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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DeKalb County Releases New Urban Tree Canopy Report** *Study Reveals Critical Insights for a Greener Future*

**DECATUR, Ga.** – DeKalb County Department of Planning and Sustainability announces the release of its Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) Study, a detailed assessment quantifying the extent and impact of the county's tree coverage.

The Urban Tree Canopy, defined as the area of leaves, branches, and stems covering the ground when viewed from above, plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy and sustainable urban environments.

This project aims to provide a clear understanding of the current state of DeKalb County's urban forest and how it has changed over time. By documenting these changes, the County can better assess the environmental impacts of land use decisions and plan more effectively for the future.

The UTC study, conducted by Eocene Environmental Group, utilizes satellite imagery and advanced GIS mapping methodology to provide a precise snapshot of the county's current and historical tree canopy. The assessment examines changes over the period from 2010 to 2023, and covers the unincorporated areas of DeKalb County, which tend to be less developed than the incorporated cities. The study also highlights the significant environmental, social, and economic benefits provided by DeKalb's urban forest and identifies key areas for management strategies.

Key findings of the study include:

- **Overall Canopy Coverage:** The study reveals that in 2010, trees covered nearly 58% of the land in unincorporated DeKalb, and by 2023, the tree canopy increased to more than 60%.
- **Causes of Change over Time:** Most of the increase in DeKalb's canopy was from new tree planting or existing tree growth, while most of the decrease in canopy was from recent development, mostly in light industrial areas.
- **Benefits Quantified:** The study also highlights the substantial benefits provided by DeKalb County's urban forest, including carbon sequestration, air pollution removal, stormwater runoff reduction, and energy savings.
- **Recommendations** from the study include policy and planning actions, further data collection, and sound urban forest management strategies.

“DeKalb’s extensive tree canopy and green spaces contribute significantly to the county’s quality of life and appeal as part of a major metropolitan area,” according to the study. “A continued healthy balance between growth and tree canopy cover will be essential to maintaining DeKalb's long-term livability, environmental resilience, and quality of life for residents.”

Visit the project webpage for details on the study, including the full final report:

<https://engagedekalb.dekalbcountyga.gov/dekalb-tree-canopy>

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**Questions** about the project? Reach out to project manager, Kathy Reed, Sustainability Coordinator, DeKalb County Planning & Sustainability at [kdreed@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:kdreed@dekalbcountyga.gov).

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