

GROUP 27 April 28, 2010
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

GOOD THINGS

- *Being able to walk safely
- *Diversity & strong local leadership
- *Good Neighbors and neighborhood cohesion
- *Opportunities for residents to have an impact-volunteering, planning, etc.
- *Downtown area-accessible on foot, public spaces, business
- *Festivals, Bandstands/Concerts
- *Lots of support for causes
- *Oakhurst Garden & DHS garden
- *Library
- *Cliff bus & MARTA
- *School system
- *Educational level of City residents
- *Pedi cabs
- *Greenspaces, cemetery, Scott Gardens, dog parks
- *Girls & Boys Club
- *REC Center-appeals to all ages
- *South Decatur Community Center
- *Zoning-limits on height, smart growth, good design

PROBLEMS

- *Some minority students & parents to not feel any ownership of the Decatur schools
- *No “voice” for disadvantaged kids in the school system
- *Traffic congestion and signalization
- *Mixed use zoning with incompatible uses
- *Antiquated building codes
- *Don’t want Downtown Decatur to become another Buckhead-noise, congestion
- *Pedestrian “unfriendly” intersections and dangerous intersections
- *Property taxes-reduce age limit on school exemption to 65.
- *Garbage pick up (would like 2x week) and no “pay as you throw”
- *Overly strong influence of the City Manager
- *Lack of bike lanes and safe routes/bike safety for kids
- *Too many restaurants and not enough grocery stores
- *No Senior Center or Drugstore (Oakhurst)
- *No shuttle for seniors

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO? WHAT WOULD INSPIRE YOU?

- *More sustainability-food crops, living wage, more jobs, affordable housing (rentals)
- *Economically mixed neighborhoods
- *Attention to the needs of the homeless
- *Democracy and inclusion in schools
- *Increased and improved connections between schools and the broader community
- *Advocates in schools for kids without one
- *Implementing Smart Growth
- *Ease of access/transportation by foot, bike and shuttle
- *Fewer parking lots
- *Save, preserve and plant trees
- *More options for kids-after school activities/tutoring/activities in parks
- *Dedicated Senior Center
- *Depot as cultural/community center
- *Community building events
- *Movie theater

WHAT SHOULD DECATUR LOOK LIKE AND BE?

- *Small groups can address issues easily, good communication and paths for activism and local problem solving
- *More of what people need (grocery stores, co-ops) right in the City of Decatur-entertainment and services

WHAT STORIES?

- *Walkable and Sustainable
- *Diverse neighborhoods-economically, racially, by age and type of employment
- *Change is possible in Decatur-Community/resident driven initiatives
- *Keep the Family feeling
- *Life cycle housing
- *City Tax Credits for energy efficient existing homes and new construction
- *Community education on alternative housing and energy to ensure acceptance
- *Alternative energy sources in the City
- *Electric car charging stations
- *Smaller “smarter”, efficient homes-fewer “McMansions”

WHAT WILL DECATUR LOOK LIKE?

- *Fewer cars/vehicles and less diesel from trucks
- *Access to fresh food and local food
- *Extension service in the community to help create/educate on gardens
- *Development diversity-Keep best of old buildings, not “Disney-fied”
- *Funds in help fix up homes for those with fixed incomes
- *Bike lanes and safe cross walks
- *Tree lined streets
- *Lots of Public art
- *Education on bike safety and rules
- *Restore courthouse square continue the old “look and feel”- no more glass boxes-strong design standards
- *Quality lodging for visitors
- *Free transportation/shuttles between downtown and the neighborhoods
- *YMCA in Downtown and subsidies for “Y” membership

DECATUR IS A CITY WHERE _____.

- *All are welcome and comfortable
- *Everybody is friendly
- *We care
- *We have everything we need
- *We can count on each other
- *Meets all our needs
- *Its easy to be healthy
- *Everyone is respected
- *There are as many trees as residents
- *Where communities are interconnected
- *Citizens are empowered
- *The car is not king

PLUS/DELTA

- Groups need to meet in separate rooms
- +Balanced input
- +Nice group size encourages speaking
- +Helpful handouts
- +Group’s Gender balance

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Miguel Alandete

Meeting Date: 04-28-2010

Time: Wed. 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- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

Great schools – great teachers, active parents, walk-able neighborhood schools with lots of resources; **Community Involvement** – evidence of a plan; Community Government is accessible; Public Safety; Responsive City Service Providers (police); Vibrant Downtown; Walk-able Community; Great Restaurants; Great Festivals – in particular the Decatur Book Festival; Concerts on the Square; Farmer’s Market (Decatur); Proximity to the Dekalb Farmers Market; DHS Sports Stadium Complex; Diversity – in age, sexuality, race; People seem to watch out for each other; Decatur Rec; GA Center for the Book – via the library; Agnes Scott; Having 3 MARTA Stops; Our effort to be bike-friendly; **Community leaders** do a great job securing grants; Our leaders have proven to be great advocates for Decatur but we’re proud to see them also involved as leaders regionally and state-wide; Cliff Bus – through emory should be replicated throughout the city; **great activities**

“Our community problems.”

Lack of an affluent Black/Hispanic/Asian middle class; CSX is irresponsible; CSX divides the city and limits walk-ability; Taxes – if too high will price people out of the city; Lack of clear understanding of where the borders of the city lie complicates services for those residents on the fringes of the city borders; Lack of greenspace; Age of Renfroe and DHS and Police Station; Improve bike-ability on Commerce; The relationship between the city and the county should be improved; **Traffic** on College seems to be worse; Bus service is being cut on Ponce (#2 Bus); Pay-as-you-throw seems elitist – we already pay for garbage collection, why do we have to buy the bags?; Lack of recycling for commercial sector; General inconsistency surrounding recycling; Chick-Fil-A dumpster is disgusting; concerns about the City Schools of Decatur being sustainable; Need a vibrant newspaper – could be virtual; Internet service should be improved; City employees can’t afford to live here; 1010 Clairmont – needs to be solved; Potential for being too **exclusive** (in a pejorative sense).

2- Where do we want to go?

“ Inspiring visions of the city“

No High-Rises (keep it at 80ft.); More smart development inside the commerce loop and the Devry Campus; less cars; street-scape – continue with plantings, lighting, etc.; Alternative Transportation, i.e. street-car on ponce?; Signage zoning restrictions; safeguard greenspace; pursue historic preservation; retain

architectural integrity; do a better job defining borders of the city; a place for public art.

“We want Decatur to be...”

Be known for civic energy efficiency; Leading a **green** movement that affects H2O, Air, Energy-usage, etc.; Maintain a **diverse** community; known as an “ARTS” community; Show creativity in all aspects of life; Embrace new-urbanist ideas; explore whether Downtown Ponce should be pedestrian only; Clean up areas just on the perimeter of downtown but inside the Commerce-Loop; Influence the N.Decatur/Clairmont Rd. area; Inspire other contiguous communities; find a way to embrace those living on the fringes of our borders; continue to be a city where one can grow old; Explore residential solutions for the older population so they can stay in their homes, i.e. transportation services, etc.; Continue to enable volunteerism; make the city more **racially diverse**; need to be sensitive to the socio-economic/racial divide;

“Decatur, a city where ____”

You don't need a car; you want to live, you want to retire; you can find great food/restaurants; you can find family activities; it's a great place to raise a family; the “arts” thrive; schools thrive; planning and input is valued; local businesses thrive; diversity and vibrancy exist for the benefit of small businesses; we have a diverse population; architectural integrity is valued; New Urbanism is celebrated; it's easy to consume locally-grown food; it's easy to get online anywhere; public facilities are used in a variety of ways, i.e. arts, adult education, etc.; people know their neighbors; people feel safe

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Haqqa Bolling

Meeting Date: 4-28-10

Time: 7pm-9pm

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I would probably bold almost everything, this group was quite excited and interested in just about every idea put on the table

3- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

school system
walkability
having a voice
easy access to public transportation
personal attention from police and fire
community activities: arts, entertainment, festivals, restaurants
organic market
farm-to-school
community gardens
diversity of student population, intentionally integrating schools
homogenizing high school classes: differentiated learning
neighborhoods are diverse across many differences: age, lifestyle, economic, racial, with and without children, etc.
located conveniently: 25 minutes to everywhere
nurturing: i.e. invitation to Global Village School
people from all over the world: attracted by CDC, higher ed, Brickstore, Twains

“Our community problems.”
skateboarders in public/common places : downtown, schools – harming marble, paint, etc.
development and code issues
business opportunities (increase tax base) vs. quality of life
lack of clarity/info about parking options (booted in CVS parking lot)
inefficient energy use: i.e. no solar for new school construction projects
cycling and walking transportation: need for bike paths/lanes, current bike parking doesn't work, need for sidewalks
sharing city – school facilities: Decatur Ballet's difficult relationship with DHS
performing arts facility
poor customer service at city hall: an experience of rude – incompetent treatment by city hall staff
not enough ethnic diversity
rat problem: eating gardens
animal control understaffed: loose wild dogs
private schools often left out of the conversation, they're part of the city too

4- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”
mutual respect of all walks of life
not have to own a car
public temporary art
own center for the arts facility
leader in sustainable food
less surface parking
top 10 for storm water management

top 10 for reducing carbon footprint
prepared for all types of disasters
physically fit citizens and city employees
safety – kids can travel safely
energy neutral transportation system

“We want Decatur to be...”

multinational
electric trolleys for neighborhood to neighborhood transportation-tying N. and S. together
bike lanes on all streets
narrower streets for traffic calming
farms – csa, cooking classes, fresh foods for food pantries for the needy
real food in all of our schools – cut back on waste
national leader in healthy food for kids
convert surface parking lots to community gardens and other green space and meaningful retail
carousel at Christmas time
outdoor amphitheatre
public performance art
shade on Marta plaza
screen on the green
building community by working on something together, on projects
public spaces for games, hanging out – bocci ball, chess, shuffle board, conversation
more affordable housing - people who work in the city able to afford to buy a home in the city
elderly residents being able to stay in the community
MLK day of service for the elderly more often through the year
self contained condo for adults w/out children – pool, health club, etc.
golf carts

“Decatur, a city where ____”

everyone is fit
everyone is welcome
everyone knows their neighbor
anyone can ride a bicycle
you get a world class education
you live in a carbon neutral environment
you can be who you want to be
fresh food is locally grown and available to all citizens
it has foot in past and eye on the future
we can co-exist with wildlife

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session I: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Mark G. Burnette

Meeting Date: April 29, 2010

Time: 7 – 9 pm

1. Where are we now?

“Our Community Successes.”

Varied Festivals that are community builders

Walkable Downtown with vitality

Maintained local identity

Child Friendly community

Schools are good

Commitment to being a green community

Commitment to encouraging a healthy lifestyle for residents

Good neighborhood parks

Creation of dog parks

Housing types are diversified

City has open and accessible government

Commitment to encouraging economic and racial diversity

Encouraging and supporting locally owned businesses

Preservation of historic structures

Encouraging farmers market and destination restaurants

Creation of sense of public safety

Creation of complete community

Churches, schools, businesses, and government have good synergy

Encouragement and support of sense of community among residents

“Our community problems.”

Lack of safe pedestrian connection between north and south Decatur

Lack of public parking and information on where such parking can be found

Lack of affordable housing

Decreasing racial diversity

Lack of adequate stormwater runoff controls

Lack of enforcement of pedestrian rules on crossing streets

Lack of enforcement of rules for motor vehicles respecting crosswalks

Lack of harmonious design scheme for MARTA plaza and square area

Lack of consistency in directional signage language and abbreviations

Conflict between city government and school system over annexation

2. Where do we want to go?

“We want Decatur to be:”

More clearly defined in public mind (differentiated from Decatur mailing address area)

A city known for tolerance of people with a diversity of lifestyles and values

The best all around city but not necessarily “Number 1”

A place that feels like home

A place where everyone wants to live

Part of the world but its own little place

“Decatur, a city where:”

Public schools are a destination (people want to move and stay here because of the school system)

Natural systems are being restored (recycling water, replacing/increasing tree canopy, growing food) with the goal of becoming self-sustaining

People come to shop

The small town feel has been maintained

There is no speed limit above 30 mph

Its residents think globally and act locally

Its residents are involved in the community

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Calleja 04-28-2010 9 a.m.

Where are we now?

Gifts

- Walkability
- We like that we have a transparent, honest government
- We appreciate the visibility of the government in that the officials are accessible and attend community functions
- We have the feel of a small town within a big city
- We like the progressive philosophy of much of the community
- We appreciate our vibrant downtown with different business, restaurants, shops
- We like that Decatur is kid-friendly
- Decatur has a sense of nature – green spaces, parks natural areas
- Historic preservation is important in Decatur
- Activities are available for a multitude of generations
- We celebrate diversity in Decatur – we don’t just accept it! Racial, Age, Lifestyle, Health, Income
- Planned growth has made Decatur great
- We are learning from our past
- We feel safe in Decatur
- We have confidence in our Public Safety and Public Works employees

- We appreciate that the city is a good employer and retains employees and the employees seem happy in their jobs and are pleasant for the public to deal with; they seem happy in their jobs
- Education is important in Decatur. We have high goals for our educational system, diversity is important in our education system, we have a commitment to succeed in our goals and the school system is a representational microcosm of the city values
- There is good cooperation between the city government, the business association and the community.

Problems

- We face financial challenges in the city – we have high taxes and they are getting higher
- Our small size is sometimes a liability in that we can't always realize economies of scale/size
- Physical development in the city places stress on the infrastructure and on nature/trees
- The state of our roads is not good. Perhaps we need to build stronger relationships with the county and the Department of Transportation to address this.
- We are a small voice in a large county. It's hard for us to get the county to do things for us.
- We're different from the more conservative areas surrounding us
- Airplane noise
- Air, water and noise pollution is too high
- Water conservation is not as important as it should be
- Parking requirements/code results in an impact on development
- We are concerned about our physical safety in the parking decks (perhaps have patrols?)
- We have residential parking issues especially on residential streets close to shops
- There is a lack of support for walking/biking/running. We need to be more exercise friendly.
- We need to work on adapting to being a truly urban area.

Where do you want to go?

Inspiring Visions for Decatur

- Pedestrians, cyclists and cars can all share roads and obey all rules/laws
- A city where different parts (Oakhurst, Glendale, etc) are connected by a path of walkways without impacting greenspace
- Our parks are prioritized and wild greenspace is increased
- We invest in active living
- We are able to maintain our economic diversity

- We have passive and active greenspaces (some as parks, some as wild areas) and we sustain what we already have
- We invest in shared parking – including encouraging alternate transportation options like public shuttles along the lines of expansion of the Cliff bus (adopting similar for Decatur)
- We have wider sidewalks and narrower streets to encourage walking/running/cycling and slower car speeds

Decatur is a city where...

