

38 Powers 05/12/2010 7-9pm

A. How do we sustain this city:

Planning Dept and Economic Development are important in the process

Encourage younger talent to get involved

Safety

Maintain stable tax rates

Spend wisely

Have credible leadership

Maintain transparency of government

B: How do we preserve the things we appreciate:

More strict guidelines for redevelopment

Maintain diversity thru more affordable housing

Affordable housing does not equal low income

Maybe we stop paying taxes at a certain age

Age 65 and no children and stop paying school taxes

2. A: How do we preserve and improve our natural environment:

Collaboration with Trees Atlanta

Public transportation

Add multi-use trails

Condemn/re-appropriate more greenspace

Have co-operative agreements between neighbors(foottrails and greenspace)

B: How do we protect our air, water, greenspace

Performance/protection bonds on construction sites for trees, etc

Ways to conserve water and capture with rain barrel capture systems

Save gray water

Revise/develop regulations for erosion control

Incentives for impervious surfaces

Take traffic off roads by adding more free bike exchange

Plant more trees

Regulate idling car engines

Have infiltration systems to capture more water

Rigorous enforcement of industrial parking lots

2b:

Shuttle services ie cliff valley

Joint development with other municipalities and institutions

Recommendation from appropriate professionals for use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides

Acquire greenspace thru stormwater utility fund

3a: how dowe get from place to place in Decatur:

Drive

Bike

Walk

Marta/ public transportation

Shuttle

3b: what might change in how we travel over next ten years:

Super impose maps for cliff shuttle/marta

Better and wider bike lanes

Better pedestrian paths to connect north and south Decatur

Meet to park/carpool for folks that live in Decatur and work elsewhere

Rideshare website

3b:

Meet neighbors because of carpooling

Could spend less time traveling with better traffic signal timing

Alternative vehicles(electric)

Golf carts

Scooters

4. When you think about.....

More diverse

A variety of things to do(r/b and gospel concerts)

Artwalks

Music/concerts

Local feel(local food and music)

Restaurants and amenities are within easy reach

More neighborhoods getting involvement

Arts festivals

Share best practices between neighborhoods (invite public officials)

Keep accessible financially

5A: who will need housing:

Seniors

Young people

Workforce

Next generation of children

Students

Teachers

5B: what type of housing;

Active senior developments

Student housing

Mother-in-law suites

Smaller townhomes/brownstones

Appropriate sized for user group

Youth hostels

Garage apartments

6:

Farmers markets

More community gardens

More swimming pools and well maintained

Awareness with community supported agriculture(CSA)

More bike paths

Recreation facilities

Gyms

Solar panels on school bldg rooftops

More LEED certified bldgs

Indoor performance facilities

Group 34. Alandete 05-12-2010 Wed 7pm

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

The city works hard to develop a plan (zoning, land-use, arts, recreation, strategy) and sticks to it; we might want to revisit planning more often but not to re-invent a strategic session but perhaps to tweak it; Be trend setters for others communities. Be more Green; Keep an eye on Taxes – lets **keep the city affordable**; how do we do this though when 20% of the citizens are over 60 years old?; Look carefully at increasing commercial tax base; continue to engage community via activities – an increase in festivals; city leadership must continue to be great., i.e. Decatur 101, volunteerism, informed citizenry; Foster business growth – don't rely entirely on DBA (while it is good it often becomes a lazy way to pitch services to the business community); Encourage local shopping; see economic development continue;

are there holes in our community infrastructure in terms of the types of businesses – why no liquor stores?; better grocery options; gas stations; boutique hotel; independent art-house movie theater; performance space; civic center; we question the population statistics....; explore New Urbanism ideals for development; city leadership needs to prepare for leadership transitions for those in non-political roles; resolve city/county issues

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

Recognize interdependence with Atlanta; Be engaged with the larger Metro Area; Include biking, walking in a transportation plan; actively seek greenspace opportunities; encourage tree planting; add green space around dekalb-county courthouse (pretty it up!) and same with the prisoner holding area across the street from the courthouse; explore constraints to improving our natural environment by being the county seat; Resolve relationship with the county; investigate need for all that parking space (lots) on Church and Commerce and Dekalb Medical Center; Improve flood areas; Reduce erosion;

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

Community Bus that transports folks from nearby neighborhoods to downtown for festivals, shopping, dining, etc.; Better sidewalks – farther from busy roadsides; Make traffic more manageable; wider sidewalks; Encourage smaller cars; Explore a trolley from East Lake to Avondale and Clairmont to VA to Agnes Scott.

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

The Arts Festivals we have; Art Galleries, How can we promote the arts? Make our city a mecca for the arts; Film Festival; Increase Public Art Space; Explore how other cities (Santa Fe, Taos, Asheville) have successfully fostered the Arts; Increase working space for artists; Find a way to encourage and support our existing Arts/Crafts/Musical/Theater Community; DBA should coordinate public showings of community arts within local business establishments; Provide opportunities for artists to perform in public spaces., i.e., have an open-mike on band-stand on Friday evenings; Beer Festival and Wine Festival are GREAT; Lets keep an eye toward diverse audiences for public performances;

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

In order to maintain diversity, there needs to be affordable housing; Very diverse population (Families, singles, partners, seniors).; Universal design standards should be encouraged; encourage LEED; plan on including places for our city workers to live; no more senior high-rises; emphasize aging in home; seek tax solutions to enable this.

6. How do we maintain affordability?

Make sure school dollars (taxes) are spent efficiently; consider limiting tax-free institutions in favor of taxable commercial owners; Explore annexation with great care.

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

Encourage walkability; Bike/walking trails; bike/foot patrols (police); Greenspace promotes healthy activities; sponsor races/walks/biking that would touch local businesses too as a draw to

Decatur; Continue Decatur Youth Rec; Expand Decatur Rec for Adults;; Focus on renovating or improving the Decatur Recreations Facility; Revisit free community bike program;

THEMES

AFFORDABILITY; DIVERSITY; ARTS; TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS; GREENSPACE

Roundtable – Wed. May 19, 2010 - 7:00p.m.-9p.m. Group #36

Sustainability

business development – keep viability of being a “destination” – brings \$ in to sustain community

round out “destination” offerings : need men’s clothing, ice cream, book store, turn Blue Moon into B&B, public library is essential/don’t lose it

we’ve had good leadership – good governance – Peggy is best in state

we’re in positive financial state

capital improvements only when there are grants

need to plan well for succession of leadership to maintain the quality we have had

structured ways for citizen involvement – continuous pulse (without being overwhelmed)

Natural Environment

more pervious space – get rid of paved parking lots

each business should be required to plant green

minimize footprint of parking by building parking decks

more public / private partnership for alternative energy i.e. solar, geothermal

codes to promote energy efficiency (which costs less when new build)

reduce air pollution through less car use

green space – preserve it, get more of it

Transportation

should be able to use alternative forms of transportation

stop traffic on Ponce Commerce St. to Commerce St. (or at least Church) – pedestrian only

more bike lanes and bike parking

sidewalks on every street

open air electric bus (like Tech trolley) not just through business area but through neighborhoods too (Thursday-Sunday?)

rework dangerous pedestrian crossings

golf cart friendly

bike station: park, snacks, bike maintenance

Life of Community

Taste of Decatur outdoors

B&B on the square

free parking during festivals

farmer's markets

amphitheatre

on paved MARTA plaza: raised beds with trees, kiosks selling newspapers-candy bars-ice cream-etc., canvas canopies/umbrellas for shade, food vending truck, chess board /game tables

cultural arts master plan – include use of performance arts space at DHS

remodel/redevelop/revitalize police station, Ebster, Beacon Hill area

more revitalization in Oakhurst – make easier walking across intersection

move police to where Maud Baker on Church St. used to be

Housing

affordable for: city work force, i.e. police-fire-teachers, military, seniors, people with disabilities, young folks, transitional college faculty, racial diversity

diversity of housing prices – mixed income

question about quality of life versus what's realistic

rental and ownership

we want to know what's happening with public housing area on Trinity and Commerce?

% of affordable housing in any new builds

lots of discussion about “what is affordable” and for whom?

salary incentives to live in city for city workforce i.e. housing allowance

more housing like Benson/Oakview lottery for city workforce

Healthy Living

MARTA plaza – shade awnings with game tables, chess etc.

more community gardens, CSA

more available garden space through rooftop or convert paved surfaces

new YMCA in downtown Decatur, updated

cross reference our transportation ideas

use “healthy living” as barometer for any decision city makes

Rec center and YMCA collaborating more around sports instead of kids being stretched between

farm to school

access to locally grown food for all incomes

revitalize empty buildings with healthy living in mind

free/cheap education about healthy eating – process vs. fresh, using kitchens in schools, rec center, Cooks Warehouse for this

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

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

Meeting Date: May 13, 2010

Time: 7 – 9 pm

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

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

population groups attend events- need to encourage ways to broaden

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

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

events, want to maintain all current festivals and events

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

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

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

these spaces

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

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

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

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

important

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

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

Connection between neighborhoods and downtown business district needs to

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

Expand positives of Square outward to encompass whole downtown business district

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

Make all intersections leading to downtown business district safer for pedestrians

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Develop and encourage use of alternative transportation methods to get around

City— pedicabs, rickshaws

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

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

Bring back trolley line in Oakhurst and connect to downtown area

Keep all MARTA stops in City

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

Commerce Drive, now a dead zone, unfriendly to pedestrians

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

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

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

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

Westchester Park is good example, use to connect green spaces

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

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

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

education of public about trees

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

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

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

composting, etc.

