

## **Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 2: Exploring our stories and the issues they raise**

**Facilitator Name: P. Gilbert/J. Gregory**

**Meeting Date: 5/13/10**

**Time: 7-9pm**

Please record the notes from your easel pad below. The subject headings correspond with the discussion guide and facilitator support sheet. Do not use bullet points. If there was an item that you circled or starred because a lot of people were interested in the comment, please **bold** it.

### 1- Topics from last meeting

- diversity
- sustainability
- environment
- cultural activities
- transportation: bikes, trolley system, traffic management
- aging here (not having to move away)
- more parks, e.g., art park
- small businesses; small neighborhood grocery stores
- safety, quality of life for pedestrians

### 2- Comments about “Facts About Decatur”

- surprised diversity is decreasing in Decatur; why? – increased cost of living here. More diverse than the rest of Georgia. To keep diversity, need to be inviting.
- only 14% of tax base from business! How to keep our quality of life without increased taxes (for residential property owners)? Lots of empty [commercial] space – who owns? Possible to look at rezoning some areas from commercial to residential or vice versa?

### 3- Question #1: How to preserve what we appreciate about Decatur?

- patronize local businesses; keep small (independent) businesses thriving; is there a way to prevent big box/chain stores from locating in Decatur? Our unique stores and restaurants keep people coming here
- enhance walkability

- educate people about the history of Decatur; “Decatur 101” is good way to learn history, could offer more often and with more focus on history, e.g., Decatur’s role in civil rights, school desegregation; someone could develop a specific session or course, Encyclopedia Decatur
  - more winter/fall activities, festivals
  - Why is there no diversity in these round table groups? [Because of] how it is advertised and communicated?
  - Diversity is about more than race, also income and age
  - Community preservation should also include preservation of the people who make up the community. MLK work weekend 1x/year a good gesture, but need more effort to preserve Decatur’s cultural heritage through preserving economic diversity, helping people stay in their homes..
  - Importance of economic diversity: our police officers, firefighters can’t afford to live here.
  - Need more affordable homes, trusts to keep homes affordable.
  - Attract more businesses to support the tax base.
  - Need for Callaway Building to be bought and redeveloped. *[Facilitator’s note: group included a former City employee who mentioned this – most or all of other participants did not know which building it is, or what occupies it or who owns it. All agreed redevelop would be good.]*
- 3- Question #4: What is most important about our overall environment (festivals, cultural life, etc)?
- Need more cultural venues, e.g., a place to see independent films, maybe a film festival but ongoing. Library offers some; might be good venue.
  - Encourage informal performance, e.g., street performers. Need areas for them; making Ponce a pedestrian mall would encourage (from Commerce to Commerce)
  - Spoleto *[mentioned as example of great cultural event]*
  - weekly market, more than organic food, include arts, crafts, performers
  - more activities in parks (not have everything at the Square)
  - more sharing of rec facilities *(between City and CSD?)*
  - progressive block parties a way to help neighborhoods get acquainted; could use parks to host; in winter could be inside
  - garden walks

- walking tours

### 3- Question #6: How to promote and support healthy living?

- more walking and bicycling

- improve traffic lights for pedestrian safety, add audio signals

- improve conditions at all RR crossings (Candler, S. McDonough, Atlanta St.)

- make possible to cross Scott Blvd. safely

- improve curb accessibility, significant problem for elderly people

- enhance safety for bikes and for pedestrians; consult experts at Ga Tech who are developing new ways for all transportation modes to share roadways

- need warning siren in more locations [*one participant did not think Decatur has a siren at all, sparked substantial discussion; facilitator recommended she find out when the monthly test is conducted and make a point to be at home and see if she can hear it*]

- provide bike safety education, esp for children

- provide a shuttle service to reduce traffic, e.g., like the Cliff Bus at Emory

- electric cars and buses; privately owned so not a drain on the City (another biz to pay taxes!)

- more Rec programming in different locations around town, e.g., tai-chi at the MARTA plaza

- more community gardens where people can grow their own food

- better amenities in parks: benches, water fountains

### 3- Question #2: How to preserve and improve natural environment?

- eliminate some [vehicular] traffic

- reduce energy use: create subsidy for people to invest in less expensive solar energy systems so they can generate own power and sell excess back to the grid

- rainwater harvesting

- City provide information to residents about how to reduce energy use

- secure grant funding to support senior residents investing in rainwater harvesting, solar energy systems

- tax incentives for green solutions

- increase landscape plantings wherever possible, even small increments, to relieve all the pavement; find neighborhood groups to maintain (instead of City)
- encourage people to reduce turf and use more native plants
- establish a green award to encourage people to value biodiversity in their yards, reduce use of chemicals
- City acquire green space when it becomes available to preserve
- invest in consultants to get needed expertise

### 3- Question #5: Housing

- need to be age-friendly, affordable for retirees and for moderate/low income families and individuals
- more mixed housing: mixed ages/life stages, mixed incomes --- INTEGRATED LIVING
- Decatur should strive to be a model for integrated living and healthy living
- need critical amount of affordable housing mixed in throughout the community (not concentrated in one place, like public housing); look for established models elsewhere in the country
- need services closer to where people live, to promote walking for the entire City, e.g., groceries
- shuttle as part of solution, to provide access to services
- older people need lower maintenance housing
- housing swap program (see Oberlin, OH): match older/empty nesters with young, growing families, who swap houses with each other
- can't neglect the young for the old!

### 3- Question #3: Getting from place to place in Decatur

- shuttle service, alternative transportation
- keep vehicles out of downtown core and offer free perimeter parking
- free scooter parking, free bike parking (there is some, need more)
- continue sidewalk improvement/repair program, but find a way to preserve the large, old trees that create most of the problems!
- close Ponce from Commerce to Commerce

*Facilitator's note: Many aspects of this session could be summed up in the statement "All roads lead back to traffic management." Finding more and better ways to manage vehicular traffic—and enable equitable, workable sharing of the roads among cars, bikes, and pedestrians—seemed to be a significant factor affecting virtually every issue addressed.*

## **DECATUR ROUNDTABLES 2010**

### **SESSION 2: EXPLORING OUR STORIES AND THE ISSUES THEY RAISE**

**Facilitator Name:** Fred L. Cavalli

**Meeting Date:** May 13, 2010

**Time:** 7:00 pm-9:00 pm

- 1) How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?
  - Review land use / zoning – especially commercial/residential transitions
  - Tree preservation
  - More sidewalk trees
  - Planting and replanting
  - Education and support for tree owners
  - Encourage green building/development
  - Green building ordinance?
  - Encourage trees in parking lots
  - Preserve commitment to height ordinance—80 foot max
  - City fiscal responsibility
  - Too many employees?
  - Pensions?
  - Careful consideration of all annexation issues
  - Review/strengthen infill rules
  - Implement overlay zone on all C-2 / R-60 abutments
  - Achieve uniformity
  
