



CITY OF DUNWOODY

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Sustainability Commission
Date: April 12, 2010
Subject: **Community Incentives for Green Building Policy**

ITEM DESCRIPTION

The Sustainability Commission recommends the Community Incentives for Green Building Policy.

BACKGROUND

As part of their pursuit of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities certification, the Sustainability Commission has researched policies establishing incentives for the community to incorporate green building practices. Policies from surrounding jurisdictions including the City of Alpharetta, City of Conyers, and Coweta County as well as jurisdictions as far away as San Francisco and Mill Valley, California have been reviewed.

The attached policy has been drafted to meet the requirements of three ARC Green Communities measures: Measure 5 Community Green Building Incentives, Measure 18 Community Solar Incentives, and Measure 26 Community Incentives for WaterSense Homes.

In overview, the policy recognizes three different areas in which sustainable concepts can be incorporated into Dunwoody buildings – green building certifications such as LEED or Energy Star, incorporation of solar energy such as photovoltaic, and reduction and efficiency of water use through the WaterSense certification. The intent of this policy is to incentivize the use of these green building practices by offering expedited plan review for both new construction and renovations. The construction industry operations are time sensitive. Expediting plan review enables builders to begin the construction process faster and possibly save money.

Although the attached policy meets the requirements of the measures listed above, the Sustainability Commission also discussed adjusting the Fee Schedule to financially incentivize green building practices. The group contemplated reducing fees from \$8 per \$1000 of construction valuation to \$6 per \$1000 of construction valuation if the conditions of the policy are met.

By incentivizing the incorporation of green building practices and more efficient use of resources, the City of Dunwoody will encourage builders in the community to utilize green building practices. This policy would be applicable to all future building projects in the community. As this does not amend any current ordinance, but functions as an operating policy, this policy would be read and voted on by Mayor and Council.

RECOMMENDATION

The Sustainability Commission recommends adopting the attached Community Incentives for Green Building Policy for the City of Dunwoody and encourages the Mayor and Council to consider revising the Fee Schedule at a later date to increase incentives for green building practices.



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COMMUNITY INCENTIVES FOR GREEN BUILDING

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COMMUNITY INCENTIVES FOR GREEN BUILDING POLICY

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish incentives for the community to incorporate green building practices in projects within the City of Dunwoody. This policy recognizes three different areas in which sustainable concepts can be incorporated into Dunwoody buildings – green building certifications, incorporation of solar energy, and reduction and efficiency of water use through the WaterSense certification.

Green buildings are designed to reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment. Several different certification programs exist to rate the sustainability of a building. One such standard is the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system. Additionally the Environmental Protection Agency and United States Department of Energy's EnergyStar and EarthCraft programs include guidelines for buildings that are not LEED certified.

Multiple uses for solar energy can be incorporated into buildings. One of the most common uses of solar energy is photovoltaic, or solar panels, which use solar power technology through an array of photovoltaic cells to convert light from the sun directly into electricity. Solar cells produce direct current (DC) electricity from light, which can be used to power DC equipment or to recharge a battery. An inverter is required to convert the DC electricity to alternating current (AC) electricity to power almost all uses of electricity in the home. The basic photovoltaic cell typically produces only a small amount of power. To produce more power, cells can be interconnected to form modules, which can in turn be connected into arrays to produce yet more power. A second method of using solar energy is solar water heaters. Solar water heating systems include storage tanks and solar collectors. There are two types of solar water heating systems: active, which have circulating pumps and controls, and passive, which do not have circulating pumps.

WaterSense is a program developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the new home certification is available as of December 2009. WaterSense labeled new homes are designed to reduce residential water use indoors, as well as outdoors, compared to typical new homes. WaterSense labeled homes have been independently verified to use 20 percent less water than typical new homes.

The intent of this policy is to incentivize the participation in these green building practices by offering expedited plan review for both new construction and renovations.