Transportation improvements would improve air quality (one group member was

surprised at Atlanta's poor air quality)

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

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

particular with intersection at East Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce

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

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

educate homeowners on need to do same

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

along Church Street

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

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

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

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

thing, multifamily housing should be part of the housing mix

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

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

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

Increasing walkability of City and other environmental ideas already discussed

would encourage healthy living

Maintain and increase recreation center programs to create community

connections and give residents a place to go

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

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

Have Oakhurst Community Garden and recreation center work together to

achieve above goals

Create more community gardens

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

etc. without having to worry about motor vehicle traffic

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

subject, suggest establishment of committee to oversee

Need more activity space at schools

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

McKoy ballfield, Ebster Park field)

Better cultural arts coordination

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

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

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

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

limit size of new house if tear down vs. renovation

Need survey of housing stock

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

Maintain image and sense of identity among City residents

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

Calleja 05-11-2010 9 a.m.

Housing in 20 Years (question 5)

We need housing for young and growing families – affordable condos and single-family homes.

We need to figure out how to enable retirees to stay in our community. The tax burden is too great for those on a fixed income.

We need housing that is affordable for all of our Decatur citizens including our school teachers, police officers and fire fighters.

We need to plan for growth that maintains diversity throughout our community.

There needs to be a diversity of housing including varying density with a conservation overlay. Dense housing doesn't mean no trees. It means more shared greenspaces – greenspaces that aren't just grass, but lots of trees.

Cluster developments – an updated version, would be a good solution for Decatur. This could be done in the defunct car dealerships and the old DeVrey Tech location. Get rid of the huge parking lots and build cluster homes with significant shared greenspace. However, this would mean that instead of 40 homes going into a development, you'd only get 20 or so, but then the land would end up being cheaper if it was zoned that way. It all starts with the zoning.

We don't want developments like Knob Hill and the new townhouses on Church Street and Scott Blvd. We want ones that have more shared greenspace and less concrete.

Having more height like 4-5 story in the downtown area would help with density especially if it was created as a live/walk to work plan similar to the space over the Yogurt Tap. So, if we took a lot of the 1-2 story buildings in downtown Decatur and built them up to 4-5 story, we could significantly increase our density while not getting rid of greenspace.

Preserve our Natural Environment (question 2)

We need to figure out how to balance the return on investment on land while preserving greenspace. Knob Hill did it wrong.

The city has to step up and own the environment – the city controls the zoning, thereby affecting price. So, a lot worth 3 million right now zoned for 90 homes maybe should only be zoned for 45 in the future. But the bank won't loan 3 million on a lot for 45 homes, but that would naturally drive down the value of that lot to about 1.5 million. The homes would end up actually having a higher value because the trees planted/preserved add value to the land. The city creates the economic environment through zoning and can zone to require more greenspace. – This would be visionary zoning.

Natural environments should be required in development.

The tree ordinance on the table should be supported.

There should be a zoning requirement around the tree canopy and number of contiguous trees.

We should have a quiet zone/time – for example on Sunday mornings from 8-12 and it should be part of the noise ordinance. No mowing/leaf blowers, etc.

The zoning codes should include requirements around green practices with dealing with storm water. Every lot should be required to be storm water neutral. However, we need to think beyond retention ponds. That isn't the way to deal with storm water.

We should give credits/incentives for green practices like:

- Pervious cement
- Green roofs
- Rain barrels
- Rain gardens

NOW is the time do all of this. Real estate/land prices are down and so if we enact zoning changes now, it won't be in the midst of a fever-pitch real estate market and we can actually take time and be thoughtful about what we want to achieve and work to avoid any unintended consequences.

How do we preserve things we appreciate? (question 1)

Keep doing round tables – even after this process is over

Themes that are discovered in these round tables need to be followed/communicated throughout the community so that when we go to solve these issues, people remain involved.

Increase use of “Open Government” tool.

Provide early notice of agenda topics for city council, planning board, zoning board, etc. People can't just drop whatever they're doing and attend meetings within the next 24 hours!

We love the Decatur Focus. It should include early notice of agenda topics and also provide a forum for suggestions, feedback and how to support a positions.

We need to bridge the gap between round table meetings and official city meetings (school board, city council, etc) and make them forums for civil discussion rather than them becoming so volatile and emotionally charged. A continuous channel of communication might help carry over the civil discussions/disagreement into the other meetings. We are able to disagree in harmony in the round table meetings, why not in these other ones? These could even be symbolic gestures.

There is value in “wild” spaces (similar to Waddell Park). Not every bit of land needs to have a use. Sometimes it is enough just to let it be a wild home to nature.

Enact mini-roundtables for the kickoff for topics and issues coming up in the next year. For example, get people together to kick off 2011 themes perhaps around walkability and environment. Theme each year and get people together to discuss in roundtables at the beginning how to put plans in action. Use this round table as a start!

Cultural Life in Decatur (question 4)

Fun activities create a community:

- Book Festival
- Arts Festival
- Beer Festival
- Beach Party
- Concerts on the Square

Combine active living to include all active living- maybe even have an active living festival with yoga and tai chi on the square and a casual bike tour of Decatur.

- Bikes
- Tai chi
- Yoga
- Table tennis

The green festival was a great start, keep it going, make it bigger!

Have the Marta plaza be a welcoming place where people can practice Tai Chi, Yoga, Dancing.

Create a free tram and continue to support the pedi-cab business. These help people decide to go into downtown Decatur and other retail areas (Oakhurst) and address parking issues.

Have a free/low-cost shuttle connecting residential areas including condos with the Dekalb Farmer’s Market and grocery stores. It should make stops all around the city – Winnona Park, Oakhurst, the square, Westchester area, Great Lakes, Ridgeland Heights

Expand Pool hours/calendar! The pools should be open through September. At least after school and on the weekends. We had a lot of interest and consensus around this topic and we think that if you create a partnership with a swim team such as Swim Atlanta, this could be done. Parents and kids want to swim after school. Retirees and stay-at-home parents want to swim during August and September. We know there's an old ordinance that says that pools can't be open when schools are, but is that really necessary? What are we really trying to achieve with that?

Retail is a huge part of cultural life in Decatur. The square is great, but maybe having one chain shop beyond CVS wouldn't be a bad thing. Something like the GAP might be a great addition that might actually draw more people to the square. Also, we're missing a huge opportunity with Suburban Plaza. We realize it's out of the City of Decatur limits, but even if it doesn't become part of Decatur, it is the entrance to our town and we should work with the owners to attract new, businesses there. Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, GAP would be welcome.

Chernock 05-13-2010 7pm

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

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

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

- Tree Ordinance
 - The city needs to create a better balance between residential and commercial needs around the issue of tree removal
 - It was suggested that Emory University has an interesting policy on trees and open space on the campus, and would be worth looking at by the city's staff

- L.E.E.D Standards
 - There was disagreement in the group about whether mandating LEED standards for downtown buildings were a good idea.
 - Recognition of importance of being energy efficient, but skeptical over the effectiveness of the LEED program
 - It was suggested that the city use trade-offs to incentive developers to use certain building standards downtown, but not specifically what those trade-offs should be

- Group members wanted to make sure that any brownfields in the city were identified and cleaned up

- Lead paint is an issue in Decatur because there are many older homes

- Water
 - Public education is a good way to help people conserve water
 - Run-off is a problem in the city. Chamblee, Sandy Springs and other cities require run-off septic tanks

- Parks
 - McKoy Park's pool is built way too small for the population, but the park is important for the community's cohesion
 - Glenlake park has a storm-water run-off problem

- Pools
 - The city should look into developing a private pool in Decatur

- The city could form a task force or conduct research on what other cities are implementing around sustainable practices

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

- Need bike paths on Clairemont

- Would like to see a light rail system from Agnes Scott to Emory with no more than a 10 minute wait for pick-up

- One person mentioned that the Cliff Bus both eco-friendly and free for all residents, and that the city needed to explore more partnership opportunities with Emory around this
- A trolley bus was also discussed
 - How could this work?
 - Possible for tourist use in the city
 - Density is a huge issue to make something like this happen
- Someone also said that they would like to see a Emory to Decatur to Oakhurst bus route
- Creating a more accessible downtown Decatur to those with disabilities is important
 - More dedicated handi-cap parking is needed
- Would like to see use a commuter lots
- And would also like to see a new phone app that tells you exactly where an available parking spot is

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

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

- Another positive characteristic is that the police and fire departments will work with you on a neighborhood block party
 - This needs to be better advertised

- The Georgia Center for the Book is another great asset

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

- There will be a need for both single-family housing and multi-family housing in the future

- We need a variety of housing for all sizes of families

- There is a good amount of rental units in the city now

- In terms of things done well, the redevelopment on the housing authority property is a positive for the city
 - Specifically because it adds density to downtown
 - Existing under-developed parking lots could support more density for downtown

- Another positive is the Artisan development, in terms of size, scale and in-fill nature of it

- However, the city needs to establish height transitions between downtown and single-family housing neighborhoods

- The city also has to recognize that while gentrification may not be widespread, it is occurring to older and lower income residents

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

make a difference?