- You can live, work and play (live close to work)
- Diversity is celebrated (as opposed to tolerated)
- Big city convenience, small town flavor
- Nature is honored
- We have the best small school system in the country
- Sustainability is taken seriously – development codes, incentives for conservation
- Where artistic impression reflects the community (diversity of music, artistic experiences)
- We work together to develop our future
- Empower our citizens to participate
- Capture the diversity of thought
- Decrease pollution – zero impact building (stormwater, carbon footprint/offsets)
- We maintain our assets by reinvesting in what we've already accomplished
- We adapt to the future

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future
Chernock 04-29-2010 7pm

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5- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

- A. That Decatur has become a walk-able community, especially around the Decatur Square
- B. There are opportunity to participate and volunteer include volunteering with city government, the school strategic planning process and the many city festivals
- C. Decatur is environmentally conscious

- a. Participants specifically cited the pay-as-you-throw recycling program, community gardens, and the farmers market as good examples of this
- D. Dog parks were cited as another community success
- E. The schools are “real community schools” and have a diverse student population
 - a. The baccalaureate program and strong parental involvement were also cited as specific examples of positives within the school
- F. Decatur is “21st Century minded”, meaning that the city uses a variety of modern technology to enhance itself such as blogs, the city wi-fi and by providing access to information in a variety of ways
- G. There are lots of things to do and places to go, **and not just on the Decatur Square**
 - a. Specifically, participants cited the book festival, beer festival, wine festival and 4th of July bike parade as good things to do
- H. The city has an abundance of independent merchants and non-chain restaurants
- I. Decatur is a safe community
 - a. Specific examples of this are the pedestrian crossings and kid-friendly parks, events where you meet your neighbors (such as this planning process), an “accessible” policy force with a “good presence” on bikes and in schools whether they are on or off duty
- J. Decatur has density downtown, resulting in more housing being placed downtown and more people “out”

The Stories we tell when talking about Decatur

- A. I tell people to come over and walk to the restaurants with me
- B. I tell people that I walk home from the bars
- C. I’m taking my kids to the parks that each have something unique
- D. I live two blocks from MARTA
- E. Everywhere I go I can take a great walk
- F. I talk about the overall diversity in the city, and that Decatur is one of the only cities in Georgia that has a non-discrimination policy that includes transgender people

“Our community problems.”

- A. Traffic and noise from traffic
 - a. Specifically, people speed on Clairmont and Ponce too much
- B. There are proposals to over-develop the single-family home neighborhoods
 - a. Specific example cited of a development proposal near the old train depot that dragged out for 2 years. According to this participant, the city did not understand the role of density in this area.
- C. Concern about a lack of ability to continue being able to afford to live in the city for both the elderly today and people’s children in the future
 - a. Taxes are very high and unaffordable for some residents
 - b. A challenge here is to balance out the needs of different groups, those with and without children
 - c. In relation to this, there is a need for workforce housing, and the city needs to understand how it compares in affordability to similar cities
- D. Empty commercial space needs to be filled in
- E. There needs to be easier access to city statues for residents who want to look them up

6- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

- A. We are inspired by Decatur’s unique character and architecture
- B. Decatur has a great personality and great energy downtown
- C. Decatur has a little bit of everything.

“We want Decatur to be...”

- D. We want more walking and bike paths in the city
- E. To see a car free zone in the center of town
- F. We want more places to walk **to** throughout the city; meaning we need more destinations besides just downtown and more options for entertainment

- G. To see the West side of Ponce as a controlled traffic zone similar to the East side of Ponce
- H. To have mixed income housing, including rental units throughout the city
- I. Encourage more commercial business space so that more people can work in the city and we're not just a bedroom community
- J. To see all surface parking lots **gone**
- K. To have a Decatur city trolley bus that takes you to the different shops and restaurants
- L. The city should look into incentive programs to keep people shopping locally
 - a. One participant suggested printing Decatur bucks, which would be subsidies from the city to make up the cost differential between shopping at a chain store and an independent merchant
- M. Create a municipal compost site
 - a. Something said that Athens, GA has something similar to look at and compare
- N. Encourage more community gardening
 - a. To key principles of this were that gardens should be city promoted but neighborhood supported, and provide affordable and accessible fresh food for all
- O. Maintain the independent business community in town
- P. Maintain and grow community events

“Decatur, a city where ____”

- A. “Life thrives”
- B. “You live, work, learn and plan”
- C. “Mayberry meets Berkley”
- D. “Small town dream lives on”
- E. “You know your neighbor”**
- F. “Mr. Rogers would feel comfortable”

- G. “There is always something interesting happening”
- H. “We communicate and cooperate”
- I. “There is no wrong side of the tracks and all the different groups work together”

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future
Cohen 04-27-2010 7pm

Our Community Successes

- Community involvement
 - Participation
 - Neighborhood associations
 - Schools
 - Commissions
 - Strategic Plan
 - Volunteer opportunities (coordinated well)
 - Decatur 101
 - Festivals
- Attractions
 - Festivals
 - Food/Restaurants
 - Bars
 - Farmer’s Market
- Good Size – best of both worlds; suburban mentality in the city; urban vibe with a small town attitude
- Identity – sense of place, community, positive association, branding, unique (not suburban sameness)
- Arty – diversity, different, not homogenous
- Relatively well-governed – transparent, non-political, accessibility, open City Hall, responsive, accountable
- Schools
- Dog Park
- Safe – can walk around most places
- Public transportation – accessible, MARTA
- Pedestrian-friendly – basic needs met in the city limits and can get there by walking

- Satisfactory green space (could be better)
- Attractive to families
- County seat – courthouse
- Good job of bringing commercial in downtown
- 2 downtowns (Decatur square and Oakhurst)
- Rainy day fund – fiscally responsible
- Decatur blogs – social media

Our Community Problems

- Taxes are high, services are great. Need to expand tax base. Told different things would need to happen to lower taxes (e.g., new condos would help), but they haven't gone down. Now told need more businesses to share tax burden and lower for residents.
- Paramedics are limited – DeKalb County might have to step in for certain things that the City of Decatur paramedics cannot do.
- Develop Commercial opportunities and property. 1 or 2 landlords in particular are problems (e.g., Vision Properties). Expand East. Develop Big H.
- Need to focus on non-downtown property. Vacant lots. City is not proactive enough, needs to take initiative (will act when issues are brought to their attention, but citizens would like to see proactive action).
- City needs to follow their own guidelines for development – some things happened too quickly, no resident input.
- Antiquated zoning laws – e.g., autos were more important 40 years ago when zoning laws were drafted, now restaurants need a waiver to get parking. Too many variances are needed. Just change zoning laws to avoid numerous, repetitive variances.
- Oakhurst sidewalks – need more, and the current ones are in disrepair
- Some basics are missing from downtown (especially Oakhurst)
 - All-hours grocery store
 - Chain clothing store (e.g., Gap, Chicos)
 - Bakery
 - Liquor store
- Green space/Environmental issues
 - Community garden
 - Utilizing space that is available (e.g., flood zone that cannot be built on anyway), walking trail

- Water in creeks polluted – Alkaline and sewer leaking
- Drainage/flood issues
- When presented the idea for community garden, got run around, sent to endless officials
- More fully-utilized city property (e.g., schools – let community use) – better coordination needed between schools and city
- Traffic
 - Hard to cross train tracks – lights at tracks are impossible, not coordinated, only a few places to cross
 - Scott Blvd. – too high speed, not pedestrian-friendly, dangerous to cross; too slow with heavy traffic
 - Jefferson and Ansley – people roll through stop sign
 - Too many crossing guards at Renfroe and Decatur – difficult to drive, have waited 30 minutes
 - Close Ponce to vehicle traffic between Church and Commerce (European model) – turn parking in front of BrickStore to green space, expand restaurant patios
- More seating in downtown (e.g., MARTA plaza – possible model: Colony Square entrance to Ansley Park)
- Be fiscally responsible, don't need to do everything, use restraint (e.g., Oakhurst firehouse over budget)

Inspiring Visions of the City

- Great schools
- Good dog parks
- Good infill – smart development, resolve eyesores, find good tenants
- Art scene
 - Theater
 - Performance art
 - Provide space for arts
 - Amphitheatre space to be used for movies and concerts (why go to Piedmont Park for Screen on the Green, gazebo not ideal stage for concerts)
 - Movie theater
- Continuum of care for older citizens – housing, healthcare
- Safety – especially at night, Oakhurst
- Diversity of housing so working class, older citizens, etc. can be here (don't want to turn into Highlands)
- Expanding houses well to blend in with rest of neighborhood
- Partner with Emory and Agnes Scott – branding (similar to Stanford/Palo Alto)
- Continue being a movie locale

- Technology – Google project
- Better communication/cooperation with DeKalb County – shouldn't resolve differences in court (e.g., HOST litigation, zoning issues).
- Better communication with City of Atlanta and other neighboring towns
- Environmental leader
 - Programs
 - Building codes
 - Energy usage
 - Clean water
- Maintain/increase diversity
- Manageable size of city – not too big, controlled growth
- More refugee services – education, basic services

Decatur, a city where...

- People are safe/secure
- People are environmentally conscious (greenest city in the Southeast)
- The schools are great
- Entertainment destination
- Where you don't have to leave unless you really want to
- Emory is
- Trains don't blow their horns
- Fiscally sound (City)
- The taxes are low and the services are high
- Community is involved
- Where things get done
- Where you can walk/cycle everywhere
- Green spaces are plentiful
- Technology and the arts (and the people who use them) prosper

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Mickey Baskett

Meeting Date: 04-28-2010

Time: 9 am

Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

City Government - very helpful, goes beyond

Pay-as-you-Throw - far ahead of other communities, special to Decatur

Recycling

Volunteer coordinator

Community Discussion Groups; i.e. Elizabeth Wilson's monthly discussion group; neighborhood groups. These promote civic engagement

Opportunities for involvement

Small Town Feel

Schools - quality, neighborhood, parent involvement; tax structure allows everyone (people without children, seniors, and businesses) to share the burden of the costs

Perception that everyone works together for the good of the community. Government, businesses and citizens all realize they have a vested interest to keep the city what they want it to be

Festivals and Concerts-on-the-Square - festivals benefit the non profits and can not benefit a for profit business.

Walkable

Little Town/Big Services

Safe

Marta

Police and Fire - community oriented service

Business district support of schools and other aspects of city

Diversity

“Our community problems.”

Taxes - high. Decatur is soon becoming unaffordable to middle class

Lack of annexation - fewer people have to pay higher services

Gentrification - causes lack of diversity; high taxes; unaffordable to live here; people having to leave homes

Traffic/Parking

Growth - growth is not always good; even if it is “smart” growth

Festivals - becoming too many, too large

Attitudes of racism, classism, snobbish

7- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

Affordable housing

Keeping diversity - balance the gentrification/diversity

Schools - keeping the stability and quality with proper planning

Community tool bank - folks could borrow tools free to work on their homes

Better partnership between schools and city government -- too much division and lack of cooperation. Each has their own agenda.

Sharing of resources - i.e. using school buildings after hours for community events; sharing parking lots

“We want Decatur to be...”

More walkable

Have less traffic/better flow of traffic

Less people driving/fewer cars

Better crossings -- streets and RR

Where there is less testing in schools and an opportunity for discovery

An expanded active living center - with the proposed expansion plan implemented; with strong leadership; central to city activities; more accessible

A city with a R.R. passenger service

A city with affordable housing - more workforce houses so that the people who work here can afford to live here. Make sure that the housing stays affordable with accountability and city commitment -- more public discussion

A city with alternative energy sources - so that we can provide some of our own energy

“Decatur, a city where ___”

Every child has equal opportunities to fulfill their potential

Everything I need is within walking distance -

- healthcare
- groceries (Trader Joes)
- churches

We have yearly discussions among citizens - town hall meeting style

Everyone is involved in the community

There is technology access for all - training sessions to educate seniors and underprivileged how to use technology; free or inexpensive equipment for those in need; use of school’s computers after hours by citizens.

“Seniors” and “taxes” are compatible

Seniors are engaged in the community - acknowledging value of seniors and what they can bring to the community

There are more services for seniors (evaluate and centralize resources to make the accessible)

Greenspace is accessible to all - more casual areas for sitting and “hanging” out.

There are adequate services and resources for early childhood development

Everyone has and uses bikes

We grow all our food for our citizens - no one has to go to bed hungry; food is affordable

Social and emergency services are available to all

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Unidentified Facilitator Submission

Our Community Successes:

People are well connected

Walkable

You know your neighbors

Sidewalks

Small school system

Active living / Decatur Rec Center

City can provide al daily needs

Privately owned eateries

Café Style restaurants / outside dining

Strong Police presence

Safe

Festivals/Cultural activities

-book festival, beer festival, beach party
Something for everyone
Always options for activity

Our Community Problems:

Lack of greenspace

- especially in downtown
- need more bathrooms at parks
- need to maximize park space that we do have

Downtown too vertical

- buildings too tall

Design Challenges / Density challenges on square

Connecting neighborhoods to activity centers

Affordable housing

Workforce housing

More Single story housing for seniors

Performance gaps between schools

Need to improve social services

- Many kids fall through the “cracks” / graduating w/o being literate
- need tutoring
- literacy programs for students

Divide/lack of communication between school board, city government & elected officials

Need better access to information about educational programs

Strengthen parent/child relationships among lower performing students

Need to fully use strengths

- better use of rec center
- more after school programs at schools

More youth jobs

Programs for 14-17 age group

Programs for women

Better localized bus service, linking neighborhoods

Overflow parking at library/rec center

Parking on the Square

- more signage directing drivers to parking decks
- free or pay parking?
- More private lots should be made available
- Lack of parking restricts access to businesses

Aging City employees

- will plans get done if these people retire

Empty Retail space

Inspiring Visions of the City:

We are already lucky

More entrepreneurs / locally owned businesses
Small Town
Green City
Racially harmonious
Arts Community
Establish a boutique hotel
Become a cultural/arts destination
Church St developed from ponce to commerce and beyond
Greenspace/park downtown
More parking for business employees
Residents are a family

We want Decatur to be:

A place to live and let live
Mix of ages, races and lifestyles
Tolerant
A place kids can be kids
Full of people who want to know each other
A front porch community (people know their neighbors)
A place with activity options for all

“Decatur, A city where...”