II. Definitions



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When used in this policy, the following words, terms and phrases, and their derivations, shall be the meaning ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning,

- A. AGENT means an official contracted or subcontracted person who is authorized to act on behalf of the City of Dunwoody and represent their interests.
- B. CITY DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY means the Director of Sustainability or other employee or agent as designated in writing by the City Manager.
- C. EARTHCRAFT HOUSE means a certification program created in 1999, a residential green building program of the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association in partnership with Southface. This program serves as a blueprint for energy and resource efficient homes. Information can be found at the EARTHCRAFT HOUSE website <http://www.earthcrafthouse.com/>.
- D. EMPLOYEE means an individual drawing a salary or wage from the City whether on a full-time, part-time, or contractual third-party basis. The term shall encompass all members of the Governing Authority without regard to whether or not such individual is compensated.
- E. ENERGY STAR means a joint program of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Department of Energy which aims to protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices. ENERGY STAR is also an energy performance rating system. The EPA also recognizes top performing buildings with the ENERGY STAR designation. Information can be found at the ENERGY STAR website <http://www.energystar.gov/>.
- F. EXPEDITED PLAN REVIEW means in all cases in which building plans include green building practices, as defined by this policy, the City of Dunwoody will speed up the progress of plan review once an applicant has made written application for permitting in accordance with the City of Dunwoody's Building Code. In all cases where practicable, the City of Dunwoody will complete its plan review in no more than ten business days.
- G. LEADERSHIP IN ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN (LEED) means a regulatory system for construction that establishes several levels of environmental



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achievement from a Certified rating to a Platinum rating. Information can be found at the United States Green Building Council's website <http://www.usgbc.org/LEED/>.

- H. OFFICIAL means any elected or appointed person who holds office or serves in a position of public capacity.
- I. PHOTOVOLTAIC means a solar power technology that uses arrays of photovoltaic cells to convert light from the sun directly into electricity.
- J. SOLAR WATER HEATER means water heating systems include storage tanks and solar collectors. There are two types of solar water heating systems: active, which have circulating pumps and controls, and passive, which do not have circulating pumps.
- K. UNITED STATES GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL (USGBC) means an entity that promulgates the LEED Rating System. Information can be found at the United States Green Building Council's website <http://www.usgbc.org/>.
- L. WATERSENSE is a program developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the new home certification is available as of December 2009. Information can be found at the Environmental Protection Agency's website <http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/>.

III. Scope

This policy recognizes three different areas in which sustainable concepts can be incorporated into buildings – green building certifications, incorporation of photovoltaic, and reduction and efficiency of water use through the WaterSense certification.

A. Green Building

1. Builders seeking green building certification(s) including LEED, EarthCraft, and ENERGY STAR must submit proof of LEED, EarthCraft House or ENERGY STAR registration and the corresponding program's checklist indicating all of the credits they plan to pursue. Additionally, intentions must be shown on building plans and indicated on their Building Permit Application in order to be granted expedited plan review.

B. Solar Energy



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1. Builders incorporating solar energy elements, such as photovoltaic or solar water heaters, as shown on building plans and indicated on their Building Permit Application shall be granted expedited plan review.

C. WaterSense

1. Builders seeking WaterSense new home certification must submit a checklist of EPA WaterSense measures with intentions for meeting certification measures shown on building plans. Additionally, intentions must be indicated on their Building Permit Application shall be granted expedited plan review.

IV. **Exceptions**

The City of Dunwoody's practice to expedite building plan review is not always practicable. The following situation is an exception to the Community Incentives for Green Building Policy.

- A. For all projects requiring reviews by other agencies, such as commercial buildings that must first be reviewed by the Fire Marshal's office for life safety, the City of Dunwoody cannot control the length of time needed by other agencies; however, the City of Dunwoody will make every effort to expedite its review of building plans.

V. **Responsibility**

A. Director of Sustainability

The City Council may appoint the City Manager, or said agent appointed by the City Manager, to serve as the Director of Sustainability for the City, or the Council may contract with an independent third party to serve as the Director of Sustainability.

DUTIES: The Director of Sustainability shall have the following duties and powers in regards to the Community Incentives for Green Building Policy:

1. Work with all Department Heads to make certain that employees are aware and educated about this Community Incentives for Green Building Policy.
2. Work with the Chief Building Official to ensure that the Community Incentives for Green Building Policy of expedited review is practiced in all appropriate projects.
3. Work with the Community Development Director to make ensure this practice is monitored.