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

- The farms to schools program is good for people’s health

- The Oakhurst Community Garden’s classes are a positive for the city as well

Clower 05-15-2010 9 a.m.

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

- The elderly will be a growing segment within the community
 - There is a feeling that there will be more adult children returning home to play the role of caretakers for parents that still live in Decatur
 - In addition, there will be an increase in the number of multi-generational homes, not just for caretaking, as a result of either economic conditions or cost of living issues
 - This will have a potential impact on schools depending on overall dynamics of the change
 - For the elderly that want to remain in their current homes, there is a concern about affordability given the current tax burden on each household.
 - Suggestions include reducing the tax rate for certain age levels potentially mirroring social security ages. this will allow those on fixed income to better manage living expenses
- Young people in their 20s and 30s is another area that will need housing and a potential growing segment
 - Decatur is an in-town suburb and the trend is for them to want to live closer to an in-town area
 - Young families moving into Oakhurst is one trend that was noted
 - Concern with ability to move into Decatur and have affordable first or second homes; concern that salaries for younger people may not allow them to move into the city
- When posed with the question, what kind of housing do these segments need?, the team responded with: Single family homes, condominiums and apartments
- Other points with the type of housing that is needed:
 - Affordable from the standpoint of the tax burden (tax burden was an area that came up repeatedly)
 - Manageable for low or fixed income individuals

- Smaller starter homes are needed for those that want to move into the city
- Townhomes, apartments and condos all appeared to be viable alternatives for attracting as wider range of demographics
- With additional housing being developed, make sure the city has a managed density program/tracking
- Create a first-time home buyer program that is subsidized with grants or other means
 - codes on limitations on the size and cost of the homes in this program
 - individual would need to qualify for the program based on income or demographics
 - regulations around the amount of time they must live in the home, the contribution for the down payment, the upkeep of the home, etc
- For the elderly, there are several types of housing that will be needed
 - "Age in place" where they stay in existing home
 - Tiered care facilities where the elderly can move from living independently to different levels of managed care within on facility
 - Concern about reducing the tax burden for the elderly without eroding the overall tax base
- From the perspective of demographic, ethnic diversity
 - affordability is an issue
 - concern about reversing the 2000-2007 trend where the African-American population shrunk
 - Appears that the increase in the cost of living had an impact on the diversity of the city
 - Some of the first time home buyer programs could help this
 - In addition, need programs that could attract those that are challenged with the cost issues
 - Quality schools are an attractor to the city but that seems to come with a price/increase in cost of living

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

- Reduce residential % of tax base by attracting a wider range of businesses
- there is a need for business development initiatives
 - Tax relief for specified periods of time
 - make the tax base competitive with other areas
 - Potential for building on the existing base of medical businesses given the proximity to Emory and the CDC
 - Need to help entrepreneurs understand the business opportunities in Decatur
 - What are areas of unmet demand for businesses?
 - Grocery or farmers markets in all areas of the city
 - Affordable clothing stores
 - Toy or children stores
 - General discussion on more day to day stores; the team understands that the big box retailers have taken a lot of this away but there is the desire to have more

affordable shops move back into the city so that you can walk as opposed to driving

- there is a suggestion for the city to conduct Market surveys and promotions to determine what type of businesses/shops the community is willing/able to support
 - Chamber of Commerce or city needs to lead effort on how to recruit and sustain a broader range of small to medium size businesses
- There is a need for retail shops for residents vs. the retail shops for visitors
 - Daily life needs vs. boutique shops

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

- Ten years from now, we will need more alternatives
- Need more designated bike lanes but "Share the road"
- Need to educate the bikers on the proper use of bike lanes and riding in the road
- Need more parking alternatives
- Do not reduce the current number of lanes, especially on busy streets
- Need mechanisms/plans for better accommodating commuters into and out of the city
 - As congestion has grown, there are more cut thru in neighborhoods
 - Congestion on some streets during peak times is causing residents to alter driving directions or patterns
- Concerning routes and destinations
 - Need traffic plans to manage the commuters just passing thru vs. the people who are traveling in the city and have a certain destination
 - Need more core business areas
 - Strengthen government and business partnerships in traffic planning and solutions
- Alternatives in the future for traveling in the city
 - More pedicabs and 'rickshaws'
 - Trolley or tram or bus alternatives that use electricity or natural gas and have designated regular routes within the city limits
 - Participants expressed they would support using these to go shopping and to entertainment in the city as long as the price point was reasonable
 - concern for how to fund or subsidize this option but maybe there are grants that the city could obtain
- Overall concern that congestion will increase and somehow there needs to be a plan to manage this increase in congestion and parking; need for overall traffic plan that includes alternatives

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

- Add bike lanes where possible/easy but not at the expense of car traffic
- Don't compromise the good lifestyle that already in the city; already a very vibrant healthy/walking community
- Develop a large green space downtown; replace some of the older buildings in the city with a large downtown park area; need more green space directly in the city center
- Develop programs to encourage healthy activities
 - Promote/publicize existing opportunities, especially the neighborhood centric ones
 - Grant programs for the city or neighborhood associations

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

- Balance development for revenue enhancement with impact on environment
- Better manage storm water runoff; there were several examples of where new development was causing localized flooding in areas when there are heavy rains
- Do a better job of overseeing/regulating development; in one example a plot of land had been clear cut but no definitive development was ongoing and this was causing erosion/flooding issues
- Encourage alternative transportation plans as we mentioned
- Proactive planning for growth, especially impact to downstream or surrounding areas
- Preserve and maintain the tree canopies
- Need traffic plan to keep traffic moving
 - Look at traffic light timing
 - maintain existing busy lanes

When you think about the overall environment of our city, what is most important to you?

- Quality beer and restaurants
- maintain support for and expand existing festivals
 - city slogan should migrate toward: homes, schools, churches...festivals
- Add a 'big city park'
- Relocate/enhance county seat elements/structures
- Review unoccupied high-rise square footage for possible use by county government
- There is a need for a plan for better use of existing, unoccupied square footage all over the city

Cohen 05-11-2010 7pm

Recap of Session One

Things that are going well:

- Schools
- Identity
- Intimate Size
- Character
- Relatively well-run city government

Things that are challenges:

- Taxes
- Traffic
- Little Resident input on development
- Remaining development opportunities (e.g., abandoned properties)

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

- Mixed use development (Resident/Business)
- Keep taxes in check to promote economic diversity of the population of Decatur (so a variety of people can afford to live here)
- Maintain safety/security (e.g., crime) – both public perception (i.e., “feels” safe) and the actual crime rate
- Stress the environment in planning (i.e., consider green space)
- Promote a walking environment – keeps people healthy, gets them out there (so there is presence and increased perceived safety), sidewalks
- Bikes
 - Need bike lanes
 - More courtesy for bikes from motorists (share the road)
 - Have areas where it’s safe for kids to bike as well (especially residential), not just bike lanes, but raise awareness
 - Cyclists need to be courteous too
 - “zip” bikes to share – public bike program
- Crossing railroad tracks is difficult for bikers and pedestrians, need more options, will help connect Decatur Square area to Oakhurst
- Pedi-cabs
- Festivals – perhaps add music festival, food festival and soap box derby
- Preserve green space
- Update/upgrade school/recreation facilities (e.g., basketball hoops at local school in disrepair)
- Need variety in new businesses (not just new restaurants). For example, a bookstore.
- Maintain recycling and other programs

- More than 2 electronic recycling days per year
- Trash amnesty days where residents can dispose of anything
- Keep initiatives manageable so they get accomplished
- City ordinances to keep property attractive (lawns, broken cars) – Keep Decatur Beautiful

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

- Biking
- Sidewalks
- Look at underutilized public land for green space
- Community gardens
- Water
 - Water quality in streams is bad, recent test showed sewage (bacteria) and alkaline (means dumping of cleaning products)
 - Beautify creek areas
 - Creek next to Winnona Park Elementary has warning signs (don't let children/pets play in water)
 - Continue to test water in creeks and streams
- Need dedicated environmental city official
- Does “pay as you throw” encourage poor sanitation, people to get around policy, or hoard trash?
- Develop incentives for residents/businesses to be environmentally forward (e.g., tax breaks, cash).
- Provide education to residents – city can offer class (like “this old house” seminar) or post information on how to be environmentally conscious on the city website
- Home audit from GA Power
- Develop program to cut down on plastic (e.g., bottles, bags) – incentive to live green
- Upgrade city tree policy – while you need a permit to cut a tree of a certain size, perhaps we also need a “replace” policy (need to plant a tree to replace cut one).
- City buildings should pursue environmental certification