- 2) How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?
  - Encourage and support restaurants in using green take-out containers
  - Encourage/require institutional and commercial recycling
  - Enhance walkability
  - Improvements to Commerce Drive for pedestrians / Ponce to Clairemont traffic calming
  - More sidewalks and bike lanes
  - Pedestrian islands on large streets

- Bike lanes and other improvements for biking on Clairemont
- Review execution of new parking on Church Street at Glenlake Pool – traffic safety? (road narrowing and reducing lanes is a good idea)
- Enhance/support bike parking/racks
- Educational programs (rec center?) for nutrition, personal finance, and gardening
- Encourage more personal and community gardens
- Pedestrian/bikeways connecting neighborhoods and other areas
- Public garbage cans—add more
- Add more dog waste stations

3)

4)

5) Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in 20 years? What kind of housing do you think they will need?

- Senior independent living—encourage and add more
- Allow and encourage combined facilities (independent/assisted living/nurse care)
- Encourage parking alternatives—shared parking, reduce parking lot requirements near MARTA, etc.
- Support/encourage work force and affordable housing

## **Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 2: Exploring our stories and the issues they raise**

**Facilitator Name: Steve Provost**

**Meeting Date: May 13, 2010**

**Time: 7 – 9 PM**

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2- Comments from thoughts about the previous meeting:

I welcome people coming to Decatur to spend money

Ability to live here long term – not priced out of housing

Good to keep a balance of growth and long term residents

Continue to attract the kinds of businesses that we want in Decatur

## 2 Responses to the six questions:

### Question #1

Keep our past while also moving forward

Sustain what we've been doing with controlled growth

These Round Table discussions periodically would be a good tool for sustainability

Help proven businesses to stay in the city during tough economic times --taxes too high, rent too high

Encourage businesses with zoning benefits, incentives

More cooperation between the City and School Board

Fear that the big chain restaurants could replace the local businesses

Continue to actively pursue the businesses to come to Decatur that we want here

Incentives for people to come into Decatur to buy/spend money

### Question #2

Enforcement of regulations by local authorities

Encourage the school system to protect / expand their green spaces

More unpaved trails

Add extra greenspaces so current greenspaces aren't overused --set aside funds for this

Athletic facilities are overused --not enough of them

Parks are being impacted by overuse

Buy land for additional park space and athletic fields

Create lots on edges of town to park cars so interior is more walkable and bikable --create car-free zones

Provide more places bicycles

Encourage water collection and containment --use to improve the growth of plants

Buildings to collect water for plant material, parks (incentives) --residences too

Runoff problems – improve the storm water system to handle runoff --encourage permeable surfaces instead of hard surfaces

Reduce traffic to improve air quality

Use a “fur bus”-like system to go around to businesses

Question #3

Free transportation in the down town core of the city – trolley

Park on perimeter of city, ride in on trolley --concerned about the cost of doing this ...how to pay for it?

Zip cars

Shuttle bus like at Emory

Need more places to house bikes

Pedestrian zones become more public space – like linear parks

Decatur to be known as a bike-friendly city --bike friendly and promoted as such

Education program for motorists and bicyclists and runners --bike etiquette

Question #4

Concerts on the square popular with residents and visitors to the city

Promote, encourage freedom to express religious views

Happy with ALL the festivals we have --love the book festival

Question #5

Don't want 22-story housing --keep it quaint, 5-stories or fewer, needs to stay cute

Happy to have condos in the downtown to move to later in age

Preserve the homes that are already here --we'd be doing well to hold the line

Want to be able to age in own home

Look to lower the age for school tax exemption --graduate it, based on income

Delay property tax until home is sold or owner passes

Question #6

Community gardens!! Puts people in touch with their food, potential hobby/activity -- the more gardens the better

More greenspace and athletic fields

Encourage opportunities for walking

Education effects healthy living --educated people are healthier

Use school focus for education forum

Downtown market year round --food market, artisan/craft market

Places designated for gathering for activities --Ex.: drum circle places, fitness course equipment

Knowing your neighbor and trusting the place you live

More activities / groups like fitness bootcamps --neighborhood walking groups, neighborhood stretching groups

A path that weaves together all the neighborhoods in the city

THEMES from this meeting:

Overuse of greenspaces

Adding greenspaces with designated use -active -wild places -passive

Encouraging the businesses that we want to be located here --small businesses

Encouraging pedestrian and bike use --decrease vehicle use

Housing options for elderly and students

Making the schools an educational community center --social forums

## **Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 2: Exploring our stories and the issues they raise**

**Facilitator Name: Kyle Williams**

**Meeting Date: Thursday, May 13**

**Time: 7:00 p.m -9:00 p.m.**

### **Group 48**

**5– Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in twenty years? What kind of housing do you think they will they need?**

Young families

Downsizing from within Decatur

Challenges will be to provide affordable housing, maintain racial/economic diversity

Increasing housing prices size out and price out diversity and lead to larger infill

Policy = zoning overly policies that are specialized and individualized

Reverse white flight and housing market demand will increase demand that will require increased density and supply, which squeezes out low income residents

Policy = protection of public house

Decatur is attractive to young families, but not to seniors

Increase PR to attract retirees and seniors

Equitable taxation based upon ability, age

Increase commercial tax base

Demand increases squeeze out the middle

Density is only a part of solution as most residents desire single family housing

Policy = work force incentives, tax incentives to offer affordable housing

Multi-generational, mixed families

Preserving community

College housing (DeVry, Agnes Scot, Columbia)

Annexation will create greater stock and supply

Concerns about whether annexation will actually result in lower taxes, changes to neighborhoods and walkability

Annexation may help lower/stabilize housing costs

Annexed properties should have their taxes frozen at pre-annexation rates for 10 years

City should facilitate and advertise available tax freezes, tax rebates, etc. for historic preservation, renovations

Decatur should have an Annexation Policy – overarching policy of when, trigger points, goals

**1 – Think about Session 1 and about how the city has developed and grown. How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?**

Lower taxes

Offer tax incentives for stormwater reduction, corrections

Credits for volunteering against taxes or traffic fines/penalties

Issuance of more parking tickets, rigorous enforcement of parking ordinances – which would lead to increased revenues, encourage walkability and sustainability

Sustain City by becoming, continuing to be a model (i.e., leader in education, parking, transportation)

Citywide coordination of parking

Rationalized parking, cooperation between and among businesses, locations

Tax breaks for work force

Public safety remain a budget priority

Incentives for businesses – bulk up commercial tax base, fill-in “Dead Zone,” revitalization of business areas would create jobs, relieve traffic congestion, distribute tax base