“the character of the neighborhood is made up by the characters in the neighborhood”
“there is a good mix of rural and urban.”
“a small town lost in a city.”
“spontaneous Zen happens.”
“streets are alive and businesses thrive.”
“dogs like it.”

deSilva 04/27/10 2pm Group 7

Our Successes:

- Developing and preserving our green spaces.
- There is a strong sense of community
 - Small town atmosphere with big city amenities
 - We are people orientated
- Easy access to city government
- Good city services
 - Garbage and recycling services
 - Police department
- Open door policy with police department
- Not having to pre-sort our recycling

- Fire department helps with car seats and missing persons
- School System
- Scale and size of the community and the buildings downtown
- Churches are active within the community and will participate in other projects – not just their own events
- Festivals and events
- Marta being a part of the city (3 stations)
- Very walkable city
- Cooperation between Agnes Scott, City of Decatur Schools, and City of Decatur. (i.e. art displays in city library done by school children)
- Agnes Scott is more active with City of Decatur
- Strong non-profit involvement with city
- Having Hagar's House (homeless shelter) in city limits – so close to Marta, etc.
- Strong culture of volunteerism
 - Fundraising
 - Community involvement
- Embracing lower income groups (i.e. Adopt a elderly or low income [child] person at Christmas and provide gifts. Also the local churches collect, sort, and store the gifts.)
- Diversity – we have a strong starting point
 - Age
 - Race
 - Gender
 - Sexual Orientation
- Traffic is not as bad as other metro areas

Our Challenges:

- Trying to maintain our diversity
 - Economic diversity
 - Elderly population – higher costs, higher taxes more of an issue
- Changing Demographics – increase in number of white / affluent population
- Less neighborly in same neighborhood
- Influx of new residents from outside is leading to a change in the small-town feel / culture
- Achievement gap in school system
 - Need more parental involvement
- City needs a bowling alley (within city limits) that has family friendly amenities (i.e. arcade, toddler play area, etc.)
- City needs a central playhouse / theater with special events venues available for public rental
- Growing traffic challenges
 - Speeds are increasing
 - Volume of traffic increasing
 - Neighborhoods are being used as cut-throughs for other areas
- Taxes

- Higher taxes are a concern for those on a fixed income
 - Balancing our scale (size) and our city services
 - Growing our tax base
 - Concern for all about our rising taxes (not just those on fixed income)
- Development and annexation
- Balancing growth and higher densities vs. (protecting) existing neighborhoods
- Need more housing for disabled residents (Park Trace is not enough)
- Need more senior housing
 - Large rooms
 - Affordable
 - Within easy walking distance to downtown for someone in her 90s
- Addressing traffic along the Clairemont corridor
 - Connecting Decatur to Emory
 - Getting people out of their cars
 - Safety
 - Pollution
 - Preventing accidents (children being hit by vehicles)
- (City is not) pedestrian friendly enough (i.e. the cross-walk in-front of Parkers on Ponce)
 - Need to change our culture – we disobey our own laws (Decatur residents are a big part of the problem in not following the laws to protect pedestrians)
- Shared Parking
 - Build better understanding of our parking decks
 - Shared use – office building and apartment complex
 - Issue of Fidelity Banking sharing parking with church and people crossing 5 lanes of traffic
- Poor community awareness of available parking
- Need more streetlights (particularly near county office buildings)
- Need another post office
- How do we increase locally grown / healthy foods
 - Community gardens
 - Building awareness
 - Creating community gardens
- Healthy eating is a building block for healthy lifestyle
 - Create partnerships between restaurants, schools, and farmers
 - Example: encourage others to follow in the footsteps of Cakes & Ale (who grow their own produce)
- Build a safe environment for kids to walk to school
 - Infrastructure (sidewalks)
 - Safety: traffic and crime
 - We used to have this in Decatur
 - Safe havens along walking routes (Block Parents)
 - Can also improve health
 - Need crossing guards during evening rush hour for those kids who have after school activities

- Encourage more parental participation / more community involvement
- Balance the good and the bad with technology
- Increase broadband coverage (and access)
 - Include residents of the housing authority (this is an economic barrier that should be eliminated)
 - Attract more tech savvy / creative businesses
- Banning leaf blower (noise / pollution)
- Banning cell phones

Decatur is a City where:

- People come to see where things are done right (we are a model to other communities)
- ALL are welcome
- We grow our own food
- Pedestrians are safe walking everywhere
- It's easy to be healthy and happy
- Volunteers make it happen
- People talk to each other on the street
- You can age in place
- Share parking is embraced and taxes are low
- We love our trees
- We protect our environment
- More people walk than drive
- You are always learning

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Stephanie DiLorio

Meeting Date: 4-28-2010

Time: 9 am

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.

8- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

School system has good performance and reputation, support from the city.

Schools are small and located in neighborhoods, making walking to school possible for many students

Growth and development in Decatur have been accomplished with minimal negative impact on the quality of life

Decatur has city center that people can walk to from nearly every neighborhood
Decatur has a small town feel; it is a progressive and welcoming community
Decatur has locally-owned, independent business that embody community spirit
City officials and city service staff are approachable, involved and engaged, which facilitates quick response and changes
An involved and engaged community results in active volunteerism, committed and vigilant neighborhood associations to keep City accountable, well-kept neighborhoods
The community shops locally
Level of community involvement gives the city broad appeal to people of different ages and lifestyles and creates a sense of stability and safety
Government has made some good green decisions and considers sustainability in decision making process
Decatur has nice green spaces, such as well-kept parks, and excellent festivals
Decatur is fortunate to have large employers in or nearby the city and MARTA access to Atlanta
Decatur is often ahead of the curve, for example affordable housing and streetscapes, and seeks out grant money to implement new ideas
Churches, non-profits, and businesses cooperate with each other and often share resources, such as parking spaces, meeting spaces
Decatur offers good value (ROI) for taxes
“Our community problems.”
Very few bike lanes and bike paths
Little support for starting independently owned businesses
High taxes put Decatur in danger of pricing people/populations with fewer resources
Concern about long-term financial viability of the City
Decatur’s preservation codes aren’t strict enough; there are too many code variances and inconsistent enforcement of codes; review of codes needed
Decatur lacks some important amenities (i.e. grocery stores on the South Side, movie theater)
Few nightlife options downtown aside from eating and drinking
Financial profits and bigger is better mentality seems to guide new development; New development often doesn’t match the aesthetic or ethos of Decatur
Decatur doesn’t provide enough housing and access for people with disabilities
Risk of becoming a homogenous community (i.e. only (white) people with wealth live in Decatur)
Decatur hasn’t properly considered the negative impact of annexation on the community
School board and the City don’t seem to be on the same page; there needs to be agreement over long-term planning and better communication

9- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”
Decatur has an outstanding professional theater company
Decatur has a pedestrian area (i.e. remove parking between E. Court Sq. and N. McDonough
Decatur has a big green space—Central Park

Decatur is a friendly place to move through without driving; There are fewer cars and more transportation alternatives such as a trolley, safe bike routes, shady places for people to walk

Decatur has very close ties with Agnes Scott and Emory and medical centers; Decatur leverages the talent in the universities and medical centers to make the city a better, healthier place (i.e. cooperative projects allowing Decatur to be a testing ground for ideas and research; opportunities for students to participate and study community life; programs promoting healthcare and healthy lifestyle, quality of life)

“We want Decatur to be...”

An incubator for businesses, particularly new technology and creative businesses

A place of refreshment and rejuvenation

An attractive destination for tourists and conferences/business meetings/outings

A city that takes what it has and uses it to the best of its potential

A city with a central place to gather that is attractive and used by the community on a daily basis

A green/sustainable town

A model for active living

Self-sufficient

A place that seeks to balance and serve everyone’s needs

A city that knows who it is; a city with an identity

A place where people want to be/experience

A place where residents stay

A place with a strong culture (i.e. welcoming, open, friendly) and strong cultural offerings (i.e. great restaurants, entertainment)

Known as the “Portland” (Oregon) of the South

“Decatur, a city where ____”

People can buy almost all of what they need in the city affordably; businesses are diversified (mix of locally owned independent and bigger retailers); community can walk to most of the businesses

The image the city promotes of active living is a reality

People walk to get to where they want to go

Community enjoys use of public facilities, such as the high school and rec center

Duke

4-27-10

7pm

Successes

-Downtown renaissance amazing, nice place to hang out

-City staff responsive, user-friendly

-Active living; recreation center, parks

-Walkable; downtown, crosswalks

-Diversity

- Sense of community; interaction, openness, friendliness, involvement, pride of ownership
- Transformation of downtown streetscapes
- City school system
- Low crime rate; responsive police and fire

Important, Mean the Most to Members

- Less restrictive rules for homes – no covenants
- Traffic flow; balance with needs of pedestrians
- Bikeability, walkability
- Public education on rules for cars, bikes, and pedestrians
- Encourage a diverse business climate
- Refine/define what R60 zoning means (as well as other zonings); current ordinances seem arbitrary and subjective; need to define residential zoning more exactly
- Control of city spending; fiscal responsibility
- Light pollution (example: nighttime lighting from Columbia Seminary)
- Noise and quality of life issues

Community Problems

- High taxes; people struggling to pay, some are leaving the city due to high taxes
- Lack of bike paths; biking is dangerous in places
- Better utilization of school facilities; move administration offices and use schools for students.
- Better support needed for children with ADHD and other special needs
- Schools lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs/desires
- Help for businesses to assure success
- Incubation and stewardship for business community
- Speeding, lack of traffic law enforcement
- Control and balance development (i.e. condos and infill housing)
- Affordable housing
- Preserving neighborhood integrity
- Cities dependence on outside funding sources (i.e. county, state, federal funds)
- Top levels of city government becoming more insulated and detached from citizens; failing to listen

Inspiring Visions of the City

- No ugly, empty places/lots. Instead, vibrant parks or active businesses in these areas
- Easy to use a bike as a primary form of transportation; alternative transportation Mecca
- Decatur transit system
- Walkable community, wider sidewalks
- Encourage ground floor retail in developments
- Railroad crossings that don't require trains to blow horns
- Maintain city hall downtown; keep it accessible
- Maintain items on our success list
- Maintain accessibility of city officials and services
- Friendly, open, neighborly; encourage neighbor interaction

- Diversity
- Maintain small town feel; no tall buildings
- Stay family friendly
- Smart growth and development; attractive architecture; street-level businesses with residential above
- Promote free parking in decks and lots
- Pedestrian only zones; parking on periphery and walkable, attractive areas in interior
- Coolest place in Georgia

We Want Decatur to Be

- The coolest place in Georgia
- A place where people walk around, everything is accessible
- A place with a broadly diverse population
- An easy place to live
- Everything you need is in walking distance
- A place with more parks and greenspaces; connected greenspaces, a greenway belt
- High citizen involvement
- A place where city government is responsive and listens to residents before approving changes
- A place where bond issues are voted on in general elections; a city that takes on large issues through referenda
- Accessible government
- A place where taxes are spent more effectively; maximum bang for the buck

In Ten Years, I Want to be Able to Say, “Decatur is a City Where...”

- It’s the coolest place in Georgia
- You can walk or bike anywhere safely
- There are lots of good restaurants
- There is no crime
- People want to live here; you can be yourself
- A wide variety of people live here
- There are lots of good parks, lots of greenspace
- The government listens and responds
- We have clean air and water
- An environmentally friendly city
- Home values are high
- You can afford to live here
- The city is attractive
- You can live in a postcard-like setting
- People send their kids to school in their own neighborhood

DECATUR ROUNDTABLES 2010
SESSION 1: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

Facilitator Name: Fred L. Cavalli
Meeting Date: April 29, 2010
Time: 7:00 pm-9:00 pm

1) Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

- School system
- MARTA
- City, businesses and institutions share space
- Public and private partnerships
- Strong sense of community
- Open-minded, diverse, inclusive
- Recycling
- Accessible and responsible government
- Child friendly activities and festivals
- Rec center activities for children and adults
- Walk-ability

“Our community problems.”

- Taxes
- We need bike lanes
- Not a variety of stores (many are expensive) (need stores that sell every day things)
- Volume and control of traffic limits walking, biking, etc.
- Overflow parking is not enforced—resident only signs not enforced (commercial/residential conflict)
- On-street parking issue—blocked driveways
- Not enough affordable housing
- Limited housing options (number of unrelated people living together?; garage apartments = restrictive laws)
- Too many laws?
- Too few laws?

2) Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

- Ban motor vehicles on Ponce between Commerce and Church – create pedestrian mall
- Bike lanes and bike parking everywhere
- More independent senior living
- More socio-economic diversity in neighborhoods
- More gender and age diversity also
- Senior living near elementary schools
- Pedestrian cut-throughs
- Create a staff position in city government to act as a liaison between residential and commercial interests. This office should support the residents’ point of view rather than relying upon ad hoc neighborhood organizations
- Harmonious and collaborative development between commercial and residential
- City in the forest
- Arts center
- Clean up sanitary sewers—smells

“We want Decatur to be...”

- More diversity in housing—age and socio-economic, and travel methods
- Have a middle class
- Bus, shuttles and/or better connections to other points in Metro-Atlanta
- More pedicabs
- Cleaner and greener
- Work force housing—if you can work in Decatur, you can afford to live in Decatur

“Decatur, a city where _____”

- You can walk to the airport
- We have 100% graduation rate from public high school
- Every child who graduates from Decatur High School goes on to higher education including job training, voc-tec, college, etc.
- You don’t need a car
- Gardens are everywhere
- Greener energy sources
- Underground utilities

- More green space, including downtown
- All parking underground
- There are still wild spaces – not developed

Finch 04-29-2010 2 p.m.

Decatur Strategic Plans Sessions 1

Community Successes

- Good social involvement: Lots of community activity: Book fair, beer/wine, arts events
- Family oriented, see families everywhere, family centered activities
- “Walk able” city
- City Services i.e. School system
- City supports business community
- Efficient and responsible city government
- Citizen participation in community
- “Walkability” is the product of design and infrastructure
- Political leadership and staff
- Good public transportation
- Decatur is safe
- Advantages of a small town in a major metropolitan area

Community Problems

- Relationship with County: multitude of open issues
- Traffic and traffic flow
- Congestion in some areas
- Decatur needs a facelift. Lots of concrete. Landscaping issues
- Blount Plaza: dead space
- Some parts ugly
- Not affordable to live here
- Dangerous intersections
- No sidewalks in some areas
- Decatur Taxes
- Airplane noise

Inspiring Visions of the City

- More bicycle friendly
- Use Public Art bike racks
- Lots more trees-it's hot here
- Enforce pedestrian rules (countdown lights)
- Room for more parks
- Smart commercial growth
- Aesthetically appealing
- Look at Chattanooga
- Make the city look "more take care of"
- Improve trash can appearance
- Green would be really good
- Maintain diversity-age, race and economics
- Affordable housing
- More rental and/or single family options
- Apartments above retail space
- Incentivize development
- Put a pocket park across from DQ
- Plan and prepare for increased growth and density to ensure quality of life
- More pedestrian friendly streets i.e. block cars on weekends

We want Decatur to be a city...

With more "boards": more options for citizen involvement

With more people involved, especially younger people

With a contemporary, revamped website

Where there is a relationship between the city and its citizens

Where it is easier to get involved (i.e. ad hoc meetings, community bulletin boards)

Where there are more urban gardens

Where communication is improved and informal "meet up" groups are common

Where there is a better use of social networking

Where we have neighborhood block captains

That is more green-trees and environmentally green

That is a "LEED" neighborhood community

Decatur is a city where...

- We use solar rays
- Capitalize on rainwater
- Smart street plantings (are everywhere)
- Professional input on landscaping
- There are more pocket parks with shade where people play checkers
- There are more dedicated bike paths (Howard)
- There are wide sidewalks on Ponce so people can walk, ride and bike
- (Check out Portland Oregon street design)
- Building codes and ordinances match the vision
- The process is updated and cleaned up
- In mixed use projects, there's a plan for incompatibilities (i.e. restaurant/traffic noise in residential areas)
- We use "pedal people" (kids on bikes) to pick up trash
- We recycle all locally-there's no waste
- We practice sustainability
- We have more farm to school initiatives
- We educate not to litter and pick it up if you see it

Decatur is a city where... (Final phrases and themes)

- Young business is encouraged
- You don't have to leave
- There's a diverse and healthy population
- People can work, live and play
- People visit to see how it's done right
- All is possible
- Public art is encouraged
- There are lots of people friendly, landscaped parks
- Sustainability
- Empty storefronts are full
- Buildings are available for incubating new businesses

Garrett 04-29-2010 7 pm

1- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

We participate and volunteer to make things happen.

We celebrate books and a variety of events and festivals.

We care and want to be engaged.

Parents care and participate as a community in the schools.

We have a high quality of schools and good results from schools.

Maintaining longevity of connections and relationships throughout our lives.

Martin Luther King Jr. Service Project and tutoring program at the schools.

People are willing to help when they see a need in their community.

Recycling program and waste diversion are a good model.

