

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 Wonderoot.
 - Could also be for music- place for high school bands to play in Decatur
 - o 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)

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 educated 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 than 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.

Round Table 3

Celia Willis

5/2/10

- Communication
 - A community internship class at the highschool
 - A Youth Counsel- similar to the roundtables but more frequent
 - Even up to once a week
 - How do we help citizens talk to each other?
 - Online forum- blog, chat, e-mail list
 - Have a permanent mediator between the youth and the people who can make it happen
 - 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

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

High school roundtable Session 2 Thompson

Comments that moved you:

Passionate conversation around bicycles. Everyone likes bikes they are fun and 100% efficient.

Buses are loud, ugly, and too big, impede traffic and go over the sidewalk. Although people do use them and we are concerned about impact on transit dependent

Trains and trolleys are preferred

Consensus around need for greenspace, more variety of food and retail. Little Kroger is uninviting and whatever is in that space should connect to the cemetery

Fact Sheet Discussion

Attend events, advertising activities, (city should) keep up with social media

Decatur website is not well formatted and it's hard to find stuff

Need a local activities channel and posters for events in local businesses

City website homepage is not useful and difficult to find things. Need current events in the center of the page, like facebook

Keep parks open later so they are used

Need more clean up days in parks and they need to be better publicized

Need more greenspace around Decatur

Need landscaped medians, but leave room for the trolley

Love the idea of having a raised monorail system

Green roofs, solar panel on roofs, incentives for green architecture for commercial and residential properties, need incentives for green features like cash for clunkers programs and tax breaks

Trinity triangle area should become a park
Encourage composting. Most trash can be biodegradable
I get information from NPR, TV, my mom, New York Times, bus ads, teachers, Tyler Perry movie poster, Decatur wifi page
Decatur wifi needs improvement, not a strong signal
Housing is expensive; my parents tell me that, we used to afford a bigger house before we lived here
Hard for young people and poor people to find housing
I want to live in a house with a yard. **Affordable means \$500 a month**
Need housing for retail salaries
Worried that we will lose all the liberal, creative residents if the community becomes too expensive. Conservative people live in expensive places.
Bothered by large houses next to small houses
Pollution causes sickness and it is hard to control it living next to Atlanta
Decatur seems healthier than most places but there is still a lot of air pollution
Need cheap healthy food
School lunches could be healthier
The healthy food at school doesn't taste good choices are pizza, chick Fil A and McDonalds
Use a community grill to cook healthy food. Put grills in parks
Oakhurst community garden could partner with the school to provide healthy food
We can stay involved by: signing up for an email list, attending events, posting information on the bulletin boards at school and in community and attending meetings

High School Roundtable: Session 3 Thompson

Doubts & Reservations:

If Decatur is pushing out creative people, where are they going? This is something to make sure we think about and prevent but might not be happening now
Concerned about eliminating buses b/c of the people who need to use them. Before downsizing buses need to look and see who is actually using them first
Need greenspace on buses
More structured, but passive greenspace like Hidden Cove Park
Lessen the use of cement and steel in parks. Use natural materials like stone for stairs.
Want massive treehouse, like Swiss Family Robinson, in parks
Difficult to mix bicycles and cars
Don't like how the PATH ends at Carpe Diem
Need a perimeter bicycle trail around Decatur
Make sure bicycle trails go everywhere that streets go
Make sure alternative transportation meets daily needs and recreational needs
Don't sacrifice vehicle space for bicycle space
Eliminate on street parking and have shared parking

Common Ground:

Provide affordable housing to ensure a diversity of opinions

Face to face meetings for small scale issues and projects

Open Forums

Majority Rules

Conduct Polls

Publicize the issue

Targeted communication to stakeholders

Give more weight to the opinion of the most affected

Hire an unbiased 3rd party

Have neighborhood committees and representatives

How to encourage involvement in public life?

Give them Candy (incentives)

Provide publicity everywhere – CVS, TV , radio, website and newsletter with opportunities