Greater economic development by City, partnering with private

**2 – How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?**

Tree replacement program

Expansion of recycling program to multi-family residential and commercial and to include food waste

Curbside composting

Fully utilize MARTA, CLIFF

City involvement in MARTA

Expand sidewalk program to both sides of all streets

Expand bike lanes

Stormwater policy, improvement

Rooftop gardens

Inventory and designated greenspace

Tax incentives for LEED certification

Environmental construction costs more, but that will diminish over time

Study of water shortages – drought tolerate plants, landscaping; limitation on number of car washes

**3 – How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?**

No sure if City is proactive in developing technologies – electric cars, access to biofuels – add electric plugs to parking meters

Pedicabs offer a viable alternative form of transportation

Safer rail crossings

Designated bike lanes, walk lanes from car lanes

Aging population will decrease the number of commuters

Large SUVs will reduce because shortages of resources (i.e., oil)

**4 – When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?**

Continue to offer variety that appeal to all ages

Continue to be respectful of proximity to residential

Safety is important

Responsive public safety

Increased street lamps

Improve technology, city website (no comparison between effectiveness and useability of Strategic Planning website and the City's regular website)

Keep city meetings in the evenings

Invest in proper land use planning

City needs to study the impact/benefits/costs of MARTA; pool/tennis courts/rec. center; existing parking to identify best use of resources

A plan of succession for city employees, especially city manager and volunteer coordinator

**6– In terms of “healthy living,” what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city? What activities, programs, or changes in the things we build could make a difference?**

Active living – bike lanes, tennis courts

Oakhurst tennis courts are lame – bathrooms are gross – unreasonable to have to obtain a key from City Hall

Rec Center should focus on more than just kids

Larger swimming pools with real, useable lap lanes

An arts program that rivals Callanwolde

Arts partnership lags benefit

Local farm-to-table food instruction from city

Encourage schools, restaurants to use local foods

Gardening courses, teach where food comes from

Expansion of local, community gardens

More athletic fields – allow rec to expand to soccer, lacross

Bike racks, places to lock bikes, bike rentals, self-serve bike rentals

Study effectiveness and usage of ZIP car

Wi-Fi is not reliable – unsure if this is a proper city role given competition w/ private providers

Bury power lines – or at least conduct a cost-benefit analysis between costs and damages caused by trees

Lower taxes

Outdoor arts, amphitheater

A better hotel – different, boutique, unique – a huge need given the size of houses especially around graduations

Explore gambling

### **Roundtable Session**

**May 13, 2010**

**Group 39**

**Kevin Spears, Facilitator**

#### Housing

Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in twenty years? What kind of housing do you think they will need?

*Who?*

Middle income professionals (teachers, fire, police)

Low income families

Seniors

Very elderly – those who need assisted care of varying levels

College/grad students

Young families

Decatur does not have much in the way of “active senior living.”

Paying the tax burden is difficult in retirement. What will make it possible for seniors to stay in their homes?

*What kind of solutions?*

Supported living for seniors

Reduce the tax burden for seniors

Increase the share of business/commercial property that generates tax revenue for the city. What incentives would attract business/property owners for this purpose?

How do you resolve the problem of single-family houses being so expensive?

The group recognizes that there are several plans/developments in the works that may address some of the needs diverse housing needs, mixed use etc.

Some members of the group mentioned some problems with standards and regulations for in-fill housing or renovation of existing houses. Current standards may not be adequate to address situations that arise. Some suggested that the City may need a greater willingness to engage in more cooperative give and take with builders and developers.

### Cultural and Public Life

When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?

There is so much going on in Decatur but we would like to see more. Not just festivals but other things like:

- public art
- smaller gatherings
- ongoing features like the cow sculptures a few years ago

Events that draw a diversity of ages.

Involvement of kids is essential

Use the public space for more informal gatherings

It seems like there is either a big event or nothing. We need more smaller, simpler, regular public activities.

There is a sense that you can't use the Square unless there is a large event or you have permission. Few people go to the Square just to hang out, have a picnic, sit and relax. What would attract people to do this?

## *Ideas*

- A kiosk on the Square that announces current events
- Structures on or near the Square that can be used by groups for informal gatherings
- Shade on the MARTA plaza (topside)
- Food carts
- A play structure near the Square
- Do something to encourage street performers
- Have students performances in public spaces
- Foster farmers markets in the neighborhoods
- More outdoor seating for restaurants, cafes etc
- Move the weekly farmers markets to the Square
- Provide incentives for businesses to host outdoor events/activities – small events, on a weekly basis

## Transportation

How do you get from place to place in Decatur now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?

## *Challenges*

Gridlock in downtown 5:00 – 6:30pm

Parking – private parking ownership limits flexibility of parking options. For example, it is difficult to park in one lot and go to multiple businesses.

There is no other way to get around downtown other than on foot.

Bicycling in Decatur is dangerous.

The heat in the summer months is a huge disincentive to walking, biking, etc (i.e., not use your car)

City of Decatur does not have total jurisdiction over use/change to its roads, streets

## *Solutions*

Cooperative use of parking lots – i.e., businesses contribute spaces in their lots that can be used by people other than their direct customers.

Churches may be willing to contribute spaces for weekday parking

A downtown trolley or shuttle

A larger satellite parking lot on the outskirts of downtown served by shuttle/trolley

Shuttles that run between neighborhoods and downtown

More left turn lanes to cut down on back-ups during high volume times

Crossing guards need more training on traffic management. They are the cause of back up or confusion in some cases.

### Healthy Living

In terms of healthy living, what would make the most positive differences for the residents of our city? What activities, programs or changes in the things we build could make a difference?

There are a lot of healthy activities already. Perhaps more attention to marketing what is available.

More community gardens

Continue developing the farm-to-school program

Connect walking/running/biking groups with each other

Health programs in partnership with Emory Healthcare and Dekalb Medical

Nutrition and exercise programs sponsored by the City

Have public exercise on the square – e.g., yoga or tai chi

Decatur Business Association sponsor health-focused events featuring business with health-related products

The list of Park & Rec programs could also list informal groups – e.g., running groups, meet ups, etc

### Natural Environment

How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?

#### *Ideas*

More flowering plants to complement all the green

Wildflower fields

Preserve our trees – the wonderful green canopy. But don't force tree planting on home owners

Have public composting sites as part of waste management (San Francisco has a pilot program along these lines)

More attention to flood-risk areas

Attention to water run-off erosion

A bird sanctuary

How about a squirrel-powered source of electricity?

### General Thoughts

How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?