Walkability makes for a livable community.

Independent businesses thrive and Decatur is conducive to entrepreneurs.

Parks are well maintained and the recreation program through Decatur Recreation department is great.

Cemetery acts as a great addition to the greenspace in Decatur.

Local government is transparent, open door, and these policies lead to an engaged citizenry.

While there is some crime, it is much less than surrounding area, such as Atlanta.

Police respond very quickly to problems.

“Our community problems.”

Restaurants are closed on Sundays.

When I tell others I live in Decatur, they say ‘You can’t there from here’- difficult to get to.

Walkability needs continued improvement in particular in pedestrian cross-walks that don’t work; some intersections are bad (such as Commerce).

Need more and additional commitment to LEED/Energy Efficient buildings in the city (Fire House 2 is good but we’ve missed other opportunities)

Taxes are too high which cause lower income residents to lose their homes

Teachers, police, public service employees can’t afford to live here – need more workforce housing.

Need more affordable housing.

Pollution and traffic are regional problems but affect Decatur.

Affordable housing needs to be updated and of better quality.

High rise buildings downtown are simply ugly.

Difficult to ride bikes, especially with children.

Missing the Christmas tree lighting on top of Fidelity Building (it was a true community event)

Traffic is too fast for walking and biking.

Tough to choose a beer parlor!

2- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

The city has shut down traffic for one day a week for biking and walking.

City has turned some parts of downtown into sitting/greenspace pedestrian malls, central town model.

No children have fallen through the cracks; the community has a high priority for every child succeeding – ‘it takes a village’

City has combined the elementary schools into 2 schools and built 2 larger elementary schools.

Decatur has become a model for Green Community.

Decatur has more celebrations like the Beach Party.

The city needs a balanced amount of walkable, green, model city while at the same time maintaining its grit, diversity (income, race, socioeconomic, education, etc).

Decatur is a place where everyone knows your name.

Decatur is a city where you can leave your doors unlocked like we did years ago.

Decatur is financially stable in every aspect- schools, city administration, etc.

We can work in Decatur (as well as live and play)

Note the sign on the city limits: “Decatur is a place for homes, schools and churches” and this should include businesses and commerce as well.

We have diversified taxes through commercial employment.

Providing incentives for business or for greening homes: tax reductions at intervals of living in Decatur.

We continue to get great service for taxes we pay.

“We want Decatur to be ...”

Cultural richness that is tangible e.g., all the cities I love- Paris, e.g., the city is walkable, dynamic, pedestrian mall, visually interesting, it never sleeps.

We want to bring out the richness of culture through increased availability of the visual arts.

Decatur is a model city in terms of housing, traffic, education, jobs, environment, greenspace.

Decatur continues to be innovative and first- it is not afraid to try things that might work.

“Decatur, where it’s greater”.

We are the tide that lifts all ships- everybody comes, schools, housing, cultural

We don’t leave anyone behind – we are a city that is ‘Too busy to hate’

Everyone joins together to get things done e.g. slowing traffic on a particular street called for a community effort that was very connectional and they even had a ‘Speed Bump Party’ when their speed bump was installed.

Where we leave things out in front of our house and people pick them up for re-use.

“Decatur, a city where ____.”

It is a safe place to live.

I am proud to be a member of the community.

You can own your own business.

All people feel welcome.

The community as a whole is valued.

A thriving commerce and community, working together where the commercial and residential balance allows both to prosper.

Where we live play and WORK.

Where the internet is free and trains within Decatur are free.

The children love the schools and there are great teachers and sports and other activities.

We collaborate with neighbors such as Emory and Clarkston with their international community.

Greater Decatur includes the area outside Decatur- and we should know and appreciate what is going on there.

We make movies.

Our stories are told.

The President wants to come to see how communities happen!

There is a Trader Joe's* (or equivalent)

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: P. Gilbert/J. Gregory

Meeting Date: 4/29/10

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.

10- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

- variety of things to do: festivals, activities, Oakhurst Garden, volunteer events
- **togetherness, sense of community**
- diversity: age, race, ethnicity
- free cultural programs: lectures at the library, music
- feel safe walking about (safer than previous home in NJ)
- very walkable community, sidewalks most places
- good school system
- neighborhood association brings people together, fosters community pride
- animal-friendly; dog parks; get acquainted with people much faster when walking a dog
- City management is very responsive to problems, questions
- **great recycling program**; love not having to sort recyclables; sanitation service will pick up most things; electronics recycling days at the High School

- spring is great here, so much green!
- Decatur manages to maintain unbuilt space, **preserves green space**; Cemetery
- Decatur 101, Citizens Public Safety Academy (*participants weren't sure of official name of the public safety program, at least two had participated*)
- community includes universities, hospitals
- attractive place to retire
- lots of small businesses; **independent restaurants and retailers (as opposed to chains)**
- chickens allowed in City; goat co-op recently organized or about to be
- town square is good; fun, energetic space
- Decatur must offer a lot for kids, see them all over the place
- active Rec Center
- variety of religious institutions, lots of different denominations and faiths
- outdoor eating areas, sidewalk tables
- **festivals**: Arts, Beer, Book, Wine, Beach Party, Easter Egg Hunt, 4th of July, Christmas Tree, Jazz Nights, House Walk [sic], Garden Walk [sic], Old House Fair, Used Book Sale
- Decatur Focus, although sometimes news is outdated by the time it is delivered
"Our community problems."
- **taxes are too high**
- community not as diverse as previously, seems to be flattening out, becoming whiter
- challenge: **how to keep economic diversity while maintaining level of services that we have**
- miss having a local newspaper
- **challenging to be a pedestrian in Decatur**; better than it used to be but safety could be improved; need both visual and audible signals at crosswalks
- need better traffic control, better signage; traffic has increased in recent years
- seems that many small businesses have failed, is the City supporting them as well as it could?
- some areas don't feel safe, e.g., around the MARTA station entrance; should ban loitering
- parking is difficult at times; need better information about where parking is available at different times of day; feel parking spaces are there, but don't know where they are
- don't need any more upscale/high-end residential development downtown; contributing to decline in economic diversity in the community; HOWEVER, only affluent can afford to move in? DON'T WANT DECATUR TO BECOME BUCKHEAD
- Need to keep and enforce ordinances limiting building height
- Need more small grocers within walking distance, stocking locally produced foods; City should incentivize that type of small business
- **protect green space** and tree canopy in neighborhoods and downtown; need more trees downtown; City should seek to acquire undeveloped tracts and protect from development
- City should oversee vacant commercial properties to improve safety and community image; can they be torn down if vacant too long?
- Decatur is clean and tidy overall, but still lots of sidewalk litter, especially around the MARTA station
- Skateboarders need to be monitored, kept from terrorizing pedestrians and damaging sidewalk areas (specific mention of Church/Ponce intersection and immediate area); need

a skate park – most participants unaware of the one in McKoy Park, and speculated Oakhurst is “too far away”

(Facilitator’s note: at least one participant thought Oakhurst was not part of the City of Decatur)

- Need more community involvement by younger people, teens; participants wondered what high school students might have to say at a session like this
- Could establish an Art Park: space young people could use to express their creativity, unstructured, e.g., a wall where they could create graffiti and then photograph it for later exhibition

11- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

- **Make Ponce downtown a pedestrians-only zone**, from Commerce to Commerce, similar to downtown areas in Boulder (CO), Asheville (NC), Burlington (VT); not necessarily permanent, but at certain times or all the time except during emergencies or special situations; could create outdoor seating areas encouraging people to mingle and linger, great for small businesses located there
- modernize the Rec Center
- modernize the firehouse and the police department
- increase salaries for police officers
- produce and/or attract great minds that will go on to have significant positive impacts beyond Decatur; an intellectually active community where not only book clubs thrive but intellectual salons
- **more diverse citizenry than currently**, especially economic and racial; less white than it has become lately; more African-American, Hispanic, Asian residents
- **a model for sustainability** – cultural, economic, environmental; capture rainwater, convert waste to methane, etc.; achieve through partnerships among educational institutions, government, business community, and local residents
- **trolley** to provide transportation around Decatur including to/from Oakhurst; could be public but also could be small private business; use energy-efficient transport, e.g., electric vehicles
- **protect historic buildings**, e.g., Courthouse, Depot, Leon’s, Methodist Chapel; residents need more information about and access to historic properties *(Facilitator’s note: very low awareness among these respondents about availability of venues)*
- preserve character of neighborhoods by restricting “hideous construction” of homes that don’t fit their settings
- **be sensitive to aging community**, a challenge because economic base will change as population retires; protect quality of life by helping/encouraging people to stay healthy; attract younger people to preserve age and life-stage diversity; barter system—overseen or managed by City?—to help people provide for each other; City will need to establish a department to manage these challenges
- increase activities/amenities for seniors, and publicize them!, e.g., group outings
- set up system for matching families and elderly citizens, i.e., “Adopt a Grandparent”
“We want Decatur to be...”

Facilitator’s note: ran short of time, skipped this specific question

“Decatur, a city where ____”

- we want to live
- you feel safe
- everybody wants to be
- you can have a family
- diversity is valued
- we care for each other
- everyone is welcome
- you can live, work, and play
- we will try anything once (to be a better community, e.g., recycling, other sustainability programs)
- we can experience cultural opportunities
- the environment is protected and valued
- you know your neighbors
- you are happy
- you don't need a car
- small businesses flourish
- you live longer
- young and old minds can grow together
- education is for all ages
- education is a priority
- cultural opportunities abound
- we have diversity, environmental stability, and economic stability
- we have safety

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Mattice Haynes

Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 27, 2010

Time: 2-4pm

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.

12- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

Community of people and families.

Your voice is heard, respected, and responded to by city officials. (Example: emails from residents expressing concerns are forwarded around within the city departments).

Close proximity to friends and neighbors (i.e. small geographic area).

Lots of opportunities for people to get to know each other.

People look out for each other.

Preserving and valuing what we have; for example by supporting a local business instead of purchasing outside of the area.

Diversity of shops in small area.

Developing a culture where driving is optional.

Safe community (“can walk around at night”).

Teens not as anxious to begin driving because much of what they need is accessible in walking/biking distance. If they do drive, Decatur is ideal area because speed limit is no more than 45mph in the city.

Transportation/accessible (MARTA).

Safe, healthy, free/inexpensive activities.

Great schools with passionate staff and teachers as well as high parental involvement.

People in Decatur/community gets involved and takes ownership for creating this place/environment.

Focus on sustainable living (i.e. idling campaign etc).

Decatur is progressive; one step ahead of others.

Strategic planning process with citizen involvement and 80% success on last plan.

Responsive police and fire.

Festivals.

“Our community problems.”

Lack of affordable housing (Ex. 2 bedroom 1 bath house in city is \$250,000; can get a 5 bedroom house just outside city boundaries for same price).

Gentrification and maintaining diversity (young people, elderly, low income).

Tough economic times and our dependence on residential tax base to fund our initiatives.

High taxes.

Some facilities need major renovations.

Disparity in services in low income areas (Ex. Ebster Pool).

Offering services equally in all areas.

Disparate policing (Ex. teen drivers (especially boys) are followed by police in the city;

Speeding on Candler goes unchecked by law enforcement; Drivers consistently don't stop at pedestrian crosswalks on Candler and near the square and law enforcement doesn't enforce enough).

Safety issue, due to driving speeds/traffic, for runners, bikers, Safe Routes to School/kids walking to school etc.

Railroad tracks through the center of the city.

Poor traffic flow (perhaps intentionally).

Concerned about Decatur becoming like Virginia Highlands back in the '90s (i.e. (young) people not from the area hanging out late in the city/square and nightlife culture overtaking community culture)

Decatur becoming so popular for outsiders that there are often long waits Fri/Sat night at local restaurants and this may deter residents from staying in the city (to dine/spend money).

People don't know where parking is/parking not well identified.

City departments lack financial resources needed.

Parental involvement in schools could be more diverse.

How to balance potential growth (ex. annexation).

13- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

Maintaining and increasing diversity.

Promoting and educating on healthy lifestyles especially with kids – walkable/bikeable.
Tournament tennis and salt water pools.
Not having to leave the city to buy or experience things.
Better lodging options (Ex. boutique hotel plus renovate Holiday Inn).
Maintaining sense of community and family (ex. neighbors bringing food every night for 2 months when family member ill).
Continue to be one step ahead of “trends” (comment also made that they weren’t trends when Decatur started doing them).
Continue to involve citizens.

“We want Decatur to be…”

Home.
Self supporting and sustaining.
Diverse.
Successful.
A leader in the active living/healthy lifestyle/green movements.
Center of residents lives (don’t have to leave).
Safest city in metro area.
A place where small businesses thrive.
Familiar to other states.
A place with great festivals.
A place where people want to live.
A place that continues to have great schools.

“Decatur, a city where _____”

Everyone is respected.
People never want to leave.
You feel like a member of the community.
People can live where they work.
People want to be.
You don’t have to lock your door.
Children are valued.
We’re known for our people, businesses, and community events.
Diverse populations are welcomed, involved and interact with each other.
Everyone is invested and take ownership.
People want to visit, play, live and work here.
We maintain what we have while also improving; continuing to plan for the future and executing our plans.
We have affordable housing and mixed development (i.e. low or high income not concentrated in one particular area).
THEME: Big focus on the people of Decatur (i.e. culture, relationships, and sense of community).

Katz
4-27-10
7pm

How do you talk about the good things (gifts) in the community

Live and work
Community
Education (caring teachers)
Safety (responsive police)
Scale of city - not too big not too small
Tree canopy
Shops/retail
Restaurants
Approachable government
Volunteer Coordinator
Sustainable development
 - recycling program
 - energy efficient choices
 - green citizenry
Active living program
 - bike paths
 - recreation
Mixed use development
Agnes Scott is an asset to Decatur
Parks are great
Cultural opportunities for kids
 - visiting symphony
 - arts
Decatur Focus newsletter and city website are great sources of information

How do you talk about the problems in the community

Traffic
 - clairmont, church are particularly bad
 - pedestrian / cyclists have difficulty
Traffic light engineering and timing is incorrect
Run out of blue recycling bags often
Infill
 - large homes, McMansions can dwarf older homes and kill property values
Sidewalks need fixing - not level
Cars sticking out of driveways often block sidewalks
Discontent paying dekalb and decatur tax
City maps don't include some city resources including boys and girls club
Needs to be better communication on taxes and what they are for
Lack of transportation alternatives like a tram system, free bikes, etc.