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

- More pedestrian space around Square. Shut down street, eliminate competition for parking spaces
- Eddie's Attic side of courthouse loop backs up with court-goers trying to get a close spot. Eliminate those parking spaces (and ones in front of Brick Store?)
- Make entry into courthouse parking deck easier to alleviate traffic on McDonough and cut down on idling cars
- Add a deck or two and eliminate small parking spot clusters
- Better advertise free parking at courthouse after hours
- Promote walking, less driving - *show* people where to park (signage)
- More trees/benches on MARTA plaza

- Some worry about push back from the city that current green space is not used enough in order to justify developing even more – need to prove demand
- Pedi-cabs
- Make it easier to get to all areas of Decatur (e.g., a fare-based trolley, link to other neighborhoods and Emory)

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

- 4th of July fireworks
- Gatherings, festivals – all the things that make Decatur look good to non-residents
- Wine, beer, book festivals – all develop community feeling
- Like balance of Decatur-resident-geared festivals vs. events that draw from wider Atlanta/SE crowd.
- Attracting artists/authors from far and wide
- Forefront of technology (e.g., WiFi)
- Great restaurants (don't have to leave Decatur and can walk to them)
- Food festival
- Larger farmer's market and move to a more central location
- Put everything on the Decatur website – “advertise” what is going on, improve communication
- Share each other's neighborhood association information – links/directory to contacts, maybe put links to associations on city website
- Blogs – community volunteers – centralize information
- Walking tours/maps (Mayor's walking tour)
- Put information about the city at the Oakhurst fire station or restaurants so that Oakhurst residents feel connected and don't have to go to Square area to get information about City of Decatur

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

- Don't think people live and die in Decatur (some disagreement on this point)
- Will I be able to afford Decatur taxes on a retirement income?
- Attract young folks – to expand tax base and alleviate taxes for older citizens
- House values going up – becoming less affordable – how can young families afford to move in?
- Starter homes are endangered (people build on, less and less 2/1s in City, etc.)
- Smaller and more affordable homes will attract not only young folks (singles, couples, beginning families), but also empty nesters who wish to downsize, widows/widowers, etc. which will contribute age diversity to Decatur.
- Help older folks continue to afford their homes
- Continuing care, independent living, assisted living (nicely done, not a high rise or condo)
- Apartments and rentals
- There is the threat that with many in the same demographic moving in at the same time, we are boxing out new residents (will there be mass exodus/turnover).
- We are a victim of our own success

- Force builders to balance new expensive houses with affordable housing (e.g., for every \$700K home, ensure a \$200K house built)
- Remain attractive to young singles and young families
- Market City of Decatur as different from Greater Decatur. Perception that Greater Decatur is rough, dangerous.
- Annexing underutilized property to build affordable housing
- Live/work areas for artists (e.g., Castleberry Hills, Studioplex)

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

- Walkable
- Programs for kids and elders (in Decatur magazine)
- Let schools allow residents to use grounds (model is Winnona Park; Renfroe is other extreme and is chained up)
- Develop city to encourage residents to get moving/healthy
- Green space and gardens – get people outside and eating local food
- Is a Whole Foods grocery store coming?
- Feed better lunches at schools
- Several new restaurants specializing in local foods
- Improve water
- Make it easy for anyone to walk/bike anywhere
- Feeling safe everywhere (presence begets presence)
- Trolley would cut down the number of cars
- More parking decks and close off parking in city square would encourage walking – have very local, circular trolley to help
- Mark mileage on “paths” through the city so you know the marked circuit (Oakhurst has marked trees)
- Cops walking or on bikes

Decatur Round Tables

Group #8

At First Christian Church of Decatur, Tuesday, 2-4PM

Facilitator James Brewer-Calvert

What did we leave out of the minutes from the last gathering?

“urban camping discouraged” refers to panhandling

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

What 1998 goals did not get met? (Lynne Menne said, “World peace.”)

Communal support for no-parking zones in Decatur

Why not open delivery only zones in the PM

Re-emphasize parking options – communicate!

Tourism – market Decatur as place to stay

Decatur Tourism bureau brand new

Encourage development of B & Bs

Bike patrols – more, be more visible

Lights in trees (like Sundance Sq in Ft Worth)

DIG DEEPER! 6 Study Questions

#1 HOW DO WE SUSTAIN THE THINGS WE APPRECIATE?

We need to be intentional about maintaining the mix and diversity of people (ages, income, races, etc)

Emphasize positive aspects of diversity in development

Pay attention to people – make effort to listen and respond to people’s needs

Be civically involved to foster and develop ordinances that are for the good of the whole

Make civic meetings more inviting and exciting

Come up with new ways to involve the city

Resist temptation to “pull up the drawbridge after one is across”

We’ve got to broaden the tax base

How do we keep what we’ve got when the cost is only going to go up?

#2 HOW DO WE PRESERVE AND IMPROVE OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?

Get McDonalds out of the city – too much trash

Need more trash receptacles and for people to learn to use them

Make sure City does not sell water utility to private ownership

Address traffic and pedestrian concerns

AIR -- we are impacted by “controlled burns” 5 counties away

Turn empty lots into public green space

(this is a toss-up – every park and city land is off the tax base)

#3 HOW DO YOU GET FROM PLACE TO PLACE, AND HOW MIGHT THIS CHANGE IN 20 YEARS?

More Pedi-cabs

Pursue electric trams – link with MARTA

Require new development to include scooter and bike parking spaces

Sustain zip cars

Send message that we want/need MARTA in Decatur

Bike share system

Passenger vans and mini buses (like in nursing homes)

Valet parking

Jet packs (!)

We want convenience, and independence, and we want it now!

#4 WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU ABOUT OUR CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT?

Low crime rate – our police and fire are visible and available

Variety of cultural activities – book festival, arts, beers, carnivals...

Encourage more spontaneity – mimes, musicians, street artists...

Java Monkey and Eddie's Attic are tiny in comparison with wider interest

DHS Theater – is it available?

Encourage block parties

Missing: popular community theater

#5 WHO WILL NEED HOUSING IN 20 YEARS? DESCRIBE THE NEED.

Everyone

Baby boomers will be 70-90 years old

Fewer 2 story homes – smaller homes

Big is out – energy is costly

More homes will be “off the grid” re. solar panels, going green...

Congregant housing

More in-law suites

Allow kitchens in garage apts., basement apts.

Spread out the tax base

More high density condos

Sanctuary city

#6 IN TERMS OF “HEALTHY LIVING” WHAT WOULD MAKE THE MOST POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF DECATUR?

Be more engaged --offer to community classes at Agnes Scott

--elder hostel classes

--tourism bureau

Welcome Waffle House

Support movie industry

Be more pedestrian friendly

Foster more small group conversations – face to face with our neighbors

Groceries – put one in Oakhurst in addition to Kroger

More community gardens

More areas for walking and riding

Renovate recreation center

See more of local churches being involved

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 2: Exploring Our Stories and the Issues They Raise

Facilitator Name: Mickey Baskett

Meeting Date: 05-12-2010

Time: 9 am

Question 6 (from Discussion Guide)

In terms of healthy living, what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city?

A. Recreation center

A good functioning center

Needs funding for improvement

Location is good, walkable

Satellite locations would be good to have in various neighborhoods

B. Parks

Need to be more accessible - perhaps via a shuttle

Need to have a variety of activities

- More casual space for just “hanging out”

- **Dancing**

- Bocce ball

Each park could have recreation center type facilities

Resource sharing - example use the Boys & Girls Club as a senior day care when it is not in use

Adair Park needs upgrade -- water, restrooms

Use facilities in parks to help keep seniors engaged - **senior activities and places for them to meet**

Have enough parks and green space - keep parks updated and vital

C. Trails and Nature Walks

Need more of these within city or within parks

D. Pocket Parks

Need more

Trails

Benches

Question 3: How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in 10 years?

A. Intra city shuttle that has a regular route around business district

Need grants to fund it

10 minute interval schedule

Regular route

B. Bicycles

Need more bike lanes

Volunteer repair workshop to help people build and repair bikes

Program similar to yellow bikes for loan or rent (need a way to keep from getting stolen)

C. Need Improved Crossings at Intersections

- Will help improve traffic flow

- Will make it safer for walkers

- Trouble spots are Candler/College and Atlantic/Howard

D. Need a way to connect the high school with Renfro

- tunnel

- or bridge across RR

E. Walking

- Available shopping will result in more walking

- Need essentials, i.e. place to buy underwear, office supplies

- Need a variety store (example - Richard's Variety Store)

- Keep big box stores away

- Need more than boutiques but less than big box

- Idea - use one of the large buildings for a Marketplace that houses many vendors of essentials - not gifts -

- Need a movie theatre or show movies at an available space (in schools?)