The variety of housing types – historic to brand new – is a real asset.

The diversity of Decatur is wonderful but some kinds of diversity are diminishing (e.g., racial).

More lo-tech communication – bulletin boards, local radio

Better directional signs – to library, parks, parking

Vogels 05-13-2010 9am

In the first session. . .

- Street trees need to be a part of Decatur's future
- Use pervious pavement (Cornell Structural soil) for future parking lots
- John Madigoski city engineer . . . in my opinion barely functional. Very negative in that office
- Storm water fee . . . where does that money go? Constantly have damage from storm water drainage

Question #1: How do we sustain this city?

- City is repaving Willow Lane. Dekalb County plans to repave as well. DeKalb contacted City of Decatur, but Decatur is going ahead with paving b/c of needing to spend state money. Road crosses flood plain
- Patillo Way and Greenwood Circle has had flood problems for years. Had to pay 1000. To add lip to driveway. City came by and repaved, destroyed lip and covered manhole covers. City claimed it was use of state money and could not do anything about it. Later came back and milled pavement a foot deep.
- Poplar and Inman has dangerous storm water drainage issues. Child could be hurt
- Dekalb County most paved County in GA. DeKalb goes by old paradigm. . “pave it over”
- Decatur should adopt same ordinances as the City of Atlanta regarding landscaping parking lots. Could use ordinances to remedy Callaway parking lot
- Decatur must appreciate and preserve historic buildings
- Stick to current city limits. Plans to annex not valid.

Question #2: How do we preserve and improve our natural environment?

Intersections that need landscaping and safety attention: Church and Commerce, McDonough and College and McDonough from DHS to the square

City needs its own arborist: could educate public on appropriate trees to plants regarding sidewalk issues, root structure, life of trees, canopy, utility wires, etc.

- City should dictate all utilities Companies when dealing with City’s trees. GA Power comes through and chops trees tops
- We want all utilities in conduits like Peachtree City
- Trees were torn down with Housing Authority buildings
- Need to be actively planning and planting trees for future tree canopy. Current canopy in decline
- City needs tree ordinances for private property owners.
- City needs to educate private property owners regarding types of trees to plant
- Developers should replace trees taken down with 4-5 new ones
- City has to be more responsible with builders regarding trees

- Canopy dictates our storm drainage, AC and power bills
- Do not sell public property, maintain and add to public land, create green space
- Take long-term view with public property
- When making policy, be empathetic to how it would affect you and others as citizens
- Create a citizens' advisory board
- Create a green space commission
- Create a green or emerald necklace through the city
- City should buy property on Scott and Clairmont next to woodland gardens. If developed, has to be mixed use space of green space and building
- Urban development should have the same ordinance or codes and builders.
- Pedestrian traffic must be addressed at corner of Candler and College

Question #3: How do you get from place to place in Decatur?

- Used to walk child to school—now drive
  - Clairmont School encourages individual drivers with new car drop off
  - Parents still drive even though they could walk
  - Need better pedestrian and bike paths
  - Columbia and college intersection very dangerous
  - Parents of Winnona Park do walk
  - With restructure of schools from K-5 to K-3 Decatur added car congestion and added number of schools parents need to get their children to
  - Need to celebrate how our kids have the choice to walk to all schools and our crossing guards are great
  - Need better crossing opportunity with railroad tracks and renfroe
  - In next ten years—increase parking opportunities outside Decatur and run shuttles into the city. Make downtown district a walking district. Free up space from parking for trees. Ban Gas cars. Add conduits
  - Dekalb employees should have to use MARTA and shuttles into the city
  - Begin using golf carts
  - With school reconfiguration and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. school not being centrally located we should provide shuttles for kids to ride
  - Safe routes to school should expand to all schools, churches, and employers
  - 5<sup>th</sup> Ave should be a K-5
  - Education has improved with reconfiguration but not geographically friendly
  - Need multi use trails. City needs to accomplish goal of completing sidewalks on all streets—should use pervious concrete. Sidewalks would be a good test for pervious concrete
  - Use shuttles or designated cars that loop Decatur for major stops. Like in DC
- Decatur should have loop shuttle to YMCA, schools, and athletic fields like a cliff bus

Question #4: When you think about the overall environment of our city, what is most important?

- Square
- Festivals: Arts, Books, Wine, and Beer. Book festival brings in a wide variety of people to city
- Concert on Square
- Beach party
- Commercial aspects of Decatur brings residents out regularly
- Beach party very Decatur, all ages, see a lot of people from Decatur. The events give back
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July event, parade and fireworks. Can watch them from front yard
- Churches are vital to downtown
- Schools and school events
- Flea market at Baptists Church on Clairmont. Citywide flea market
- Cooperation of churches
- GA Center for the Book
- ASC venues open to the community
- DHS needs to open stadium and auditorium to the community for city even
- Community needs to know about school events are venues for the community.
- Bring Semi pro soccer team to Decatur, Attract sports teams in Decatur or traveling youth teams, Bring in English league teams, bring in world cup

Question #5: Who are the people who will need housing in twenty years?

- Boomers will need housing as they get older
- Will want to sell home and move into downtown condo
- City needs to loosen codes with multihousing
- Need more affordable housing for younger people
- Decatur needs a healthy balance between single and multifamily housing. There is a stigma if don't own a home in Decatur
- Decatur needs to glamorize downsizing
- Build smaller homes
- Bring in more fee simple townhouses
- Create a retirement home like Parksprings in Stone Mt. Build on edge of the city near Dekalb Hospital and use shuttle to move people back and forth. Use Decatur hospital and all the space for currently used for parking lots for retirement community.
- People move outside of Decatur when they retire to avoid taxes like Avondale Estates—
- Cheaper to rent then to own in Decatur because of taxes
- Statistics correct on Data sheet?

Question #6: In terms of healthy living. . .

- Keep parks safe
- Allow kids to move around Decatur alone
- Police force needs to be visible. Add bike police force, have police walking sidewalks.
- Need active neighborhood watches

- Parks needs visible safety measures
- Put Emergency number in cell phone
- Public Housing needs to be mixed use for young and elderly
- Drug deals are going on within Public housing and on Patillo way
- Do not want people coming into Decatur to buy drugs
- High School needs better surveillance

#### Wrap Up and Review

- Empty parking lots and get rid of them
- Decatur is ripe for change and improvement. Do it in a new way
- Have new vision with utilities
- Make public space safe
- Transportation. Consider shuttles, bypasses, multi use trails, get rid of parking lots
- Trees: intentional canopy replacement
- Storm water drainage needs attention
- Provide variety of housing for elderly
- Address intersection of Church and N. Decatur. Parking lot wasteland
- E. Ponce to Farmer's Market corridor needs attention. Get rid of stripper's joint.