What kind of community would inspire you?

to be a science/math hub for Atlanta

Diversity

- income level
- age
- ethnicity
- ideas

Tolerance and respect

Safety

Lots of community activities

Environmentally Bold

- Carbon neutrality
- old trees and new trees

Better standards for retailers and restaurants

- better health regulations

Better police presence downtown will lead to more foot traffic

****pedestrian only Ponce on Friday and Saturday nights****

Better retail mix

- bookstore
- movie theater (cinema tavern)

Development for area around parole office

Need more rental units downtown to increase foot traffic

Make Decatur a better draw for businesses

More affordable housing

More post office drop boxes

Emergency phones on the street

In 10 years Decatur is a city where:

we celebrate holidays together

the city sponsors environmental and recycling efforts

we live consciously

- plan
- recycle
- set out to do what will make our lives happier

people who don't live here want to come spend time

we educate our kids

the community is involved in education

we can model environmental stewardship

- farm to school initiatives

we have better access to emergency medical services

we safely walk and ride bikes, even with kids

we have citywide environmentally sound mosquito control

Group 57 • May 1 • Saturday, 9 am

M. Lampe

Our Community Successes

- Great communication between city and residents (with city officials, police etc.; through website, Focus newsletter, etc.)
- Taxes are high, but results are tangible
- School system
- Decatur is a destination (examples: Beer Festival, Arts Festival, Book Festival; community involvement all over)
- Development is controlled and balanced, preserving the best, open to new ways; good guidelines

Community Gifts

- Parks and greenspaces (Dog parks, McKoy, Glenlake; needs of all residents are addressed – something for everyone)
- "Goin' for the grants! -- Taxpayers like!
- Most important:
 - schools
 - density means car-free is possible
 - walkability
 - community
 - development plan

Problems / Challenges

- Traffic
 - Church St. construction

- Oakhurst School has busy streets, inadequate sidewalks
- Commerce / Clairemont light is timed poorly for pedestrians
- Flooding
 - Olympic / College / Atlanta Ave. -- bad sidewalks
- Pedestrians have a tough time in city; systems need to be reworked to favor walkers and strollers
- Diversity -- keeping a mix; as taxes rise, property values rise and affordable housing becomes scarce
- Revenue model is flawed, unsustainable; too high percentage of residential to business properties
- Festivals too popular? Locals feel squeezed out
- The "active minority" is too small -- the same Decatur core does everything

Inspiring Visions of the Future Decatur

- Balanced retail
- Preserve "foundation" in place now -- no erosion
- Connected parks and greenspaces and connected destinations; the Decatur necklace -- walkable, better lighting in neighborhoods, with mini shuttle that is energy efficient
- Equity among groups
- Mutual respect in traffic
- Open play spaces
- Improved government efficiency; eliminate gap between city / CSD
- Community recycle / reuse

We Want Decatur to Be . . .

- Known as a walkable city
- A place of wellness (food, school lunches)

- Sustainable, energy-efficient
- Senior-friendly w/ community support
- Navigable with car alternatives that can accommodate all abilities
- Where all age groups are integrated
- Home to a Decatur "Craig's List" clearing house for goods and services
- A place of greener streetscapes

Decatur Is a City Where . . .

- It's easy and relaxing
- Where neighbors know each other
- A model for other cities, "the best village / small city in the USA"
- Lots of sister cities, in addition to the ones we currently have
- Citizens are listened to
- Community is key
- A healthy city for every age
- "You've got to come and see . . . (signature event / something in bloom / Decatur's green necklace)"
- A city that connects the dots
- There are no scary streets
- Government works

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Antonio D. Leung (Tony)

Meeting Date: May 1st 2010

Time: 9:00 – 11:00

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.

14- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

Transition was pre/post Olympics

More social interaction

Small town feel is maintained

Balance between growth and expansion

Adopted ‘Smart Growth’

Influenced by academics and scientific professionals example Emory, Agnes Scott and CDC

Opportunities to know the civic leaders/accessibility of city government

Open straight forward dialogue about competing interests

“Our community problems.”

Diversity must be maintained

Public transit

Decatur is having challenges with lower income housing, programming for social needs, public transportation

15- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

Education –

Set an example for the country

100% literacy

Start early - Every child is successful in elementary school and going into middle school

More options for the ‘mid achievers’

Support network for everyone that need assistance

Pairing families to support the need and as volunteering - more volunteering in community

Vocational partnership program

Adult educational program

Decatur Recreation to partnership with others

Commercial –

Better supply of basic needs –more regular shops

Shops for daily needs – not boutiques – affordable shops – storefront faces streets – scale of buildings

Ability for shops to survive – support start-ups – jump start – review tax incentives to encourage small businesses to survive

Allow live / work

Look into big boxes – but with right type – allow small businesses to coexist

Transportation-

Complete streets

Maintain buses - easy - accessible – transportation within Decatur

Consider public private partnerships

Contingency to backfill MARTA's shortcomings

Don't leave people stranded

Bike friendly – bike safety

Overall safety on the streets

Non car zones examples Denver, Madison Wis.

Traffic light synchronization / coordination

Pedestrian friendly - enforcement

Housing-

More Affordable housing

Make property taxes affordable

Proactively check for exemptions

Advocate for the elderly – make sure they are getting the exemptions

Low-income exemptions for property taxes

Incentives to landlord for affordable housing

“We want Decatur to be...”

Nice place that doesn't cost a fortune

Need to reconnect to all segments of Decatur

School needs to accommodate a variety of learning styles

Everyone has a chance to succeed

Pair up families, not just students

Play together, not just learn together

Affordable available after-school programs

Scholarship subsidy for summer programs

“Decatur, a city where ____”

A place to work and live

Home, churches, schools and **work**

Have everything I need and easily accessible

Cars optional

We are safe

Police are our friends, with everyone regardless of age, color , etc. community police

Police are involved, positive interaction

Police has respect for everyone

Georgia education standards are a step back, all Decatur students lead the way

Environmental champions, No trash, zero waste, recycle everything

Composting and recycling alternatives

Energy independent

City buildings energy efficient

I can grow old – accommodating aging population – senior living center – active retirement

Stay in Decatur – have fun and grow old

Have diversity of businesses and nightlife

Decatur WIFI expanded, accessible to all people

Nilsson 04-29-2010 7 p.m.

Facilitator Notes

Where Are We Now?

- Strong sense of community
- People live outside their homes
- Good options for social activity
- Generates desire to stay within the community
- Good transportation options within and to get to out
- Small town feel with close access to Atlanta
- Opportunity for residents to become involved and volunteer
- MLK service project
- Activities that foster relationships
- Good school system
- Environmentally conscious
- Professional government that is well administered
- Feel safe; PD has presence and quick response
- Same for FD
- Proximity to top medical facilities
- Closeness to medical facilities promotes sense of safety for elderly and families with young children
- Dekalb Farmers Market
- Green space; community gardens that serve as model to others (i.e. Oakhurst)
- Feeling of stewardship
- Dog friendly
- Good night life
- Unique businesses and restaurants

Our Community Problems

- Lack of quality affordable housing
- Hard to be 20-30 years old in Decatur or a professional in the smaller compensation jobs. Cannot afford to purchase a home in the city and there are limited rental properties
- Service sector cannot afford the city
- “Old” Decatur residents have to leave due to high taxes
- Elderly should be exempt from school taxes

- Dangerous intersections (i.e. Trinity/ S.Candler and McDonough/College; Commerce/College/Columbia; Scott and Coventry; Scott and Clairemont)
- Concern over trees that are planted too close to traffic
- Need more parking. Can we use school lots?
- Need to clarify where available lots and decks are located and when they are available at no cost
- Traffic lights not synchronized on Ponce (but good for cyclists)
- Not enough bike and scooter racks
- Need movie theater and Trade Joes or Whole Foods
- More open air Farmer's Markets
- Street surfaces are not good – potholes and cracks
- Need bike “SHARROWS” on Clairemont, Scott, Commerce, College
- Need to close Ponce from Commerce to Commerce on specific times or weekends and make fully pedestrian during those times
- Need more sidewalks. Should fix or connect current ones; more crosswalks (Scott and Clairemont)
- Some individual homes and businesses are not maintained

Inspiring Visions of the City

- City will continue and will stay conscious of being fiscally responsible
- Better/higher standard of visual arts with sustained commitments from institutions (i.e. develop an Arts Center)
- Continue to support diversity
- Continue to have a strong school system
- Continue growing the school curriculum to expand the PE and Arts depts.
- Continue to creatively think of alternative transportation modes (i.e. Zip Car)
- City should provide incentives for water reuse and reclamation for residential and businesses
- Continue to enhance sustainable and storm water efforts
- Further support urban agriculture
- Continue to grow active living and add less formal events; more micro-community oriented activities
- Educate people on recycling
- Good effort on trash collection, but plastic bag program is counterproductive environmentally. Consider bins or biodegradable bags without discouraging recycling

We Want Decatur to be...

- Sexually and racially diverse
- Age Diverse
- Professionally diverse
- Income diverse

- Culturally diverse
- Light on cars
- A dense City Center with decreasing radial density
- A city that maintains a village vision
- Supportive of micro-village centers that surround the main Downtown (i.e. Oakhurst and promote others...)
- Zoning friendly to small businesses
- Better connected between North and South of the tracks and North and South of Scott Boulevard

Decatur is a Place Where We...

- Can live at every age and stage of life and have a good time
- Drink and eat and not drive
- We know our neighbors
- Are environmentally conscious
- Care about those around us
- Live, work and play
- Proud to live in
- (you) can be you
- Have residential individuality and architectural autonomy and uniqueness

Suggestions Moving Forward

- Allow for comment cards for further discussion

Value of this Discussion

- Extremely valuable
- Good to have a voice
- Discussion guide is a valuable document

Decatur Round Table Conversation

Notes from Tuesday, 2-4PM

at First Christian Church of Decatur

Facilitator: James Brewer-Calvert

WHAT GIFTS AND SUCCESSES DO YOU SHARE?

Love it – a walking city; banks, bars, businesses, food, churches

Must do something about traffic/pedestrian access

Concerts, festivals, come walk downtown

1998 plan that made this possible – communal things to do

Small town feel in a huge metroplex

Homes still sell in this economy

Not many bank-owned signs – we're not in the red

Varied ages in population
Oakhurst resurgence and good schools attracted families
Decatur focus has been on what we can do to help East Lake and Oakhurst
Things get done (despite the Commissioners' reluctance)
Progress can be made
City management does listen
People have input – don't quit – persevere
People keep up their homes
"Buy in" people here are invested
Volunteer opportunities – MLK Day = 1,000 plus!
Wonderful library – GA Center for the book
Decatur Book Festival
Churches share space with community
Not a typical USA suburb -- "Why I move here and why I stayed here"
Cultish? "Hey there goes a Decatur sign! Licence plate! T-shirt!"
Great city services
DCM – DEAM – Hagars House
Community works together to address hunger and homelessness
Urban camping law discourages
Educational opportunities – CTS/Agnes Scott/Emory/DeVry
Access to public transportation – pedicabs!
Share the road – are bike laws observed?
Eclectic nature of downtown merchants

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Keep all the good we previously mentioned.
Maintain strength of being a walking city
But it is mostly in downtown and not outside the immediate area
Concern re. traffic on Commerce St. Sycamore, also
Blinking, countdown light for pedestrians
Pedestrian only in downtown Decatur – no parking at city hall and Brick store
Do a better job of advertising the free parking that is available
Communication (x 3) on parking options
Park and Ride like Emory U. – must be attractive and convenient

- Link Decatur mas transit with other parts of the city
- Disney-like trams with guide
- One day ticket or all year pass
- Link options together

Encourage businesses to come to Decatur; address laws and red tape and codes to bring and support merchants and producers
Need young people and folks of all ages without negating or forcing out senior citizens – property taxes are difficult
ATL metroplex does not appeal to many young families
How can Decatur attract and keep young families?
\$ has a lot to do with this.
Great schools and services can be and are expensive.

If we really want diversity we need to recognize that an expensive city may and will impact this.

Diversity is a gift – include all ages, races, sexual orientation, skills...

Concer that we may be growing closer to Virginia Highlands

Housing affordability important

Do you want to contribute to pay \$ in school tax?

How do we address and share the burden/responsibility/joy of public education?

Make it possible for seniors’ taxes to be delayed, to go with property sale

Local tax credit for local purchases that benefit Decatur

Shop locally and get relief on property taxes

Address why places of worship do or do not pay local taxes?

In Decatur, 85% homeowners / 15% merchants imbalance of tax payments

Recruit more business to city that bring jobs

Address zero sum mentality – Merchants “fight” incoming/new merchants

Zone properties accordingly – enterprise zones for development

Mixed use pre-approval enables both faster growth and rapid response to new business opportunities

Communicate with neighborhoods

Zone with fluidity based on needs

DECATUR IS A CITY WHERE...

...I like to live and work and play

...for re-creation

...the schools are excellent, the children are safe

...73 year old people can still afford to live

...social engagement is accessible

...positive spontaneous interaction happens, and we have the spaces, places and environment to encourage this phenomena

...I can do everything I need to do in a given day – a self-contained city

...we can find a movie house and a full service bookstore

...it is like a bodega

...parking in downtown is eliminated and pedestrians have total access

...city hall continues to be open to our voices

...we can send a shout out to our great sanitation services

Provost
4-28-10
2pm

Ground Rules

- Listen With Respect
- Each person gets a chance to talk
- One person talks at a time
- Speak for yourself, and not as a representative of any group
- Help the facilitator keep things on track
- Outside the group, we will not quote what is said in the group
- Keep cell phones muted or off

- Listen to understand before responding

Our community successes...

- Small town feel
- Diverse business community
 - Urban environment in small town
- Accessible gather places
 - Square
- People on the streets
- Attractive school systems
- Continue to attract new residents, diversity that works
- Strong sense of community, active participation, neighbors know each other
- Friendly place
- Volunteering
- Location
- Past strategic plan worked, hold zoning
- Pet friendly

Our community problems...

- Separate city gov't and city school systems
 - Shared resource opportunity
 - Communication could be better
- No trailers at schools
- Congestion of traffic
 - Traffic light timing
 - Rail crossings, underpasses? Ped xing
- More bike racks available
- Zoning has gaps that impact charm, concerns about high density

Inspiring visions of the City...

- Art house theatre, live theatre, movies on the square
- Broaden community arts programs – community theatre
- Encouraging bicycle commuting, other forms of commuting
 - Address those commuting to Decatur
- Get people to work and stay in Decatur
- Transportation arteries are unclogged
- Expand tree planting programs
 - Landscaping that make commercial district attractive
 - Streetscaping like Church Street
- On street sidewalk dining – European style, slows down traffic

We want Decatur to be...

- A City without speed bumps
- A City that encourage active living
 - Young adult programs included
 - Leagues with community partners

- Continue to get citizens involved
 - Continue communication with citizens
- Dialog between police & young people is improved
- Continue to be green
 - Improved natural green space
 - Less engineered green space
 - Commercial recycling program – small business
 - Preserve green space not “develop” green space
- Communication between community groups & City & between groups
- Increased small business
- Increased activities in arts
- Alternatives to post office down town
- Improved access to courthouse & parking deck

Decatur, a City where _____...

- Where active living is a way of life
- Small town but cosmopolitan
- A city where I am free to be me, expressive, diverse
- There is no dress code.

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Steve Provost

Meeting Date: April 28, 2010

Time: 7 – 9 PM

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.

16- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

Neighborhood progressive dinners (16 one!!) -- Neighborly

Agnes Scott - hospitality

Lots of gardens (Woodlands, Oakhurst) Parks, Greenspace

Neighborhoods remain same for 25 years

Walkability, a walking city

School system, well run, planned, good education

Moved here for the **schools**

Like having our own school system

Impressed with the dog parks

Decatur has character, is distinguishable, mom and pop stores

Events!