F. Trolley

G. Encourage more electric cars (example Baskett's GEM car)

- have available charging stations

- monetary incentives

H. Driving

- Discourage use of gasoline cars
- Need better signage for parking areas
- After hours agreements with offices to allow parking

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

A. Safety

- Ways/places for teens to gather
- Safe ways for teens to get home
- Policing of school after hours to make sure kids are abusing the area - i.e. smoking on grounds
- Parent involvement in schools and neighborhoods promote safety and all parents share in keeping watchful eyes on kids

B. We have a great downtown area - need to maintain the small town destination aspect.

- Keep zoning in place for building heights - 80'
- Concentrate high density building in the downtown areas
- Growth isn't always good - evaluate growth with services to achieve proper balance
- Hold the line on dis-allowing high density developments in neighborhoods

Question 5: Who are the people who need housing in 20 years? What kind of housing?

A. Who

- Elderly
- Young Professionals
- Workforce
- Teachers

B. We want to maintain diversity of home owners - elderly, racial, work force, lower income. How can owners of houses afford to pay for houses as costs rise and taxes rise?

- Need a task force to figure out creative ideas so people can afford house in order to maintain diversity
- Elderly need to be able to afford their houses. Perhaps build specific housing for elderly in pockets of areas - i.e. small cottages, or group houses

C. What kind of housing do we want?

- Condos in downtown area
- Co-Housing (Eastlake model)
- Infill housing (Balance with greenspace - for example houses could be clustered as long as there was some common greenspace)
- Annexation - this is good and bad - helps with tax burden, but could stress infrastructure, schools
- Apartments in denser areas for lower income, young workers, students

Question 1: How do we sustain our city? .. preserve what we have?

A. Keep small neighborhoods

- Need better interaction between neighborhoods
- Need ways to help people maintain their houses to keep them up.
- Need a city directory of residents

- Stamp out elitism - How? Foster attitudes
- Balance gentrification - How?
- Each citizen needs to be personally proactive to help keep diversity in city

deSilva 05/11/10 2pm Group 7

From Session One:

- Need for more housing for disabled (like Park Trace) – there is a very long (60 people) wait list for vacancies.
- Growing our own food – local farming – for residents and restaurants
- Create an adopt-a-farm program where restaurants sponsor a farm

Question 1:

- Decatur is a free-standing community with economic diversity. There is the danger of losing this diversity and becoming an enclave of only one economic strata.
- We need to maintain public housing.
- We need to maintain the “in-between” housing for working class (teachers, firefighters, etc.)
- We need more apartment complexes
 - Encourage more Emory students to live in Decatur
 - High disposable income
 - Create a college town environment
- Re-develop brownfield properties or abandoned properties.
- There has been an increase in the number of small families moving to the area and the current housing stock does not fit the need. (the value of the land higher than the value of the existing house – encouraging tear downs and complete rebuilding)
- Avoid the example of the VA – Highlands
 - Overpriced homes
 - Overpriced businesses (due to overpriced rents)
 - All leads to a loss of economic diversity
- How do we sustain the entire city?
- How do we incorporate the views / needs of all city residents (across all economic levels)
- The process (government / bureaucracy) should not be / become a barrier to participation
- Can city support landlords who create affordable housing / apartments?
- Need more adult only swimming pools, services, and amenities for the elderly
 - Jitney Services – licensed by the city
 - Survival / wilderness training (for when things fall apart)

Question 2:

- With increases in the number of city gardens we need to use pesticides carefully – limited types, only certain times of day, etc.

- Protect green spaces by ticketing those who walk across them
- More focus on storm-water run-off and the use of landscaping chemicals that can pollute run-off
- Conduct a study of water run-off and encourage better run-off management by property owners
- Protect green space for walking, for farming
- Focus on noise pollution (emphasize the value of silence)
 - Leaf blowers
 - Unmuffled cars
 - Radios / car stereos
- Composting or other use for food waste generated by city schools (biomass energy)
- No Styrofoam

Question 3:

- We need to feel safer and be safer to get around without a car
- Create a “Yellow Bike” program: free bikes available around city for anyone to use
- Create a bike program to get people out of their cars
- Create a tax or toll for those driving their cars into the downtown area (i.e. London)
- Educate people on how to get around without cars
- Safety! Protection from motorized vehicles and from criminals
- Jitney service for the elderly and disabled
- Turn empty lots into city owned parking garages
- Get more people to use the existing DeKalb Co. parking deck

Question 4:

- Gun free zones – schools, festivals, entire city
- Our festivals and events are not engaging all of our residents (not very diverse)
- Diversify our schools equals diversifying our city (start with kindergarten)
- Create a culture of diversity awareness
 - We are not all alike
 - Block parties
 - Tea and coffee conferences
 - City Schools of Decatur sporting events
 - Use city website for a city wide “conference call”

Question 5:

- More available senior / disabled housing (not necessarily assisted living)
- Develop resources for those with Alzheimer’s (or other disabilities) and for their caregivers
- Transportation resources for the elderly
- Walkability
- Senior day care (incorporate into recreation center like Fulton Co.)

- Create partnership between schools (after school programs) and senior orientated groups. Cross-generational exposure gets the young thinking about the issues of getting older and being older

Final Thoughts:

- Develop existing brownfields and abandoned properties
- Evict absentee landlords
- Develop tax revenue from city gardens
- Create a property tax freeze for those meeting certain criteria
 - Those of age 65 and
 - Owns a home that is paid in full and
 - On a fixed income
- Review and overhaul the rules regarding Historic Preservation
 - Do not stifle growth or personal tastes
 - Still protect historic components
 - Current rules paint with too broad a brush

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

Facilitator Name: Stephanie DiLorio

Meeting Date: 5-12-2010

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.

1- Maintaining the city

Residents remain vocal and continue to participate in civic life

City develops creative ways outside of property taxes to find funding

Maintain and strengthen Decatur's brand (i.e. Oakhurst flags, Decatur logo)

Create Decatur Chamber of Commerce to recruit new businesses

Provide small business advisory (i.e. SCORE Atlanta)

Market Decatur to Metro Atlanta

Reach out to and convince larger retailers to find ways to serve smaller, walking cities such as Decatur

Comprehensive review of zoning codes and variance policy

Follow best practice for development, look to Boulder, CO and Naperville, IL as best practice leaders

Create buffer zone between residential and commercial properties

Ensure new development meets needs of diverse community and encourages diversity and sustained growth (diversity described as racial, age, socioeconomic)

Develop affordable housing

2- Natural Environment

Canopy replacement

3- Transportation

Run a trolley along main arteries to connect neighborhoods with downtown and other frequently visited places within or near the city (Emory, Edgewood, Dekalb Farmers Market, E. Decatur Station)

Improve parking signage

Implement bike lanes, specifically on Clairemont, Church, College

Create pedestrian zone by closing Ponce from Suntrust to Leon's

Eliminate parking on E. Court and N. McDonagh and turn into green space

4- Overall Environment

Create/support thriving arts scene

Keep residents happy (Happy residents = Happy neighbors = Happy community)

Encourage and fund block initiatives aside from block parties (i.e. block garden; block composting program, tree plantings)

Maintain festivals

Strengthen/improve communication coming from the City

Spotlight businesses, programs, people

5- Housing

Mixed use housing for aging population (i.e. necessities available in development or within walking distance)

Incentives for property developers/owners to encourage affordable housing, look to

Charleston and Savannah on rehabbing existing buildings with incentives and tax credits

Cooperate and partner with non-profits on grant applications for affordable housing (affordable housing needed for low income earners, young professionals, young families)

Balance density with affordable housing

Convert unused commercial property to residential (affordable) property

6- Healthy Living

Teach children to walk and bike early

Implement bike lanes and trolley

Create "bike stations" (i.e. areas of racks) and offer "bike days" (clinics on using, fixing, maintaining bikes)

Create more and improve existing greenspace

Create more community gardens

Leverage existing resources, better use of public buildings and educational institutions as healthy living and multi-purpose spaces open to citizens, non-profits and businesses (i.e. Decatur H.S. and Agnes Scott)

Secure funding for Decatur Rec Center overhaul

Implement intergenerational programs such as gardening and arts at Rec Center

Engage medical community in active/healthy living programs

Make the Decatur Focus more timely (by the time the Focus arrives events are often passed)

Have active living department serve as a clearinghouse for all active events in the City (not just the ones offered by the Department of Active Living/Rec Center)

Create Decatur Active living / Healthy Living Newsletter available in hard copy and online

Communicate resident benefits to residents

Engage Decatur businesses with active living efforts (i.e. running stores, restaurants)

Implement micro environmentalism such as Decatur initiatives to: use alternative transportation; use less power; visit community gardens; eat healthy in Decatur

Create community bulletin boards and place throughout the City

SESSION 2: EXPLORING OUR STORIES AND THE ISSUES THEY RAISE

Facilitator Name: Fred L. Cavalli

Meeting Date: May 13, 2010

Time: 7:00 pm-9:00 pm

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

- Review land use / zoning – especially commercial/residential transitions
- Tree preservation
- More sidewalk trees
- Planting and replanting
- Education and support for tree owners
- Encourage green building/development
- Green building ordinance?
- Encourage trees in parking lots
- Preserve commitment to height ordinance—80 foot max
- City fiscal responsibility
- Too many employees?