Decatur must not use blinders and think broader than city limits

Travis Grubb May 13, 2010

What is most important to you for the overall environment of Decatur?

- The book festival and maintaining Decatur as a literary center
- Utilizing the square more on a day to day basis:
  - Need street vendors or other activities
  - Close off Ponce de Leon from Clairemont to Church or even Commerce to Church – during warmer months
  - Get more people on the plaza and not just inside restaurants / more outdoor seating
  - More street vendors
- Festivals
  - Some noted the Beach Party is too crowded
- More teen activities
  - More structured teen activities
  - CREATE A TEEN COMMISSION
- Maintain the small town feel where people know one another

How do we get from place to place?

- Free parking is not the solution
- Better ability to park once for multiple activities on the square
- More “bulb outs” in neighborhoods to calm traffic
- Bike lanes
  - o More lanes in general / make them safe and well thought out
  - o On claremont
  - o City-wide campaign for biking / walking
  - o Aging residents not able to bike / walk everywhere.
    - Provide a Decatur Bus (electric) / transit system
    - Be sure lower income areas are included in transit plan
- Better rail crossings

What is important for the natural environment?

- preserve lots such as the lot on the corner of Church & Commerce
- Utilize city owned lots as”
  - o Community gardens
  - o Usable pocket parks
- Utilize waste from restaurants
  - o Grease as biodiesel
- Connect parks and other areas of greenspace
  - o Create a green beltline
- Dedicated funding to buy more greenspace
- Utilize flood plain space
- Air quality:
  - o Charging stations for electric cars
- Encourage/require alternative energy sources in new developments
  - o Provide city-backed loans to aid this
- Improve standards for newly built city buildings (LEED)
- LED street lights
- Retention ponds and re-use of H2O
- Decatur could be more self-sustaining
- Multi-use pocket parks

Who needs housing in City of Decatur?

- Lower income groups
  - o Lower the standard of what is affordable
    - 250k is not affordable to many
  - o Need a stronger rental market
- How can the city become more involved in improving affordability?

- Require a % affordable of new developments
- Provide housing options for seniors – one story living
- Be careful with tax breaks, so as not to encourage only the wealthy to move to Decatur. (such as allowing seniors not to pay school taxes)
- Trade greenspace for developed space
  - Of course this tradeoffs hurts affordability
- Provide jobs to areas of low income housing
- We call Decatur diverse...but is it really?
  - The City is still segregated I some ways
  - The conversation about being racially and economically diverse needs to be encouraged by the City
  - Expand MLK day to address this
  - Strengthen capacity of minority groups
- 

#### Parking Lot Ideas:

- boutique hotel downtown
- more rooms for festivals
- rent out more public spaces like the highschool
- annexation?
  - Maybe improve what we have before annexing

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session II: Exploring our stories and the issues they raise

Facilitator Name: Mark G. Burnette (joined with Group 46, Barry & Hitchcock)

Meeting Date: May 13, 2010

Time: 7 – 9 pm

4. When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?

Diversity – schools- inclusive gatherings- not just in theory-but not all

population groups attend events- need to encourage ways to broaden

audience- one possibility is to have more variety in the bands for Concerts

on the Square- another is to add more festivals- food events, multicultural

events, want to maintain all current festivals and events

Artistic creative feel of city- architecturally and with businesses, losing galleries

or music venues would be detrimental, need to maintain and encourage this atmosphere

Public spaces- uniqueness of Square, cherish, maintain, improve, and invest in these spaces

Expand feel of Square to other end of Ponce de Leon Avenue, Farmburger is

perceived as far from Square, disadvantage to businesses that are farther away from Square

Glenlake Park has been missed- some people may have forgotten about other

parks, number and distribution of public gathering places (parks, etc.) is important

Walkability - work to improve places off Ponce de Leon Avenue to encourage

foot traffic to them, make them more vibrant, continue developing and connecting all parts of city

Connection between neighborhoods and downtown business district needs to

be improved for pedestrians, use Oakhurst business district and surrounding neighborhoods as model

Expand positives of Square outward to encompass whole downtown business district

Make use of new high school auditorium as indoor cultural center for City

Make all intersections leading to downtown business district safer for pedestrians

and bicycle riders (discussion centered on Commerce Drive intersections, especially one with Church Street)

3. How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?

Walk, bike, and drive to work and other places, teenagers seem to walk

everywhere, three people in group ride bicycles regularly, some others in group are afraid to ride bicycles on roads, all in group drive places

Commerce Street sidewalk is not pedestrian friendly, in 10 years make it more

walkable by adding green space between sidewalk and roadway, grassy median, reduce to 2 lanes

Recent skateboard ban in downtown area went overboard, skateboards are viable

form of transportation

Shuttle to Emory is used by some in group, good model for City in future-

develop free shuttle to get around City, encourage residents and visitors to park car at beginning of day and then not use car until end of day

Develop and encourage use of alternative transportation methods to get around

City– pedicabs, rickshaws

Set up remote parking with public transportation into City- Suburban Plaza, old

Chamber of Commerce building parking lot are possibilities, model would be Emory shuttle

Bring back trolley line in Oakhurst and connect to downtown area

Keep all MARTA stops in City

Improve section of Church Street between East Ponce de Leon Avenue and

Commerce Drive, now a dead zone, unfriendly to pedestrians

2. How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water, and green space?

Need better control of storm water runoff from both public and private property,

recreate natural environment in doing this, not with curb and gutter, reduce runoff to more natural state, code changes are needed, Toco Hill library branch is good example

Drainage systems can be turned into streams (more natural body of water),

Westchester Park is good example, use to connect green spaces

Create incentives for individuals to collect and conserve water, educate public on

how and why need to do this using Focus, festivals, etc., do outreach activities, make sure zoning codes don't discourage this

Central City does well with trees, place more emphasis on tree protection and

education of public about trees

Need to replace and revitalize tree canopy throughout the City to offset coming

loss of large canopy trees, encourage replanting of such trees city and county wide, partner with Trees Atlanta and other such entities

Look at partnership with DeKalb County to encourage use of rain barrels,

composting, etc.

Transportation improvements would improve air quality (one group member was

surprised at Atlanta's poor air quality)

Use alternative fuels in public transportation (e.g., biofuels)

Create green space walk way connecting cemetery to other parts of City, in

particular with intersection at East Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce

Drive, ideas for this area were walking path or community garden in blighted property along Commerce Drive

Ban sale of English Ivy in City, remove all invasive plants from public spaces and

educate homeowners on need to do same

Keep parking spaces along Church Street near Glenlake Park, need traffic calming

along Church Street

5. Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in twenty years? What kind of housing do you think they will need?