Volunteer opportunities

Churches – a denomination on each corner. – all great -- host events – part of the community

Can raise chickens (and goats!)
Fresh blood in Oakhurst, have their own festivals, young energy
Eddies Attic – great music, not expensive, local and renown acts
Transportation system – buses, marta -- train in downtown
Restaurants -- come a long way, 27 of them in walking distance
Police Department is really good
Grocery Store – thankful for Kroger downtown
Library
Post Office

“Our community problems.”
Grocery store – have to drive outside area for full size grocery store
Traffic – no reason for speeding on Ponce --need to eliminate major traffic in city (it’s good that some streets have been narrowed)
Too much traffic generated by the Post Office
Decatur is a victim of it’s own success --there’s an “I’ve got mine now you go away” attitude
High home prices leads to a feeling of entitlement
Green Space – too small at the schools --Glenlake Park, money should have been spent buying more green space
Want more trails, soft surface rather than paved
Focus more on specific Boards (community Boards)
Cars drive over sidewalks – too many curb cuts, don’t feel safe
Police –want more interaction with them. Want quarterly public meetings
Need a decent hotel in the city
More bike facilities, lanes, paths
Railroad crossings
Reduce crime
Parking- accessible and affordable
Inappropriate to have a college on the Square (DeVry – students get in fights)
Have become selfish, entitled –need more caring about the other guy –lower income and elderly being driven out of city by high costs

17- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”
“We want Decatur to be...”

A place to age and stay

A diverse city --affordable housing –students –retired persons –working people
A beautiful downtown
Close off traffic in downtown one day per week
A populated downtown
Open spaces –more walking spaces, --more bikable space
The businesses of today to still be here 10 – 20 years from now
Efficient spending by city to improve tax structure for businesses
Organic markets, gardens, and animals

Open to the arts –incentives to help those (artistic, creative) endeavors --the city as a center for creativity

Be able to walk --to Little Five Points, to Avondale

Trolley

Golf carts

Alternative transportation

Outdoor **places to interact**

A GREEN city

More front porches --people outside talking to neighbors --relationships

Encourage neighborhood associations –neighborhood events

Open spaces to have neighborhood events/gatherings

Friendly, open city --say hi to your neighbors

Organized Neighborhood Planning Units

“Decatur, a City Where... _____”

You can wander endlessly

Easy to meet people

You can run

The outdoor beckons

People who want to live here can afford to live here

Where culture thrives

People are connected --emotionally –spiritually –businessly

People feel heard and connected

Diversity is embraced

You remember your childhood kindly

Small businesses have the opportunity to thrive

The **school system** is a vital part of the community

Citizens have a good relationship with city officials

People can get around --free transportation zone downtown --trolley

Oakhurst and downtown are connected

“Themes”:

City of friendly neighbors

Transportation

Green

Citizenship / Stewardship

The arts

Business

Gov’t/Police/Fire

Walking

Vitality

Ravenberg 04-27-2010 7 pm

Our Community success

- Can ride bikes and walk to school
- Great restaurants
- Can walk to destinations essential to daily life—bank, food, etc.
- Government and citizens actively try to make Decatur a great place to live
- Sense of community—hello on the street, pride in the community, ability to be involved and contribute
- Diversity: welcoming to all
- Attracts people to value Decatur assets
- So many people volunteer
- Small town in a big city (can have cake and eat it, too) small town with big city offerings
- Festivals
- Square offers a physical center
- Takes commitment to environmental sustainability seriously: e.g., recycle program at events
- Great school system: smallness, teachers, volunteers, passionate parents
- Independent retail; not a mall
- Great beer, great music
- You can drink and walk!
- Cultural opportunities
- Higher education in community is a plus: Agnes Scott, Emory
- Parts are great; city invests in them
- General beauty of the city (e.g. parks, Agnes Scott)
- Good tree canopy
- Community gardens: promoting good nutrition community wide
- Feel safe
- Smoke free
- Decatur 101 a great way to introduce new residents to Decatur (should be required!)
- Volunteer citizen commissions that report to the city: active living, environmental sustainability, keenagers, Decatur Gators, activities for kids, city wide baseball
- Decatur Focus—like mailed copy

- Recreation center
- New High School: potential for community to be part of HS events; services there (e.g., weightlifting)
- Access to public transit: MARTA rail
- Access to healthcare
- city investment in low income housing

Our community problems

- Traffic lights (e.g., College/McDonough and Candler/College/Trinity need left hand turn arrows)
- Traffic volume downtown
- Speeding on Church Street; intersection at Church/Forkner
- 25 mph in smaller neighborhoods still too high (not safe for kids); should be 15 or 20
- Parking meters too expensive and quarters a hassle; keeps people away from businesses
- Would like to close Ponce De Leon to vehicle traffic between Commerce and Church (permanently or on certain days, e.g., Sundays)
- Few/not enough places to lock bikes
- Taxes: don't want them to go up any more; high taxes limit diversity and aging-in-place
- Need stronger requirements for affordable housing
- City schools too top heavy in management taking focus away from teachers and students; not seeing the value in the many layers (too many); "overthinking it"
- City government should be a little tighter or taxes will keep going up
- Retail mix may not be sustainable; community needs to think about what they will support and encourage independents; perhaps more non-retail and/or professional services?
- Lack of affordable housing for workforce
- Don't have a diverse middle class and African American population is decreasing; solution is not easy
- Falling behind other communities on promoting bike transportation; don't have bike lanes
- Need a new tagline; current one is the worst
- Need a boutique hotel
- Concern: heard that marijuana is easily for sale on the square daily between 3 pm and 5 pm.

Inspiring visions of the city

- Show the region that it is possible to tackle social justice issues (grow diversity) while being green, etc. (and the other progressive things we like about Decatur)
- Breadth of [a more complete and pervasive] city [meaning citizen] understanding and support for housing authority priorities
- Less friction between school administration and parents; more trust, more cooperation, more transparency
- City Schools of Decatur 101 program
- A community with more walkers, more bike riders, farmers' market on the square, parks connected with trails
- Completion of sidewalks on every street (process has intimidated residents)
- Safer bike riding: same city commitment as for pedestrians
- Government with a role in designing community to fight chronic disease (due to lifestyle)
- [Community where] people don't drive their kids to school
- Electric busses; "no idling" policies
- Volunteerism in a broader program, one designed to connect people in relationships: mentors, literacy, seniors with children, professional, social
- Not afraid to become more dense downtown; get more creative; supports businesses

We want Decatur to be...

[did not discuss this question separately from vision question]

Decatur, a city where _____

- You don't ever need or want to leave
- There is innovation AND preservation
- You live your life
- Sustainability is a way of life
- You want to raise your family

Soldat

4-27-10

9am

Where are we now?

How do you talk about the gifts (good things) or successes in this community? What stories do you tell?

- Getting Around: good local transit system, very walkable, great new crosswalks
- Community in general: laid back, many interconnections, strong sense of community, pride, diversity, publications like the Decatur Focus and blogs allow community connections, safe, it feels like a place to be and Atlanta doesn't feel that way, Atlanta is a place to work and Decatur is a place to live, vibrant, feeling of a small town-like Mayberry, comfortably laid back
- Active Community: full of passion, many people volunteer, strong city center, strong desire to stay in Decatur, independent business owners, many festivals that bring money into the community, Decatur Business Association-very involved with programming and strong community links
- Government: responsive, accessible, accountable, the recreation department has great programming with substantive learning and structured programs
- Spaces: community gardens, backyard gardens, ability to raise chickens, dog parks, ability to eat/shop downtown, local business, quality restaurants, few chain businesses

How do you talk about the problems in this community? What stories do you tell?

- Loss of Diversity: loss of or not enough diversity (economic, racial, age, sexual, housing stock), much diversity being lost because Decatur is becoming unaffordable, related to housing stock we need more apartments in downtown/Oakhurst, loss of diversity was also a topic of discussion 10 years ago
- Taxes: many people are being priced out by taxes, some people with kids feel they can't afford to pay the taxes when 67% of the money goes to the school system, difficult tax burden on the older population even before age 80, need more commercial tax base, need to bring in more commercial business, potential business owners are deterred by taxes in the City of Decatur, annexation made sense in the area between Decatur and Avondale Estates—why was it tabled?, commercial properties may be undervalued by DeKalb County
- Neighborhoods: concern that neighborhoods abutting the commercial core need to learn how to interact and transition with that core because it is not as if they are 10 blocks from that core
- City Schools of Decatur(CSD) and the City of Decatur: major disconnect, lack of communication, need to work together and plan together, parents leaving the community because of the schools, CSD has a lack of sustainability, CSD needs a long range strategic plan, trailers are a problem, a lot of money is being spent on the schools but we are not getting enough out of that money
- Physical Amenities: major walking routes need more trash cans, need dog mess clean up posts, need more lighting for safety in residential neighborhoods and that lighting should be lower to the street, surface lots need more trees and also mechanisms to fund such upgrades, need more dog parks and community spaces
- Safety: dogs in parks where kids are need to stay out of play areas, owners need to be more responsible with their dogs, the increase in traffic has lead to safety concerns, need more bike and pedestrian safety on Adams Street and College Avenue

- Parking: there is enough parking but people don't know about it, we need to raise awareness about shared parking, we need a comprehensive parking plan, there are safety concerns when it comes to parking in park garages/ramps/decks(GRD's), parking GRD's need "way finding" signs to help locate your vehicle or to get out of the parking GRD on foot, there needs to be physical connections between parking GRD and to major destinations, parking GRD's need more lighting, parking GRD's need to be branded with art or possible a color (ex. If I say I parked in the yellow deck, everyone should know where that is), parking GRD's are too dreary, there are many opportunities for public art on parking GRD's, Ponce de Leon Avenue should be closed during the evening and traffic re-routed on Commerce Drive, we need a tunnel or bridge to get over busy streets
- Theater: missing enough live theater

Where do we want to go?

What kind of community would inspire you?

A community that.....

- is bicycle and pedestrian friendly
- has affordable homes
- has housing choices
- has a tax structure that keeps long time residents in place
- values and strengthens its diversity
- has homes that meet physical space related needs but are not out of context or scale
- has lots of green space and environment awareness
- has a housing authority (Decatur Housing Authority specifically) that sets a high standard for good design → respect for urban context downtown, employs green building methods, has quality architecture, is not suburban
- has a arts center/facility and continues coordination/partnerships with entities like Eddies Attic and Agnes Scott, the high school auditorium is a great start
- has lot of fine arts
- promotes our cemetery as a destination-not just in death
- a place where you come to live but you find yourself inspired for a life time

How do you want Decatur to be known?

- As a place where everyone is welcome
- Anti-Cobb County
- We welcome diversity
- Communication is open and clear-you don't feel lost-basically you know where you can go to get your questions answered
- Creative: artistically, able to raise chickens, forward thinking, kids have options to do things, open-minded, weird

Decatur is a place where.....?

- The next ten years are on the cutting edge and are moving forward
- I feel safe
- Where your neighbors smile at you
- I feel energized to be involved
- I can make a difference
- City officials are responsive
- Everyone is able and welcome to live
- Everyone can more freely from a transportation standpoint
- I want to live until I die
- You can grow up and grow old
- Business meets the needs of the community-not just high end business
- You can grow old and stay young

**Roundtable Session
April 29, 2010**

**Group 39
Kevin Spears, Facilitator**

Where are we now?

Community Successes

Decatur is not just walkable – it is functionally walkable. You can walk to places you need to go – shops, restaurants, the post office, the library.

The walk-to-school programs are great.

City officials are accessible and responsive. When you email or call, they often reply the same day.

Police and fire are responsive, attentive and available.

Police are proactive about communicating to the community.

Public works is responsible. I called about a dead raccoon and they arrived in ten minutes. Where else does that happen?

If you petition for speed bumps, speed limit signs etc, the city provides them quickly.

The city schools are excellent. This brings a lot of people to Decatur.

- High test scores and excellent academics
- The schools are small
- There is a great community feel in the schools.

- International Baccalaureate program
- School are officials are responsive – they seek input and make changes based on what they hear.
- The schools host community events

Even the private schools are community-minded.

The arts have a strong presence in the city.

- Galleries
- Music on the Square
- Festivals
- Nonprofits and businesses devoted to art

Great events

The book festival

The library

Great parks in Decatur

- Love the dog parks
- The parks are well maintained, kept up
- The parks are well used
- There isn't a crime problem.

Great recreation opportunities for children and youth

We have a lower crime rate than many intown areas.

It is safe to walk around at night.

Police are responsive when you report a suspicious person or situation.

There is a spirit of cooperation in the community.

Example: churches offer their sanctuaries as venues for the book festival.

Churches in Decatur are good about participating in civic events and even host their own events for the city.

Example: First Baptist hosted an electronics recycling event.

The proximity of Agnes Scott and Emory is a real advantage – the cultural events they offer.

The neighborhoods have their own personality, sense of identity and cohesiveness.

There are ample public transportation options.

The friendly, welcoming, small town feel

Diversity of many kinds – not just race

Same sex couples are welcome and integrated into the community.

Decatur blogs are a great source of city information – they take the place of a Decatur newspaper.

Community Problems

City officials started a process for discussing infill houses. Then suddenly they passed a lot of ordinances out of the blue. It seemed to circumvent the process they had proposed. It was disconnected from community input and seemed like it was done in the dark of night.

In some instances, the zoning laws are too vague. Situations arise for which no clear guidance exists.

Example: the situation with Peer Support & Wellness in Decatur Heights. Even the Zoning Board expressed discontent with inadequate guidance in the ordinances.

Sometimes city officials close off communication with citizens on an issue because they say they are not required to solicit community input on that issue.

There are a few traffic chokepoints caused by the city's traffic calming strategies. Specifically – the section of West Ponce near the post office and Church Street near Glenlake Park.

The intersection at McDonough/Howard/College at the railroad tracks is a mess – a tragedy waiting to happen – especially with a school so close to it. The light is confusing and the signage is inadequate.

There are not enough bike lanes in the city.
Decatur is not nearly as bike-able as it is walkable.
I would rather my child walk than ride a bike in Decatur.

There are a lot of potholes.
And some of the potholes seem to get worse as the city tries to fix them.

The cost of housing is a problem.
There is no way that our family could live here if we hadn't moved in 16 years ago.
Teachers cannot afford to live here.
There is a lack of affordable housing for low and middle income families.

The property taxes are high.
(But the group agreed that the benefits of living in Decatur are worth the cost)

Do the regular events (beer festival, arts festival etc) cost the city more than they generate in increased business and other related revenues?

Some events create problems and annoyances for residents – parking problems, traffic.

People coming to events from outside Decatur often don't show respect for the place and the people who live here.

There aren't enough tennis facilities. You have to drive to Glenlake to get the key for the Oakhurst courts.

The sign-up process for recreation programs is plagued with problems.

Where do we want to go?

Inspiring Visions

An ideal mix of local businesses and national chains (for affordable basics – shoes, household goods, sports equipment).

It would be great if I never had to go to Lenox Mall to buy stuff.

More greenspaces closer to the Square

Lots of places for people to be outside and interacting

People are out of their cars for everything they do – shopping, eating, playing

More outdoor seating at restaurants, cafes, parks

More informal interaction in public places – book discussions, other gatherings

The south side of the old courthouse is more inviting, drawing people there on a daily basis.

On the Square there is more public activity to draw people there on a regular basis – more than just restaurants and bars– e.g., farmers market, vendors, performers.

You know that when you show up on the Square there will always be something going on.

More shade on the plaza above the MARTA station

We want Decatur to be . . .

A leader in smart growth, sustainability, healthy lifestyle – an example that people look to.