- Pensions?
- Careful consideration of all annexation issues
- Review/strengthen infill rules
- Implement overlay zone on all C-2 / R-60 abutments
- Achieve uniformity

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

- Encourage and support restaurants in using green take-out containers
- Encourage/require institutional and commercial recycling
- Enhance walkability
- Improvements to Commerce Drive for pedestrians / Ponce to Clairemont traffic calming
- More sidewalks and bike lanes
- Pedestrian islands on large streets
- Bike lanes and other improvements for biking on Clairemont
- Review execution of new parking on Church Street at Glenlake Pool – traffic safety? (road narrowing and reducing lanes is a good idea)
- Enhance/support bike parking/racks
- Educational programs (rec center?) for nutrition, personal finance, and gardening
- Encourage more personal and community gardens
- Pedestrian/bikeways connecting neighborhoods and other areas
- Public garbage cans—add more
- Add more dog waste stations

3)

4)

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

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

Finch 05-12-2010 2 p.m.

Decatur Strategic Plans Session 2

In the first session, what did someone say or do that moved you or stimulated new ideas? (Note: not on flip chart)

- Good social involvement: Lots of community activity: Book fair, beer/wine, arts events
- “Decatur needs a face lift”
- Sustainability
- Diversity

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

- We need transportation options in and out of Decatur
- Currently can only run limited number of errands on foot
- It takes from 7 to 15 minutes to get from Oakhurst to here (downtown Decatur)
- “I live downtown” and walk a lot
- We can ride Marta to the airport, arts etc
- Growth in pop. Density will create parking issues
- City Ordinances need to have “vision”
- We need lots of options downtown: Zip, bus, taxi, Cliff Bus, bikes
- Support the Beltline
- Trolley
- Expand the Cliff Service
- How can we encourage people to walk (or drive less)
- You can now download an app that tells you where Cliff and buses are in real time
- Incentivize walking or using mass transit
- Educate, advertise and promote options
- Offer more options than driving
- Healthier
- Make it physically safe to ride bikes with bike lanes
- Create protected bike paths (designated like in Paris)
- Make it safe to ride all the way to five points
- How about no cars in downtown Decatur (i.e. Quincy Market in Boston)
- Light rail line down Clairmont

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

- I live in downtown Decatur so I can walk and enjoy the parks.
- Local shopping can enable people to only have one car
- Mow (dead) buildings down and create more parking
- Underground parking
- How about a Trader Joe's?
- Redesign Kroger
- Urban grocery: smaller footprint
- Multi level Kroger
- Need affordable housing-apartments
- Make it safer to cross tracks
- More affordable taxes
- Annexation-higher density equals more revenue
- More community gardens
- Put pressure on school board to accept and prepare for growth
- Lots of options to do mid rise developments
- Quality parks and transportation will make people want to live here
- How about a Central Park in Decatur? (Like New York)
- More assisted living options for older people (all 3 levels: independent, assisted, and nursing)
- Single families: Smaller lots, more efficient and better designed homes
- Portland and Seattle: great design
- Provide help with meals, a la carte options
- Be green and environmentally alert

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

- Get younger people involved
- Too many rules makes Decatur seem "fuddy duddy"
- More activities for tweens and parents
- We need a skateboard park or a way to make skateboarding accessible in downtown Decatur
- More outside basketball courts
- Take care of what we have

(Sustain and preserve continued)

- Support Trees Atlanta ((Oakhurst)
- Glenwood Park-looks well cared for
- Allow unique character to stay
- More little shops/ charm
- Continue and expand involvement
- Encourage people to spend locally
- Make it a “destination location” and bring money into Decatur
- Monthly or bi-monthly street party (close traffic off)
- Maximize use of web site and internet
- Better links
- Create one central website for city and neighborhood and business organizations
- Fuller city calendar of events
- Preserve historical sites

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

- More parks and community gardens
- More education (i.e. composting, rain barrels)
- Clean up and control storm water
- More trees and ‘smarter trees’
- Eliminate or reduce car transportation
- Encourage car pools
- Use web to find buddies
- Live/work units
- Local tax credit for alternative use of energy

(Preserve the environment continued)

- Tax credit for sustainable energy
- Decatur version of Cliff Bus

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

- The Book Festival
- Festivals in general
- They bring the community together and attract outsiders
- People come back
- We need huge parking signs
- We need a Decatur Arts Council with money to spend on activities and approve projects
- More ongoing support of arts
- Ongoing partnerships between businesses and events

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

- Make stairs more accessible
- More Corporate support of physical fitness
- Educate workplace to be healthier
- Eliminate student parking at Decatur High
- Farm to school programs
- Require restaurants to have truth in advertising (within reason)

Healthy Living continued

- Promote and expand recreation centers active living
- More place to play (fields for ad hoc games)
- Open more school spaces
- Use grass not mulch
- Better options to dispose dog litter
- Healthier kids-more recess
- More after school activities, more play grounds

Themes, ideas and topics that stood out:

- Travel and transportation
- Housing needs: affordable, diverse, very attractive
- Large, green spaces that are “multi use”
- Small green spaces, pocket parks
- Gatherings-art and music
- Created two jobs-arts council and web maintenance
- Incubate small businesses
- Disincent vacant buildings by reassessing taxes
- Incent incubator businesses with tax advantages
- Sustainability

Garrett 05-13-2010 7 pm

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

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

- Includes waste management
- Quality education

Maintaining citizen involvement is key

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

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

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

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

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

Discourage “McMansions”- Encourage development appropriate to neighborhood

Develop guidelines to create scalability within neighborhoods

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

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

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

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

2- Protecting our natural environment?

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

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

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

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

Looking for alternatives to asphalt

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

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

Require tree replacement when trees are cut

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

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

Encourage green and white roofs

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

Decatur should be proactive with greening the building stock- city could offer incentives for improvements similar to toilet replacement program where green development is encouraged
City could aggregate energy efficiency technology (so that certain technology may be cheaper through a bulk contract)- Does DeKalb County have program already in place?

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

3- TRAVEL

How do we get around?

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

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

Promoting alternatives to the car for travel within the city

More bicycling capabilities

Promoting more walkability and bikability and easier intersections!

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

Bikeways encourage slower traffic

Have a revival of the trolley system connecting all of Decatur

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

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

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

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

Vibrancy of core city- need retail and dining diversity

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

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

Concerts on the Square help connect us

Frequency of community events is key to community engagement

Festival focusing on Books is a very neat idea

Abundance of Irish-style family pubs is a key

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

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

Develop outdoor art (such as Valentine)-

- Host temporary exhibits such as the Cow or the Sandy Springs Turtle

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

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

Revive the Fidelity Bank Building Christmas Tree

Christmas Tree/Menorah Lighting in Oakhurst

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

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

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

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

5- Housing

What do the demographics look like?

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

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

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

For the ‘Keenagers’

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

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

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

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

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

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

6- Healthy Living

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

- Celebrate teachers and education through special programs and events

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

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

Active neighborhood watch programs

Walking to destinations

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

Access to convenience stores

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

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

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

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

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

Neighborhood associations promote block parties

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

7- Themes

Celebrate education and teaching!

Provide incentives for a variety of things

Environmental focus

Grant coordinator could help fund many activities

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

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

Facilitator Name: P. Gilbert/J. Gregory

Meeting Date: 5/13/10

Time: 7-9pm

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

7- Topics from last meeting

- diversity

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

2- Comments about “Facts About Decatur”

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

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

- patronize local businesses; keep small (independent) businesses thriving; is there a way to prevent big box/chain stores from locating in Decatur? Our unique stores and restaurants keep people coming here
- enhance walkability
- educate people about the history of Decatur; “Decatur 101” is good way to learn history, could offer more often and with more focus on history, e.g., Decatur’s role in civil rights, school desegregation; someone could develop a specific session or course, [Encyclopedia Decatur](#)
- more winter/fall activities, festivals
- Why is there no diversity in these round table groups? [Because of] how it is advertised and communicated?
- Diversity is about more than race, also income and age
- Community preservation should also include preservation of the people who make up the community. MLK work weekend 1x/year a good gesture, but need more effort to preserve Decatur’s cultural heritage through preserving economic diversity, helping people stay in their homes..
- Importance of economic diversity: our police officers, firefighters can’t afford to live here.

- Need more affordable homes, trusts to keep homes affordable.
- Attract more businesses to support the tax base.
- Need for Callaway Building to be bought and redeveloped. *[Facilitator's note: group included a former City employee who mentioned this – most or all of other participants did not know which building it is, or what occupies it or who owns it. All agreed redevelop would be good.]*

3- Question #4: What is most important about our overall environment (festivals, cultural life, etc)?