Explore allowing accessory dwellings for caregivers (paid and family members)

for senior citizens, police proper use of such dwellings with periodic licensing requirements

Decatur is a city, not a suburb, therefore density will be greater and is not a bad

thing, multifamily housing should be part of the housing mix

Increase affordable housing for all income levels and age groups, MLK service

Project is a model for helping not only seniors, land trust as done in Athens is another model- land owned by charitable trust which pays no property taxes and resident pays taxes only on value of building, such housing can be located in any neighborhood

6. In terms of “healthy living”, what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city? What activities, program, or changes in the things we build could make a difference?

Increasing walkability of City and other environmental ideas already discussed

would encourage healthy living

Maintain and increase recreation center programs to create community

connections and give residents a place to go

Create a senior/youth mentoring program possibly using MLK project as vehicle

by extending it beyond MLK Day weekend, aim to increase connections between different age groups on regular basis

Have Oakhurst Community Garden and recreation center work together to

achieve above goals

Create more community gardens

Consider establishing traffic free time in area of City so residents can walk, bike,

etc. without having to worry about motor vehicle traffic

Some group members had questions about what City is doing now about this

subject, suggest establishment of committee to oversee

Need more activity space at schools

City owned athletic fields should be made more accessible to general public (e.g.,

McKoy ballfield, Ebster Park field)

Better cultural arts coordination

Allow urban farming- small livestock - chickens, goats but no cows

1. Think about Session 1 and about how the city has developed and grown. How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?

Preserve pre-War housing stock, are well built and provide sense of place

Limit tear downs, encourage renovation of houses instead, use incentives- e.g.,

limit size of new house if tear down vs. renovation

Need survey of housing stock

City and school system need to work together to manage growth (annexation and otherwise)

Maintain image and sense of identity among City residents

Educate residents and others on what City is doing and promote same

## **Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 2: Envisioning the Future**

**Facilitator Name: Jill Jordan, Tiffany Brott**

**Meeting Date: 5/13/10**

**Time: 7pm**

Please record the notes from your easel pad below. The subject headings correspond with the discussion guide and facilitator support sheet. Do not use bullet points. If there was an item that you circled or starred because a lot of people were interested in the comment, please **bold** it.

### **3- How do we sustain our city? Preserve the things we appreciate?**

Ensure continued community participation. There is strong commitment and enthusiasm to community involvement. It is not lip service.

More business development to help shift taxes more to commercial vs. residential.

I am ok with taxes b/c of strong community infrastructure

Attract more entrepreneurial business whose workers would want to live here or use public transport

Continue focus on mixed use development

Need more day time business workers to help sustain local shops and restaurants vs. just residents shopping locally

Consider better partnerships with the county – Decatur is county seat

Sustainability is linked to population so we need to leverage existing space vs. building new. Increasing population does have an impact

#### **4- Natural environment**

Storm water is a threat to water quality

Consider permeable pavement – is this an option?

Incorporate eco-based storm water quality treatments on public right of ways

Support composting program for the city

More urban farms

Divert restaurant waste to composting for farms

Improved bike and pedestrian mobility

Ensure we have a healthy tree canopy

Have a tree ordinance “with teeth”

Explore no net loss of canopy. E.g. Emory – they may take a tree down in one area but they put one up somewhere else.

Stop proliferation of power lines. Bury them!

#### **5- How do we move around Decatur? How will we in 10 years?**

City is bikeable & walkable but we could do more if we had more “every day” life/essential amenities such as grocery store

Some areas are not hospitable to bikers/walkers

Need to create a safe infrastructure for kids for biking

Frustrating when bikers stop up traffic lanes

Consider “Bus Rapid Transit” like LA. Basically a fast bus that drops people at subway line to maximize use

Need more “end of trip” facilities to store bikes

Need to better understand when people use their cars and determine if City can address that thru attracting certain types of businesses

Encourage small pockets of commercial spaces to make accessible with short walk (e.g. 5 min)

## **5 – Housing needs in 20 years**

Maintain decent, affordable housing for all income levels

Leverage existing housing – no new development

Restrict demolition of older homes to build new bigger homes

## **6. Healthy Living “Active”**

Encourage kids/families to walk more/bike more

Promote better connectivity of paths, green space

Have more active recreational activities in parks such as basket ball courts and shuffle board, etc.

Promote Farm 2 School – more healthy options

Have more “spontaneous” gatherings & gathering places to encourage community

## **5. Overall environment (e.g., arts & culture)**

City does great job of having mix of events. I don't go to all but I can pick and choose what I want

Have more regular marketplace type events, street fairs, etc.

Garrett 05-13-2010 7 pm

### **1 – How do we sustain the city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?**

We need to protect our emergency services in the budget- we have excellent fire, police, etc. Maintaining our own services (as opposed to DeKalb) is very important- Keep them in our budget

- Includes waste management
- Quality education

Maintaining citizen involvement is key

Maintaining and care for the character of the architecture in our city and neighborhoods, which call up the importance of zoning

Taking care of our trees- Having a plan to replace old trees and maintaining a healthy tree canopy which can include having an active and functioning tree ordinance

Sustaining the city requires a balanced tax base with increased revenue from businesses as well as residents

Maintain appropriate density and the appropriate scale of commercial and residential development

Preservation of neighborhood character through ordinances, set backs, etc.

Discourage “McMansions”- Encourage development appropriate to neighborhood

Develop guidelines to create scalability within neighborhoods

Enact ordinances to prevent “McMansions” and make it more difficult for tear downs

Preserving diversity (racial, socioeconomic, etc) can be enhanced through appropriate neighborhood builds and affordable housing.

Keep engaging the community through processes such as the Strategic Planning processes- may want to re-visit every 3 years and then have ‘major’ effort every 10 years. Ensure we keep engaging the community

Use community groups to connect with each other through shared events and city-wide events

### **2- Protecting our natural environment?**

Water: While not having our own services – since DeKalb County provides- we can still be aggressive through actions such as the city providing

- a Toilet Replacement Program;
- a program to encourage rain barrels at residences;

Water treatment is energy and chemically intensive- Develop methods to reduce the need for treated water such as a city-wide grey water system

Be aware of impervious surfaces and their impact on the natural environment

Looking for alternatives to asphalt

- Porous paving for sidewalks, e.g., {use of rain gardens}
- Education of the public to the issues and the need for pervious surfaces

Promote additional green space (while being aware of the cost)

Require tree replacement when trees are cut

More carrots less stick: e.g Have a **resident STAFF expert on grant matches** for environmental matters

Use tree planters to reduce urban heat island effects in parking lots, etc.