A mecca for culture, literature, arts and music

A place that attracts innovators and creative types

Protected as a brand/name

Negative example: the recent Taste of Decatur situation

Beautiful – full of colorful trees, flower, natural habitat

Minimally intrusive to the rights of property owners while maintaining smart growth

Continue in its embrace of diversity

Not just high income residents

Mixed in socio-economic levels and diverse lifestyles

Still open-minded

Not exclusive

A place where residents know each other and interact

Community-focused and defined by its neighborhoods

Interconnected for news and information – both lo-tech and hi-tech media

Decatur is a city where . . .

. . . people gather

. . . people want to hang out

. . . there is always something to see or do in our public areas

. . . a place with lots of art in public

. . . life is fun

. . . I can catch a trolley (i.e., move around the city without a car but still easily and quickly)

. . . people are involved . . . in the city, in the schools.

. . . I can see a movie

. . . there is more to do than eat and drink

. . . there is more traditional theater

. . . I can do all of my shopping

. . . big-box stores have their place alongside our local businesses

. . . you never need to leave

. . . people say, “Hmm, yes, I have vaguely heard of Atlanta.”

. . . people can live through their whole life (i.e., into retirement and old age).

Notes from Swanson, 4/27/10, 2pm, Group 9

OUR COMMUNITY SUCCESSES

SCHOOLS. Discussion included academic success, the notion of neighborhood schools, and the recent efforts at healthier foods / local farm to school.

PUBLIC SAFETY. Excellent police and fire service. Emphasized was the feeling of a safe environment throughout the city.

PARKS, GREENSPACE, POOLS. Comments included an appreciation for the emphasis the City places on these items, how well they are kept up, run and the recent improvements to them.

RESPONSIVE CITY PERSONNEL. This included both elected officials and City staff. There was a favorable discussion on how effective previous City planning has been, and the commitment by City personnel to honoring the planning process.

CITY SIZE / SCALE. This was a pretty generalized area of discussion surrounding the “comfortable” size, scale and layout of the City, with the downtown area, neighborhoods and alternate business / retail areas (Oakhurst).

WALKABILITY. In addition to the acknowledgement of being able to walk to most things in the City by most residents, this discussion ventured into the friendliness and support for alternative (not cars or trucks) transportation like bicycles and scooters.

TRASH AMNESTY DAY. This started as an appreciation for super trash day, but also included the efforts at both routine and electronics recycling.

EVENTS AND FESTIVALS. This topic not only included the group participant’s appreciation for them, but also the favorable exposure the City receives from them, and how well they are run.

CARE FOR SENIORS. As in the City’s respect for, and embracement of, its senior residents.

SENSE OF HISTORY. The conversation here was wide ranging and included the specialty interests of several of the group members. Included was mention of the Decatur 101 course, the historic nature of the Beacon Hill / Oakhurst district, and the cemetery.

RETAIL MIX. An appreciation for the diverse and eclectic variety of retail shops in the downtown area.

VOLUNTEERISM. This encompassed both the efforts of the citizens in service, as well as the staff support the City gives in organizing the volunteers.

GOOD HOUSING AUTHORITY. Pretty much just a statement as we moved on to the next topic.

OUR COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

TRAFFIC. Widespread discussion included signaling problems (especially at South Candler and College), congestion, the balance of vehicle (cars and trucks) traffic flow versus pedestrian crossings and alternative vehicle (like bicycles, etc.) right of ways, and the lack of traffic calming measures on some streets.

ANNEXATION. A mixed conversation noting the desire for obtaining more commercial tax properties but recognizing possible negative impact on the capacity of the school system. Included was a comment in favor of annexing the residential area on the south side near Midway.

GREENSPACE, RECREATION LIMITATIONS. Little additional property available for these functions.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING. This was a big issue for the group. It was summed up with the term “gentrification” and the expressed concern that the City is losing its diversity. Additional thoughts included concerns over losing the character of the residential neighborhoods, and the fact that the City is not attracting young African Americans.

SCHOOL ISSUES. The specific focus here had to do with capacity.

WE COULD BE GREENER. Though City administered building efforts are providing an emphasis in this area, greater effort can be made with respect to our school buildings, codes, construction incentives, etc.

BIKE PATHS. More of them in more places.

RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY. It was noted that having the CSX line through the heart of the City presented a unique series of problems like safety issues with kids crossing the tracks, while also limiting the City’s options because of federal rail regulations.

OAKHURST EMPTY LOT. There was an expressed desire for suitable development of the Oakhurst former grocery store property now occupied by Navo Church.

Facilitator note: With discussion running behind schedule, the group chose to have a general conversation under the final heading, skipping over the “inspiring visions” and “we want Decatur to be” flip chart pages and include them under the single “Decatur, a City...” heading.

DECATUR: A CITY...

where I can afford to live.

where little has changed in the last ten years.

where families can live, work and play without leaving the City.

where vacant lots are green, not paved.

that is carbon neutral.

for all stages of life. (This sentence refers to ages, babies to elderly.)

of thoughtful expansion.

of greater diversity in every way (specifically mentioning age, race, economic, and political).

PARKING LOT

During the discussion concerning community successes, the group ventured off on the topic of exploring ideas for having the senior members of our City and communities share their knowledge, experiences and history with younger and newer citizens. While not re-visiting this topic during Session 1, it will fit nicely into the conversations of Session 3.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT SESSION

Try to be in the same room, comfortable and conducive to discussion.

Snacks and beverages would be nice.

Better time management and keeping on track is desired; we'll add a timekeeper element to the next session.

Thompson 04-27-10 9am

Success

Accessible for people with disabilities
Easy to walk around city
Responsive government
Good school system
Strategic Planning process
Forward thinking community
Good basic services like sanitation
People help each other
People get to know each other
Diversity- everyone can live or work or play in city
Motivated by integrity
Lots of diversity in nature
Feels like a unique place with concentration of energy
Strong tax digest
Fiscally responsible government
Diversity of age groups
Accessible government
Places to gather downtown
Dynamic environment where you can sleep, work, plan and shop
Fun for kids
Great services
Town is like an oasis
Focus on independent businesses
Strong independent restaurants
Large tree canopy
Multiple types of birds
Top notch Recreation programs for youth and adults

Problems

Need more shopping for daily needs
Need reasonably priced stores
Tax base is too dependent on residential property
No access to sales tax
DeKalb County employees cause traffic congestion
No housing for people making \$50k or less
Lack of apartments
Hard to maintain diverse housing stock
Seniors lack housing choices
Seniors have to move due to high taxes
Residents have lost houses because of reverse mortgages
Difficult to get from one side of town to another
Aging infrastructure: sidewalks, storm sewers
Weak tree ordinance
Growing school population with constrained school sites

Lack of communication between city and school system on annexation
Westchester school building is underutilized
Determining the appropriate tax rate
Churches take up a lot of property but do not pay taxes
DeKalb County buildings take up a lot of property downtown and don't pay taxes

Vision

Increase amount of protected greenspace
Never have to drive my car again
Provide safe place to bicycle
Provide for all modes of transportation
Use Suburban Plaza as a trolley/streetcar stop and large parking facility
Use shared minivans to get around town for \$1 per ride
Ban autos from downtown
Use environmental sustainability as driving force for decision making
Make it convenient to shop at farmer's markets everyday
More people living and working downtown
Use density as an incentive to provide affordable housing and greenspace
Find way to measure environmental impact
Fix signal timing
Want dedicated bicycle and scooter lanes on streets
Story
Close Ponce and remove parking on the Square
Double pedestrian traffic
Say "We used to have parking lots"
Grocery store in Oakhurst
Carbon Neutral City
Fiber Internet
No elderly person had to leave city because of taxes
Zoning ordinance based on carbon neutrality
School system meets the needs of every child
Art facility that serves art needs of community
Access to arts on a daily basis
Dance groups able to perform inside the city limits
Collaboration between city and schools to promote the arts and share space
Created shared religious spaces/facilities instead of each church having their own site
See the local food movement increase
Not just Farm to School, but Farm to Community
Farmer's market open every day
Farms on top of school buildings
Green roofs of every building
Establish unique local codes that allow sustainable buildings
Updated development codes to promote 21st century needs

City Where
Everyone is welcome
There's a festival for that
You can sleep, drink, work, live, shop
You can see every species of bird in the southeast
I'm proud to live
Roof farming capitol of the world
Interesting people are always passing through
It's hell to drive
You park your car and walk
Built for people and not for cars
Schools set an international standard
Cars are at the bottom of the list
Bicyclists and pedestrians have the right of way

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Thrivikraman, Tushar (Group 37)

Meeting Date: Wednesday, Apr 28, 2010

Time: 7-9 pm

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.

18- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

Small city “in-town”

Neighborhood schools

Downtown - “Charming” not cookie cutter, has uniqueness too it

Funky Restaurants with lots of variety

“Walk-ability” - “car-free”, always people walking around, can recognize people/make new friends, MARTA (Decatur, Avondale, and East Lake stations)

Close to Atlanta

Safety – Quick police response, look out for residents, part of and integral to the community

Diversity – socio-economic, ethnic, racial, residency, age, acceptance of differences

Diversity of entertainment – festivals, music, beach party, organized well, both official and unofficial community gatherings (people camping out for fireworks display on July 4th)

Neighborhood Association – winnona park listserv, events scheduled, helps connect community

Well-kept secret – no interstate

Rec center (Active living) – forms partnerships with schools / community

Library

Variety of shopping choices – Terriffic Thursdays in the fall

“Living in Mayberry”

Central area – Decatur Square, compact area, only 4 sq miles with lots of things to do

No high rises

Lots of Trees

“Our community problems.”

Risk of becoming a “mini-buckhead” and Va highlands

Trying to be too many things – chain restaurants

Spilt Identity – want to cultivate artisans / locally owned shops however, rent too high for shops to stay in business, affordability

Affordable real-estate: teachers, service workers, etc can’t afford to live in the city (talking about housing < 200-300K, not “low income housing)

High taxes, burdensome even though gov’t spends it responsibly: drive people away, single w/o kids, seniors

Some houses have no buffer between large commercial buildings, poor planning, reduces land value, etc

Commercial buildings are expensive; require chain restaurants due to high rent

Lack of green space, more parks

No bike paths, routes

Size, expanding too fast, capacity of city. No sense of where it’s going to stop

Lack of inexpensive non-chain general store (clothes, office supplies, stuff you would get at Target)

Crosswalks are difficult to see, need to be repainted

No Performing arts Theater / Movie Theater

Traffic- over the past 10 years, increased number of “tourists” / people outside of city.

Better planning for condos (friends visiting etc). Parking (free for residents, charge others) Better road signs, areas not marked clearly, not accessible

Water/Sewer system / general infrastructures (roads/sidewalks) with potholes

Need to sort out priorities, pick what we do well and focus, don’t want us to “lose our way,”

19- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

Maintaining Diversity- not just typical racial diversity, but diversity of all types, single, seniors, etc

Bike lanes and racks on every street, crosswalks

Focus on quality and improvement (unique character of Decatur), not growth. Grow according to plan and vision

Adequate planning for future of youth. Babies today are teens in 10 years, driving, etc

More green, 100% buy-in from residents and business

Efficiently use of space (annexation?) space by Dairy queen, area by feast, commerce and church, shopping center in Oakhurst

Increased connectivity between neighborhoods, better-connected infrastructure, social events, etc. more unified so that everybody knows what is going on. Better signage to Oakhurst

Maintain character of neighborhood – zoning to control large houses
Expanded & renovate rec center, appeals to seniors, teens, kids
Grow senior citizen resources , more social activities
Continued communication, Decatur Focus, metro blogs, etc
Increased transparency between neighborhoods, Decatur master calendar of events,
community info on website, etc
Expanded Recycling program (electronics, Apts/condos) greener business (no Styrofoam)
Decatur-Oakhurst Shuttle
“We want Decatur to be...”
Diverse
Affordable
Exemplify smart growth
Friendly & Welcoming
Vital Downtown
Charming Neighborhoods
Safe
Sustainable: Environment, economic, size/growth
Familiar and Comfortable with Neighbors
Accepting
To have an integrated community, all involved, from different communities
Everyone is connected, through city resources, social resources, infrastructure
“Decatur, a city where ____”
people who live there, love it.
people who visit it, love it.
generation of families thrive
life is clean, green, active, and attractive
the police department is concerned, active, involved, and responsive. Respectful, integral
part of the community, focus on safety.
Can call it “home” – long-term
All generation live together
Proud of local government
Intentional identity
We are carbon neutral

Wrap up and review

Large room, difficult to hear and distracting
Get other teams ideas, posters, and results
Phrasing of questions were strange, more direct questions, some were redundant

Vogel
4-29-10
2pm

Our Community Successes

- Walkable / Bikeable
- Community is interactive with its government
- A diversity of events bring people together
- Needs are met locally
- A vibrant commercial district
- A family / everybody friendly community
- Citizens are allowed to speak their mind
- Good community and government communication
- Parks and gardens
- A community the “pushes the envelope – a trendsetter
 - Environment
 - Active living
 - Mixed use development
- A community responsive to citizens and neighbors
- MLK service day
- Active neighborhood watches
- A safe community
- Good schools

Our Community Problems

- Instances of *de facto* segregation in some community events
 - Religious
 - Social-economic
 - Family makeup
- A need for more events structured to attract diverse audiences
- Barriers to walkability
 - Railroad
 - Dead end streets
- Vacant houses – code enforcement
- Traffic issues
 - 2nd Avenue
 - Ponce @ rush hour
 - Railroad crossing
 - Traffic light timing
 - Speeding
- Diversity in housing
 - Affordable for all
 - Life cycle
- Affordable taxes
- Storm drainage and flood plains
- Perception of inadequate parking
- Future school capacity and maintaining quality

Inspiring Visions of the City

- More children
- Knowing everyone's neighbor
- More streetscapes
- Path to interconnect areas
- More open space & community gardens
- Community gatherings – parties/dinners
- A business mentoring program

We want Decatur to be

- An inclusive community
- Vibrant
- Sustainable
- A destination
- More easily accessible
- Prosperous
- Solvent
- Stay a City
- Continue forward thinking, especially as regards schools

Decatur, a city where

- Everybody knows your name
- Neighbors help each other
- Everyone feels welcome
- Small businesses want to be and are successful
- You can work, live, and play
- You can raise a family
- You are proud to call home
- You want to live forever
- Dreams come true
- The environment is respected
- The government is responsive

Vogels

4-28-10

9am

]Our community successes

- City involves citizens
- Reputation of schools
- Wonderful restaurants
- Events and festivals
- Proud of reputation
- Walkability of Decatur
- Children can walk safely to schools
- Has its own services: fire, police
- Provides hometown feel
- Proximity to Atlanta
- Green space
- Safe, little crime
- Response time of police
- Progressive: wifi, zip cars

- Mature trees
- Historic character
- Urban character, pedestrian atmosphere, sidewalks
- Diverse population race, age, socio-economic
- Great neighborhoods
- ASC, CTS and Emory anchors our community
- Cultural events the colleges open to the community
- Can live without a car. Can walk everywhere
- Access to MARTA, Cliff Bus allows ability to get to employment and entertainment outside of Decatur

Our Community problems

- Sidewalks that are unusable
- Unkempt lots
- Unhappy with school charter: the internal means for input (SLT) largely ignored by school superintendent
- Disconnect with city commission and school board: 4-5 academy moving to former 5th Ave. school, not walkable or central to community
- Former West Chester School used entirely for school administration—Why?
- More communication from School Administration
- School system always in turmoil
- School board has open discussions then ignores all input
- CSD riding on reputation it no longer deserves
- Needs to be mutual support between city and school district
- Schools impact real estate and business so schools have to continue to be strong
- Success of schools impact success of city
- Negative change in education in schools in the last 20 years: No longer being taught facts, going through the motions over being taught depth of subject matter
- Charter school system perceived as private school. This is not true