- Need more cultural venues, e.g., a place to see independent films, maybe a film festival but ongoing. Library offers some; might be good venue.
- Encourage informal performance, e.g., street performers. Need areas for them; making Ponce a pedestrian mall would encourage (from Commerce to Commerce)
- Spoleto *[mentioned as example of great cultural event]*
- weekly market, more than organic food, include arts, crafts, performers
- more activities in parks (not have everything at the Square)
- more sharing of rec facilities *(between City and CSD?)*
- progressive block parties a way to help neighborhoods get acquainted; could use parks to host; in winter could be inside
- garden walks
- walking tours

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

- more walking and bicycling
- improve traffic lights for pedestrian safety, add audio signals
- improve conditions at all RR crossings (Candler, S. McDonough, Atlanta St.)
- make possible to cross Scott Blvd. safely
- improve curb accessibility, significant problem for elderly people
- enhance safety for bikes and for pedestrians; consult experts at Ga Tech who are developing new ways for all transportation modes to share roadways
- need warning siren in more locations *[one participant did not think Decatur has a siren at all, sparked substantial discussion; facilitator recommended she find out when the monthly test is conducted and make a point to be at home and see if she can hear it]*
- provide bike safety education, esp for children

- provide a shuttle service to reduce traffic, e.g., like the Cliff Bus at Emory
- electric cars and buses; privately owned so not a drain on the City (another biz to pay taxes!)
- more Rec programming in different locations around town, e.g., tai-chi at the MARTA plaza
- more community gardens where people can grow their own food
- better amenities in parks: benches, water fountains

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

- eliminate some [vehicular] traffic
- reduce energy use: create subsidy for people to invest in less expensive solar energy systems so they can generate own power and sell excess back to the grid
- rainwater harvesting
- City provide information to residents about how to reduce energy use
- secure grant funding to support senior residents investing in rainwater harvesting, solar energy systems
- tax incentives for green solutions
- increase landscape plantings wherever possible, even small increments, to relieve all the pavement; find neighborhood groups to maintain (instead of City)
- encourage people to reduce turf and use more native plants
- establish a green award to encourage people to value biodiversity in their yards, reduce use of chemicals
- City acquire green space when it becomes available to preserve
- invest in consultants to get needed expertise

3- Question #5: Housing

- need to be age-friendly, affordable for retirees and for moderate/low income families and individuals
- more mixed housing: mixed ages/life stages, mixed incomes --- INTEGRATED LIVING
- Decatur should strive to be a model for integrated living and healthy living
- need critical amount of affordable housing mixed in throughout the community (not concentrated in one place, like public housing); look for established models elsewhere in the country
- need services closer to where people live, to promote walking for the entire City, e.g., groceries
- shuttle as part of solution, to provide access to services
- older people need lower maintenance housing

- housing swap program (see Oberlin, OH): match older/empty nesters with young, growing families, who swap houses with each other

- can't neglect the young for the old!

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

- shuttle service, alternative transportation

- keep vehicles out of downtown core and offer free perimeter parking

- free scooter parking, free bike parking (there is some, need more)

- continue sidewalk improvement/repair program, but find a way to preserve the large, old trees that create most of the problems!

- close Ponce from Commerce to Commerce

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

GRUBB 5.13.10 9am NAVO

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

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

How do we get from place to place?

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

What is important for the natural environment?

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

Who needs housing in City of Decatur?

- Lower income groups
 - o Lower the standard of what is affordable
 - 250k is not affordable to many
 - o Need a stronger rental market
- How can the city become more involved in improving affordability?
 - o Require a % affordable of new developments
- Provide housing options for seniors – one story living
- Be careful with tax breaks, so as not to encourage only the wealthy to move to Decatur. (such as allowing seniors not to pay school taxes)

- Trade greenspace for developed space
 - o Of course this tradeoffs hurts affordability
- Provide jobs to areas of low income housing
- We call Decatur diverse...but is it really?
 - o The City is still segregated I some ways
 - o The conversation about being racially and economically diverse needs to be encouraged by the City
 - o Expand MLK day to address this
 - o Strengthen capacity of minority groups
-

Parking Lot Ideas:

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

Group #13

Facilitator: Amy Hoying

Meeting Date: May 11, 2010

Meeting Time: 7-9 pm

Location: Navo Church, Oakhurst

(Listed in order we discussed based on importance to group members)

Q6: Healthy Living

- Install bike lanes on most major roads in the city
- Sidewalk improvement to encourage walking (repairing cracks, adding curbs, cutting back overgrown vegetation to improve safety)
- Improved railroad crossings to get from north side of city to south side and vice versa for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improve building codes to improve building health, air quality, water conservation, and energy conservation
- Incentives for new construction and retrofitting existing buildings to meet/exceed federal standards for environmental conservation measures
- Healthy eating educational programs for children and the elderly
- Easier access to tennis courts (longer hours)
- Marked trails

- Incentives for building owners to create cultural venues downtown in addition to retail and restaurants
- Household waste disposal for toxic chemicals semi-annually
- Water quality improvement for local streams (eliminate pet waste contamination and building codes to move pet parks and buildings away from polluting local streams)
- Storm water control (permeable driveways, sidewalks)
- Park renovation and maintenance (organized volunteer school groups/neighborhood associations to help with maintenance)
- Beautification of walking routes leading to downtown area (lighting improvements, curbs, trees) and landlords forced to maintain store front areas
- Reduce car speeds through downtown area (make roads brick)
- Quality grocery store downtown
- Tax incentive to reduce cars per household
- Reduce intra-city car use through advertising alternate transport, providing safe infrastructure
- Make trails a destination as well as a conduit by adding artwork, nature trail signs, walking botanical garden, fountains
- Central fountains in the city (European model to encourage congregation, beautification)
- Community connections for work at home people: places to congregate and work, regular gatherings to engage this group by creating a “water cooler” gathering place)
- Gathering spots other than the square, more social urban spaces throughout the city
- Terminal vistas (roads ending in a landmark, fountain)

Q1: Sustainability and Growth

- Assess and improve current building codes and zoning requirements (historic neighborhoods cannot make their homes more energy efficient because of historic building regulations)
- Stricter zoning requirements to preserve neighborhood and commercial feel and continuity (limit infill design and size)
- Tree canopy maintenance and required tree replacement for sick and dead trees
- More frequent strategic planning sessions (5 year updates)
- Strategic growth of residential units based on targeted population levels and demographic mixes
- Bring a Fortune 500 company into Decatur
- Planned school growth in coordination with population growth/annexation
- Decatur WPA program (use citizens to build infrastructure, create jobs)
- Preserving the small town feel of the city:
 - o Limiting size (population and geographic area)
 - o Maintaining a caring government that is easily accessible
 - o Maintaining green space
- Maintain police and fire department quality
- Renovate/expand the Decatur recreation center
- Develop the College Avenue street-scape (trees, sidewalks, lighting)
- Research best practices for using railroad green space (incorporate it into the city rather than ignoring it as a separate space and barrier between the north and south of the city)
- Move power lines, phone lines underground
- Commercial signage ordinances to limit size and height of signs
- Indirect lighting in commercial areas to limit light pollution
- Create a cohesive community communication plan, including improving website, moving towards e-governance

Q2: Environment

- Create a carbon neutral city
- Make the city a zero-waste zone
- Mandate composting, provide a pick-up service
- Make sure city practices green procurement (local, recyclable, sustainable purchases)
- Require commercial recycling or provide a commercial recycling program
- Electric car recharge stations around the city (government parking lots)
- Pay as you throw enforcement for condos and businesses (based on weight of trash in dumpster, charged to HOA/business dumpster rental because individual charges are impossible)
- Rain barrels/cisterns for capturing and reusing rainwater
- Community recycling/waste management education programs
- Liaison to bring city and school planning together

Q3: Transportation

- Paths connected to the beltline to incorporate Decatur into the greater Atlanta area, connect historic neighborhoods
- Improve train track crossings for pedestrians/cyclists
- Bike paths on College Ave, sidewalk improvements
- Expand brick crosswalks, install more in neighborhoods
- Publicize benefits of stopping for pedestrians to encourage compliance
- Install more bike racks downtown
- Trolley line to connect Emory and Decatur
- Encourage parking at Avondale, East Lake and train rides into Decatur station by having a special subsidized card (especially for festivals)
- Shuttle between three MARTA stops that runs frequently; free on nights and weekends

Q5: Housing

- More density in downtown area
- Development concentrated around 3 MARTA stations
- More multi-family units in neighborhoods (especially for the elderly); requires zoning changes
- Variety of housing price points to encourage income diversity
- Assess lowering the age for school tax exemptions
- Mandate mixed use development
- Enforce “smart” building codes (environmentally efficient)
- More town-home communities

(We did not have time to discuss question 4, which was the lowest priority for our group)

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 2: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Jill Jordan, Tiffany Brott

Meeting Date: 5/13/10

Time: 7pm

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

8- How do we sustain our city? Preserve the things we appreciate?

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

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

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

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

Continue focus on mixed use development

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

Consider better partnerships with the county – Decatur is county seat

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

9- Natural environment

Storm water is a threat to water quality

Consider permeable pavement – is this an option?

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

Support composting program for the city

More urban farms

Divert restaurant waste to composting for farms

Improved bike and pedestrian mobility

Ensure we have a healthy tree canopy

Have a tree ordinance “with teeth”

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

Stop proliferation of power lines. Bury them!

