canopy, it suffers from urban heat island effects like most major metropolitan areas.

Urban tree canopy is considered one of the most effective tools in combating urban warming. We need to protect our tree canopy and focus on other measures such as green roofs, reflective roofs and cool pavements.

Source: Georgia Tech Center for Spatial Planning Analytics and Visualization

METRO ATLANTA CHAMBER