- Schools need round table discussions
- Need to avoid urban blight: graffiti and trash
- Infrastructure problems: traffic, poor or no sidewalks, bad intersections—especially Candler and E.College, E. College and Commerce for children walking to school, dangerous railroad crossings for pedestrians
- Improve green space and add to it
- Make lot next to Dairy Queen a green space
- Complete all bike trail connections
- More bike friendly for recreational and commuting bikers
- City government needs to be more open regarding planning and zoning with newer zoning ordinances
- Need more 5 story high buildings to bring in tax revenue

Inspiring Visions of City

- Less paved space: redo parking lots, add trees, improve water drainage, increase permeability
- Keep buildings to 5 stories
- Commercial area of city needs to change so businesses can thrive: tax credits if hire local people, summer jobs for Decatur teenagers, create internships for teenagers
- Get rid of parking lots. Only use MARTA lots and shuttle people into downtown
- Parking lots provide better signage. Decatur residents would not have to pay for parking.
- Move Dekalb courthouse out to jail on Memorial
- Dekalb county should have to pay taxes for services in Decatur
- Dekalb and Decatur address mutual impacted services that exist in city of Decatur
- Need more office space.
- County needs to pay city for services: courthouse
- Bring in more business, more commercial and taxable property

- Provide more jobs for all ages
- More mixed commercial and residential properties
- Keep small town character
- Add quality retirement assisted living communities
- City needs to embrace idea of residents wanting to live here their entire lives
- Address elderly needs: sanitation, recreation, health, housing, pair young and old to assist each other
- Enlarge elderly programs at Decatur Rec
- Create housing opportunities for upcoming Boomers and empty nesters who no longer want to maintain a house
- Maintain restaurants and grocery stores that are affordable for folks on fixed income
- Change Oakhurst zoning so Mom and Pop stores can exist. Create tax incentives for independent shops
- South of Rail Road tracks needs grocery store, pharmacy and hardware store
- Better options for parking—perhaps along commerce perimeter
- Create parking in Maloof building parking lot
- Create a walking green space (an emerald necklace) from Oakhurst garden to Mason Mill Park in Dekalb county

We want Decatur to be . . .

- More parking in less space
- More connected green space
- More friendly for the elderly
- More friendly to innovative small businesses
- Very pedestrian friendly: trees with sidewalks, small town character, but with dense urban use
- Alternative ways to get around city, i.e. cliff bus

Decatur, a city where . . .

- Citizens, government and businesses coexist
- I feel at home
- People matter
- I see people I know because it is a small town
- There is always something exciting going on
- People feel welcome
- Excellence and compassion reign
- I let my kids walk around town and hang out
- Education provides our children with promising future
- Public schools are valued and supported
- all schools are top quality
- we provide vocational education and well as college prep in our schools
- We think BIG about transportation: become an all electric city (no gas), lessen traffic through downtown, divert traffic around to commerce, install better traffic lights with better timing

Webb

4-30-10

2pm

Our community successes

Walk-ability

Safe atmosphere for children

Emotionally invested residents

Good school system- community buy-in, active parents

Events, festivals

Can walk to so much- pubs, restaurants

Racial and economic diversity

Quirky people embraced

People are “characters” and that’s OK

There are downtown destinations (downtown Decatur and Oakhurst), sense of place,

quality core, local businesses

Art, music- activities show support
Public art- book and art festival, music and beer festival
Creativity is valued
All activities- tons and tons, vibrant
Small scale- accessible
Wi-fi
Personal, accessible government
 Makes problems manageable
 Fire and police department- friendly, warm, good response
Decatur Focus, blogs/website- feels like community
Government builds community
Taxes- at least get what pay for
MARTA access- 3 stops, can bike and walk
Bike paths, sidewalks
Recycling- no sorting, quick pickup, wide variety of items
Pay as you go garbage bags
Extra courtesy for elderly (garbage pick up, lower taxes)
Service day (MLK day)
Volunteer opportunities- n church, seminary, Hagars House, DCM (30 churches)

Our community problems

High taxes (understand but a lot, strain on mid-income & who can move in)
Limited affordable housing
Concern that low-income, moderate and older residents being forced out
Demographics becoming less diverse (racial, economic, age)
Economic environment may make people want to sell because property is high
Decatur realty- force residents to sell at low prices or force to sell at high prices,
 lack of honesty and clarity, cliques
Atlanta realtors won't come here (maybe has changed now)
School system – lack of foresight, lots of change/movement, concerns about trailers. Is there a long-term plan? What is the basis of decisions?
Clairemont trailers, Winnona trailers
Schools affect walk-ability/bike-ability
 A dad says he may be forced to drive to aftercare (2 kids, 2 locations), wants city to add Pre-K aftercare at Rec center
Close schools, put up trailers, lose green space
Back part of Winnona school should be city and open to neighbors during school.
 School acts like school property only. Winnona school should be friendly.
Number of store closures and empty spaces in Decatur and along Ponce
Are high-rise developments going to create parking and traffic problems? Reduced green space?

Want free parking, not paid
Motorcycles have different parking restrictions that scooters don't have. Should be equal. Need more bike racks.

Inspiring visions of the city

Sidewalks on all streets including side streets
Sidewalks should be for bikes also- wider, safer. Multi-use sidewalk/path.
Bike lanes- want corridor (ex. Church street from N. Decatur to Decatur 2 car lanes and also bike lanes.)
In general, support for non-car transport
Keep "Berkeley meets Mayberry" flavor
Better commercial stores (Suburban Plaza is yucky) Decatur could annex these areas- strategic annexations so more commercial tax base.
Electric public transportation and pedicabs
Cliff-type bus for everyone
Need variety of grocery stores/ more & different types- need to be walking distance
Independent movie theater (1-2 screens)
Build underground tunnels for traffic to bypass downtown
Reroute traffic around downtown
Neighborhoods linked through website and blogs
People can live and work in Decatur, don't need to commute. Cooperate people can work here too. Entice big and mid-size companies but not exclude small business.
Support hoe businesses
Place where everyone is welcome
Light rail (street level) connection between marta, Decatur, Oakhurst, Buckhead, Emory
Weekly compost service (money-making venture)
Expanded community gardens, encouragement for home food gardens, front yard food scapes
Environmentally sustainable city (need comprehensive plan to do this)
Incentives to encourage green building, innovation, retrofit beyond current ga energy code. Be a leader, an example.
More unobtrusive green energy options
City of houses with original character and scale in keeping with neighborhood
Neighborhood housing has harmony
High quality value of young children
Children's opinions are listened to, sought out
All neighborhoods are connected within and as a whole so residents have a sense of community in neighborhood and city

We want Decatur to be

Sorry but I didn't separate this topic- I let it just sandwich between the other two accidentally

Decatur, a city where

Having a car is an inconvenience

There's lots to do

There's a strong sense of community and place

Tapestry of different kinds of people and everyone is honored **CIRCLED**

Creativity is fostered and encouraged to bloom

People who work in the community can afford to live in the community **CIRCLED**

Wrap up

More immediate results

Tighter focus/prioritization of items that are quick, cheap and do-able

Helpful to have city worker input (one member was and group thought very helpful)

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Kyle Williams

Meeting Date: Thursday, April 29

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

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.

20- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

Berkley meets Mayberry

Social and Political Diversity

Voice in Government

Responsive Government

Viable, Interesting, Locally-Owned and Diversity of Businesses

Sustainable

Find it all here, convenience, compact

Active streets

Nice aesthetics

Sense of community, one big neighborhood

Walkable, can leave car in driveway

Accessibility to MARTA

Civic engagement and events form community

Pubs, Churches, Schools within 1 mile

Accessible neighborhood greenspace, parks and dogparks

Diversity of families

Respect

Cradle to Grave

Recycling program

Volunteer coordinator employed by City

Schools, special education outreach and programs

“Our community problems.”

Success breeds unsustainable numbers – events, festivals, restaurants overcrowded with non-Decatur visitors that choke out locals

Decatur is a “defined space,” managing and balancing the space and the competing interests of preservation and development

No density within the central city core

No variety and diversity of housing stock

Genetrification and squeezing out folks out of Decatur

Lack of information as to available parking

City’s website is not user friendly, updated and accurate – difficult to find information, minutes not updated and current, information outdated

Wireless internet is not effective or useable

Parking inventory is not clear

Rec Center (Web Track – on-line pay system) does not work and is the hardest system to use, pay on-line

Technology lags behind

City promotes events well, but does not promote/educate on what is going on in government

21- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

A model for racial justice – Decatur remains segregated

Ability to bicycle safely to Farmers’ Market

Locally grown food

Pedestrian friendly downtown core

A leader in recycling and waste management/disposal

Connectivity of bike and walking paths

Leader in traffic management (i.e., bikes, parking, movement of traffic through City and rail)

More folks working in Decatur that live in Decatur

Awareness and use of changes in business – the evolution of how we work (more work from home)

Respect, promotion and recognition of historic neighborhoods

Formal tree replacement program that is proactive, caring, protective and replaces tree

A working stormwater plan that eliminates current flooding issues of streets, Winnona Park Elementary

Naturalization of existing concrete streams

Increase of active, passive greenspace, including use of flood plain properties

Use of economic incentives to encourage green building

A designated City Employee/Official charged with connecting groups, coordinating issues/programs, a neutral/mediator

Full use of resources – for example, the High School Auditorium should be used every night by by folks outside the school; athletic fields; Agnes Scot; Boys & Girls Club

Workable group internet

Open City Hall should be more of a forum
Residential/Neighborhood representative on the Downtown Development Association
Greater cooperation/efficiency/communication between City Hall and City Schools
Access to affordable, safe housing for all stages of life
More vibrant business district, business outside core Ponce corridor/square, businesses fill “dry” stagnant
Greater role of City in growing, linking employment and jobs, a City career center
Fully educate all kids with access to employment opportunities
Retain, promote ethnic diversity
Unbundling of parking spaces from residential uses – disagreement and split that parking minimums should remain
Balance of zoning ordinance to respect/protect not just single property, but surrounding neighborhood
Codified height transition zoning between residential and commercial

“Decatur, a city where ___”

Cradle to Grave
Live, Work, Play
Come as You Are
Setting the Standard for Small, Urban Cities
Change is What Southern Looks Like
We Do the New South Better
Residents are Engaged
We have a cultural center – music, entertainment
Children/Everyone can thrive
You can check out but never leave
I have a voice

Round Table 3

Celia Willis

5/2/10

- Communication
 - o A community internship class at the highschool
 - o A Youth Counsel- similar to the roundtables but more frequent
 - Even up to once a week
 - o How do we help citizens talk to each other?
 - Online forum- blog, chat, e-mail list
 - o Have a permanent mediator between the youth and the people who can make it happen
 - o Who is left out of the conversation? How do we get them involved?
 - Students are left out
 - Show them some proof that their words are having an impact

- Have people come to school to talk to students- similar to what I did in getting them involved in the round tables
 - Target government classes and other related classes first.
- Individual/Group Contributions
 - Find common goals then act on them
 - Form a Decatur forum
 - Hold groups meetings based on areas of interest
 - Start an arts program for the youth
 - Community service day for students
 - Instead of a school day
 - Raise money through a run
 - For environmental and other causes
- What can high school students offer?
 - A different perspective
 - More media savvy, more up to date
 - More time and energy- they have less responsibilities
 - They are a uniquely politically affected youth
- Particular issues that are extra important
 - Green spaces
 - Going green
 - The arts

High School Round tables

Session 2

Celia Willis

How do we Sustain?

- The youth needs to be more involved*
- Maintain the social environment- friendly, approachable- we need to educate kids about acceptance
- Incentives for small businesses, financial or other
- Annexation- will help bring new faces into the city and will foster its diversity
- Start using the square more
 - Food carts
 - Events- keep the ones we have but also have some geared toward youth

How do we preserve the natural environment?

- build parks not associated with schools
- build trails (like the bird trail)
- build bike paths (it would save gas)
- give kids community service opportunities
 - or make jobs out of them for students

- the jobs must be promoted in the school system
 - something like a camp counselors program
- tax cuts for people who live green
- sponsor events on the square about going green
- give major incentives for developers to go green
 - even institute stricter building codes
- Farm-to-school program
 - Bringing organic foods into the schools- serving healthy food at lunch and breakfast
 - Have culinary and farming classes
- Have youth promote car pooling, maybe even have a “walk to school” day

Improvement of Travel

- things mentioned above
- bring back the yellow bike program
 - involve the youth in the process (they could restore the bikes or manage stands)
- more bike taxis
- more free parking
 - potentially work with churches

Overall environment

- festivals promoting the arts
- make rock and roll review (the high school yearly concert) a public event
- keeping doing the cows and doors events (where people paint a bunch and put them all over the city)
 - maybe find a way to aim it toward being green
- Make a better/safer environment for young skaters
- More things for teens to do on the weekends
 - Have a movie theater/venue for concerts
 - Cheap indie movies
 - Bands could range from high school kids to big names
- Make it harder for big corporate chains (like Kroger) to start up here and make it easier for small businesses

Healthy Living

- promotion of a green movement
- address childhood obesity (like with the farm-to-school program mentioned earlier)
- make community gardens safer (problem with other people taking the food grown there)

The relationship between the students and the authorities

- the students believe it is fear based, they feel harassed
- the impression is that the cops have nothing better to do then mess with them, they think there are too many
- think they need to stop targeting students

- maybe change the standards for a cops success- right now they gain status by making arrests or giving tickets.

High School Round Table Sessions

Session 1- April 18, 2010

Celia Willis's group

- Where are we now
 - o Gifts
 - Tight-knit community
 - Walkable
 - Safe
 - Accessible
 - A good variety of independent restaurants and stores
 - Restaurants are affordable
 - The square
 - Everything is there
 - Open minded attitudes
 - o Challenges
 - Parking
 - Not enough public parking
 - Private decks are often empty and could be used for other people
 - MARTA doesn't go enough places
 - If it was expanded it would bring more people to Decatur
 - Not enough bike lanes*
 - Police
 - Bad relationship- students feel like they're just there to get them in trouble
 - No free, late-night activities/locations for underage people
 - "Malternative" idea was badly executed
 - signs poorly designed
 - Traffic is awful
- Where To Next?
 - o What kind of community would inspire you?
 - Want a small, independent, all natural grocery store
 - o More community events on the square with a focus on teens?
 - o Food carts on the square, just in general there are more things that could be done with the square to make it a good place to be
 - o A public art venue*

- Non-profit
 - Like Wonderroot.
 - Could also be for music- place for high school bands to play in Decatur
- Movie Theater
 - Independent and cheap movies
 - Could also be a local art gallery
- Bike Lanes on every main street
- Low cost clothing store
 - Thrift store
 - They mentioned the example of young blood
- Decatur is a city where _____
 - People can walk home at night without being harassed
 - Everyone is accepted
 - Art is appreciated
 - Everyone wants to be
 - Everything you need is here
 - You can live and work
 - Diversity is encouraged and fostered
 - The youth are involved
 - Everyone knows each other
 - There is green living (ex: recycling everywhere)