Encourage green and white roofs

Provide Incentives through Grants- the **Grant Coordinator**

Decatur should be proactive with greening the building stock- city could offer incentives for improvements similar to toilet replacement program where green development is encouraged

City could aggregate energy efficiency technology (so that certain technology may be cheaper through a bulk contract)- Does DeKalb County have program already in place?

- Perhaps through a tax credit or a financing mechanism to incentivize insulation, e.g. such as the PACE concepts

### **3- TRAVEL**

How do we get around?

- Train- 3 stations plus multiple bus stops
- Sidewalk improvements are making walking more doable
- Cars (although members mentioned having car-free days)
- Bikes – PATH and bike lanes
  - o Expansion of PATH
- CLIFF bus (free, convenient, good schedule): get into Oakhurst, e.g.

We want to be able to be at a destination more quickly- visual and other interest more often (i.e., we get to a ‘place of interest more quickly- a shop, a store, a park, etc.)

Promoting alternatives to the car for travel within the city

More bicycling capabilities

Promoting more walkability and bikability and easier intersections!

Find ways to divert or re-route traffic (non Decatur traffic) around the city so that we don’t have all those folks cutting through and looking for shortest, fastest

Bikeways encourage slower traffic

Have a revival of the trolley system connecting all of Decatur

Cars still need to be able to get in/out of Decatur BUT we want to limit through traffic

Need to be able to be comfortable/ feel safe walking from downtown Decatur to various places outside the core city – perhaps better street lights along College, Columbia, etc.

Provide a small, alternative fuel circulator system that moves through town (CNG or electric, similar to Chattanooga, TN non-stop, electric trolley)

### **4- Environment such as Public Gatherings, festivals, cultural life**

Vibrancy of core city- need retail and dining diversity

Engagement through activities such as Decatur 101 and the Strategic Planning Process

We have a small town feel- you know almost everyone – by connecting at events

Concerts on the Square help connect us

Frequency of community events is key to community engagement

Festival focusing on Books is a very neat idea

Abundance of Irish-style family pubs is a key

Having places to go after hours after dinner- shopping, art galleries, other

Perhaps have 'Terrific Thursdays' (or similar) throughout the year with wine, shops open, destinations after hours

Develop outdoor art (such as Valentine)-

- Host temporary exhibits such as the Cow or the Sandy Springs Turtle
- Encourage Agnes Scott, Emory and other universities to use Decatur as their art exhibit space
- Tie the art exhibits to the city schools expeditionary learning program
- Plot visual exhibits on a map with walking tours
- Have neighborhoods host similar events
- Develop scavenger hunt (through the cultural arts council) that relates to the outdoor art

Decatur fireworks has a very small town feel but very accessible, friendly, 'Awesome'

Revive the Fidelity Bank Building Christmas Tree

Christmas Tree/Menorah Lighting in Oakhurst

Other events in Oakhurst: Blues, Wine Crawl, Oakhurst Arts and Music Festival, Jazz nights

Norway has an affinity for teachers: Honor teachers with festival and parade

Patio party at Solarium with auction, food, bird houses, rain barrels, multiple beer festivals

Could we make some of the beer festivals Decatur only residents?

## **5- Housing**

What do the demographics look like?

We need housing for: Low income; people who work here; seniors; families; college students

Healthy mixed income housing stocks spread out throughout the city especially with respect to school age children

How to accommodate seniors in home- from city planning synergy to encourage smaller, non-McMansions

For the 'Keenagers'

- Wide sidewalks, options for alternative means of getting around, having access to neighbors, and access to amenities
- Accessibility, visitability (wheel chair accessible, door width, bathroom accessible and ramp accesses) – Copy 'Easy Living' program
- Ensure adult children have opportunities to interact positively with adult parents

Adult living research, make senior living in Decatur a model community, leveraging ARC senior living program

Provide incentives for 'work force' housing such as those along Oakview Road

Ensure people can continue to live in their homes through financial accommodations, tax relief, etc.

Find other ways to fund Decatur rather than through property tax, which will help alleviate the burden on seniors.

- Consider increasing fees for non-residents for services such as the dog park and festivals

## 6- **Healthy Living**

Decatur believes in getting all children to be successful through mentoring, 'Tide lifting all ships'

- Celebrate teachers and education through special programs and events

How to institutionalize- getting City Schools of Decatur together to celebrate Education

- Decatur Education Foundation, DBA and City of Decatur Volunteer Coordinator to collaborate

Active neighborhood watch programs

Walking to destinations

Having something for the children to do once they are through eating at restaurants- have a playground or some other sort of entertainment

Access to convenience stores

Zoning: could have pockets within larger residential zones where limited services could be offered such as convenience store

We share a common value of education of both children and citizens- Tap into and maximize the diversity of education, experience, culture of the residents

Encourage development of community gardens and local foods, co-op aspects, Community Supported Agriculture support in Decatur (Sugar Creek Garden, Farm to Table programs)

Have **Grant Coordinator** find funding for these activities

Continue to encourage block parties throughout city, including block parties that are thematic such as with musical instruments or 'progressive porch parties'

Neighborhood associations promote block parties

Finding Trader Joe's or equivalent that has healthier food choices

## 7- **Themes**

Celebrate education and teaching!

Provide incentives for a variety of things

Environmental focus

Grant coordinator could help fund many activities

Keep it Outdoors: Art, books, Walking, Biking, Shopping, Meeting neighbors

Question 1: Think about Session 1 and about how the city has developed and grown. How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?

- Keep the city as walkable as possible
  - Specifically, Clairmont is built for cars and could benefit from looking at a “complete streets” program to overhaul it.
    - Scott Boulevard is terrible for cyclists
    - Fixing some of these problems might cause congestion, but would be better for pedestrians
    - Crossing the tracks from Oakhurst to downtown also needs to be improved
  - A major challenge in doing this would be getting cooperation with the city’s regional partners
    - The group felt that the city could work better with Emory University, which is currently doing lots of campus transportation planning

Question 2: How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?

- Tree Ordinance
  - The city needs to create a better balance between residential and commercial needs around the issue of tree removal
    - It was suggested that Emory University has an interesting policy on trees and open space on the campus, and would be worth looking at by the city’s staff
- L.E.E.D Standards
  - There was disagreement in the group about whether mandating LEED standards for downtown buildings were a good idea.
  - Recognition of importance of being energy efficient, but skeptical over the effectiveness of the LEED program
    - It was suggested that the city use trade-offs to incentive developers to use certain building standards downtown, but not specifically what those trade-offs should be
- Group members wanted to make sure that any brownfields in the city were identified and cleaned up
- Lead paint is an issue in Decatur because there are many older homes

- Water
  - Public education is a good way to help people conserve water
  - Run-off is a problem in the city. Chamblee, Sandy Springs and other cities require run-off septic tanks
  
- Parks
  - McKoy Park's pool is built way too small for the population, but the park is important for the community's cohesion
  - Glenlake park has a storm-water run-off problem
  
- Pools
  - The city should look into developing a private pool in Decatur
  
- The city could form a task force or conduct research on what other cities are implementing around sustainable practices

Question 3: How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?

- Need bike paths on Clairemont
  
- Would like to see a light rail system from Agnes Scott to Emory with no more than a 10 minute wait for pick-up
  
- One person mentioned that the Cliff Bus both eco-friendly and free for all residents, and that the city needed to explore more partnership opportunities with Emory around this
  
- A trolley bus was also discussed
  - How could this work?
    - Possible for tourist use in the city
  - Density is a huge issue to make something like this happen
  
- Someone also said that they would like to see a Emory to Decatur to Oakhurst bus route
  
- Creating a more accessible downtown Decatur to those with disabilities is important

- More dedicated handi-cap parking is needed
- Would like to see use a commuter lots
- And would also like to see a new phone app that tells you exactly where an available parking spot is

Question 4: When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?

- The book festival
  - Very cool that it's the largest in the country
- A theatre is missing in the downtown area and could be very good for retail and restaurants
  - A movie theatre could also draw lots of people in and could be part of a larger art space
- The city should use its existing parks to create more of a destination, such as adding carousels or mini-golf, etc.
- The Decatur beach part is great, and so is the music on the square and in front of the solarium
- It was suggested that the city could set up an outdoor market for both existing and new vendor to sell their wares.
  - Boise has a huge successful outdoor market, which includes closing off streets
- Another positive characteristic is that the police and fire departments will work with you on a neighborhood block party
  - This needs to be better advertised
- The Georgia Center for the Book is another great asset

Question 5: Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in twenty years? What kind of housing do you think they will they need?

- There will be a need for both single-family housing and multi-family housing in the future
- We need a variety of housing for all sizes of families
- There is a good amount of rental units in the city now
- In terms of things done well, the redevelopment on the housing authority property is a positive for the city
  - Specifically because it adds density to downtown
  - Existing under-developed parking lots could support more density for downtown
- Another positive is the Artisan development, in terms of size, scale and in-fill nature of it
- However, the city needs to establish height transitions between downtown and single-family housing neighborhoods
- The city also has to recognize that while gentrification may not be widespread, it is occurring to older and lower income residents

Question 6: In terms of “healthy living,” what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city? What activities, programs, or changes in the things we build could make a difference?

- The group was not aware of a senior center in town, outside of the Recreation center and library
  - The recreation center has a lot, but it is “rundown” and does not accommodate everyone

- The farms to schools program is good for people's health
- The Oakhurst Community Garden's classes are a positive for the city as well

**Gail Rothman May 13, 2010**

**1-How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?**

- Economic Development
  - Need nicer office space/repurpose buildings to attract more & upscale businesses
  - Make Decatur more attractive to creative businesses with features like open floor plans, loft space, cool/modern spaces, shared incubation space/networking
  - Attract developers who specialize in creative/loft style space
  - Bring in more affordable restaurants/delis/casual eateries (NOT fast food though) and a child-friendly pub (good beer and play space)
  - Need a toy store
  - Consider closing Ponce de Leon to make a pedestrian mall (traffic study needed)

**2. How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?**

- Figure out a way to keep Atlanta pollution out!
- Encourage green businesses that provide solutions to environmental issues
- Develop alternative transportation infrastructure (see notes #3)
- List the properties that could be greenspaces (that exist but are undeveloped) on the website so communities could use, turn into gardens, use by schools, etc. and who at the city should be contacted for this
- Clarify roles in maintaining and developing parks/greenspaces – what is the role of neighborhood vs. city
- Figure out ways to collaborate and share greenspaces that exist already
- Develop pocket parks
- Communicate if there is a plan to acquire or develop greenspace
- Keep the dogparks

**3. How do you get from place to place in Decatur now? What might change in how we travel in the next 10 years?**

- Continue sidewalk installation and improvements
- Need light rail that respects existing neighborhoods (no demolition)

- Continue to provide scooter support like parking
- Keep up the complete streets program
- Need better railroad crossings!
- Iphone app in development which would provide on demand ridesharing –could we be a pilot city?
- Intelligent transportation systems (ITSA.org)
- Expand the zipcar program
- Be creative in developing non car solutions
- Need bike parking everywhere – consider bikes as a mode of transportation and provide infrastructure – don't consider it just recreational
- Need bike lanes – this is a safety issue not just a transportation issue
- Love the yellow bikes –figure out a way to secure them or have a card that unlocks them. Don't just let it go bc it wasn't secure
- Like the pedicabs
- Have shuttles around town (family friendly built in carseats)
- Have shuttles for special events to move people around
- Have a cliff bus type shuttle that circulates around the city so that one would come w/in 10 minutes rather than having a bus schedule
- Shuttle will promote local business by making it easy to shop w/o dealing with parking

**5. Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in 20 years? What kind of housing do you think they will need?**

- need a staff and citizen commission dedicated to housing issues , trends and attraction strategies.
- Increasing numbers of seniors who may want to Age in Place
  - Why cant they?
    - Taxes – need relief/exemptions
    - Transportation – need shuttles
    - Maintenance – keep the MLK project and expand – encourage more people to have their home worked on, may be stigma keeps some from asking for help
    - Physical layout of home no longer works
  - Attract businesses that serve seniors
  - Have a seniors 101 program that educates about services and programs for seniors and provides support for family caregivers
  - Expand MLK concept to neighborhoods –neighbors helping neighbors – develop a website the connects those who can help with needs in their own neighborhoods
- Lower income households including workforce (teachers, police, etc) young people starting out, DHS grads who want to move back to Decatur but can't afford it as well as families struggling in poverty and working poor
  - Need to balance – look at housing market as a whole – we are not sure how but we want a community that includes housing for all of these groups – economic diversity
- If we want to be a place for artists need affordable live/work space for them to be able to afford to live in Decatur

- Live/work space also for entrepreneurs
- Annex DeVry space for new housing?

**6. IN terms of healthy living what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city? What activities programs or changes in the things we build could make a difference?**

- Focus on fresh, healthy food for all, support farm to school
- Farmers market downtown is too expensive , expand it so costs can go down
- See transportation ideas for improving healthy living (bike lanes and racks)
- Fund the expansion of the rec center

### **Themes**

**Our group was passionate about alternative transportation, being on the cutting edge of developing models that work, shuttles, encouraging bikes, etc.**

**Also themes of business incubation, shared space, live/work emerged often**