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

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

Some areas are not hospitable to bikers/walkers

Need to create a safe infrastructure for kids for biking

Frustrating when bikers stop up traffic lanes

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

Need more “end of trip” facilities to store bikes

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

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

5 – Housing needs in 20 years

Maintain decent, affordable housing for all income levels

Leverage existing housing – no new development

Restrict demolition of older homes to build new bigger homes

6. Healthy Living “Active”

Encourage kids/families to walk more/bike more

Promote better connectivity of paths, green space

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

Promote Farm 2 School – more healthy options

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

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

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

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

Katz 05-11-2010 7PM

Maintaining Value

- Fiscal responsibility of government
- Budget is developed around goals
 - informed by strategic plan
 - not alot of infighting among departments
- trying to get mix of retail / other downtown
- stimulate community involvement
- partnership w/ DBA
- need good retail mix
- balance between increased density and close knit community
- movie / music crossover venue needed (like Variety playhouse)
- limited recreational opportunities
 - more in the evenings and more for adults
 - example: city sponsored pub crawl

Housing

- need for more rental options that are accessible to those who work here
- increasing the \$ diversity of residences
- apartments downtown are too expensive
- need other locations for condos
- need rental options for younger residents w/o children
- need to keep taxes down for older residents on fixed income
 - tax deferral until after death, for examples
- housing inventory is aging
 - need incentives for housing renewal
- strengthen tree ordinance

- need stronger lighting / noise ordinance
- stronger enforcement of infill rules
- neighborhood by neighborhood performance standards for size and style of new housing / upgraded housing
- encourage developers to work with neighborhoods

How do we get from place to place

- walk / drive
- city bus
- awkward to bike through town
- Some take Cliff
- * idea of tram to connect neighborhoods
- need more bike paths, lanes
- safety is an issue for walkers and bikers
- we have too much drive through traffic
- walking past probation office on Church is a problem
- * need traffic lights sped up for walkers
- need pedestrian bridges over the Railroad tracks
- need alternative to get to Emory area
- need more parking
- need more publicity for free parking in city garages on nights and weekends
- progressive, alternative transportation connecting neighborhoods
- Need to connect to coming Beltline
- Join our bike path to Ponce corridor and the parks along Ponce
- Must work with surrounding cities and counties

Environment

- Harvest, recycle and reclaim water
- traffic -- minimize idling by timing traffic lights
- trees - set canopy goals
- ordinance only applies to new construction
- need more trees in parking lots.
- community gardens...maybe even in parking lots
- more composting options -- city coordinated

Healthy Living

- more walking and biking
- farm to school programs
- grants for Rec Center
 - kids run program
 - family activities
- promote push mowers
- have neighborhood competitions for healthy living
- too much car idling leads to poor air quality
- traffic lights should switch to flashing yellows after 11PM
- left turn signals will cut down on traffic going through neighborhoods (avery drive cut through, for example)

Group 57 (plus a few new folks) • May 15 • Saturday, 9 am

M. Lampe

Recap of Session 1

Highlights and recurring themes:

- Vision of Decatur: The "Green Necklace" of parks and greenspaces; "Connecting the Dots" of walkability, sustainability and community and commerce
- Mini shuttle would be a great service to get Decatur folks from their neighborhoods to the parks and commercial districts around town; for short trips to recreational activities, shopping, dining, special events
- Community is key. Concept: "good old-fashioned icecream parlor" to provide all-ages-friendly gathering spot/opportunities for fun and fellowship

1. Sustaining the city

- Restructure taxes
- Create an attraction
- Create a utility for power, gas, wi-max; develop alternate revenue streams;
 - Parks: Fees, concessions, tennis center
 - Be an event destination
 - Be an environmental flagship

- Greenspace – must preserve, must obtain more developer concessions
- Engage in proactive mediation between developers and residents; city must manage facts v. reality v. emotion; move toward communication in new and better ways
- Annex, but focus on commercial districts, esp. Suburban Plaza
- Target the deficiencies that detract from the city: eyesore commercial areas, properties, especially at Decatur's gateways and along main corridors

2. How to preserve and improve our natural environment?

- Change codes to encourage residential development that appeals to the environmentally conscious
- Move "green" past being a boutique concept to being a way of life; champion "affordable green"
- Encourage neighborhood projects like the Waddell pocket park

Policy:

- Carbon neutrality, but with comprehensive education, encourage the simple acts of weatherstripping, lightbulb exchange
- Encourage biking and walking

3. Transportation: How to get from place to place

- Pursue grants aggressively (FTA Grant, 5307, CMAQ); hire a grant consultant
- We want a mini shuttle "Rover," powered by natural gas for circuit: courthouse, Oakhurst, library, major local destinations; accommodate needs of non-mobile (non-walking) folks
- Change culture, make things fun, orient people away from relying on cars

4. Overall Environment

- Create a major attraction, like a tour of local spots that have been featured in movie scenes; indicate with markers

5. Who will need housing in 20 years?

Issues:

- The challenge of maintaining the diversity of Decatur's population;
- Modifying the tax structure to rely more on business, less on residential real estate
- "Price of dirt" is expensive
- Need for services by elderly increases as income is an increasingly limited resource

Policy:

- Freeze taxes for elderly/long-time residents
- Pursue annexation of commercial districts
- Carefully integrate density into existing neighborhoods
- Become a bike encouraging city

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Antonio D. Leung (Tony)

Meeting Date: May 15th 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.

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

- Balancing grown and livability
- Zoning, smart growth and forward thinking
- Small town feel and affordable home
- Recycle the land
- Maintain people's small houses
- Expansion of partnership with seniors and anyone that needs help
- How to provide housing stock for diverse income levels

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

- Maintain what greenspace we have
- Balance greenspace throughout north and south Decatur
- Upgrade stormwater infrastructure, improve/prevent erosion, reduce stormwater runoff
- More pervious surfaces
- More parks and playgrounds for everyone throughout north and south Decatur
- Conserve 'open' space without trees as open play areas, turf area

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

- Choose to live here because we can live without a car
- Shuttle buses as feeders to MARTA
- More bike facilities, bike lanes, bike parking, bike racks
- Education of drivers and cyclist
- Electric bikes and vehicles
- Build and develop alternative transportation infrastructure, electric, natural gas, etc.

- Allow for rental units, garage apartments, zoning flexibility
- Transportation – what is the timeline for implementation, execution,
- Get to Daily necessities
- Zip cars, shared cars
- Shared vehicles, utility vehicles, vans, trucks, pick-up trucks
- Shared facilities
- Public rental access to city owned vehicles
- Continue Decatur government al accessibility – ease of access
- School Board ?
- Expansion of city limits
- Maintaining/increase diversity of property
- Increase commercial tax base (Decatur is low, in areas, of on commercial property)
- Annexation of NE commercial area

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

- Decatur does a good job in developing events
- We love the events, book festivals,
- Should consider an international festival
- want to see ‘more of them’ (people) in downtown Decatur
- foster a community that is welcoming
- mixture and balance
- Decatur: we are interested in Art, so we have an Art festival
- we are interested in Literacy, so we have an Book festival
- if we are interested in diversity, we should have an international festival
- Outreach- Solution – govt and non-govt groups
- How does the CITY govt and people does to promote diversity and festivals
- Communication of what events that is going on in the city
- Create opportunity for local destination
- Get to Daily necessities

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

- Have bike parking at high density housing
- Encourage mixed use in

- Existing neighborhoods to support aging population
- Housing for continual living in Decatur as we age

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

(Define Healthy, not just bodily health. Health is life, mind spirit)

Like to know where we can from, southern history

Getting more seniors involved

Proactive approach to our history

Communication – public communication

Bring people together and to gather

Get people out of their cars

Neighborhood walk and talk

Breakaway isolation

Communication is healthy

Intertwined in our lifes

Communicate with one another

Government to go to the people, outreach to people

Get seniors to be involved in schools, and kids

Get seniors to teach history of Decatur\

Storytelling as part of book festival, art festival

Take festivals to different part of the city

Neighborhood gatherings

How can we encourage and empower people in the city to make the difference

Citizen’s group, organizations

Bring the 600 people (roundtable participants) together every quarter, periodically to share ideas

Finding a way for the people of Decatur to interact, maintain connection, roundtable participants be a group of people to foster action

Below are the input from Ms. Holly Grimes, she is out of town and cannot attend this second session, she sent me the following by email. I believe it is important to include them in our group meeting notes.

Tony,

Since I will miss the review of Session I & am missing the dynamics of interaction, I realize these comments are out of context. However, I will try to understand the questions.

I. What did someone in your small group say or do that moved you or that stimulated new ideas in some way?

- We need to keep property taxes from forcing people from their homes and go beyond just 65+ exemptions. There are long-term residents that may not be 65 who can't pay say \$8000 in taxes if their property is assessed higher and higher. A \$25 k or 40 K exemption for a 400+ K assessed house, is not very effective. Out of this came a suggestion that Decatur should have a way of identifying those that might need outreach to help them benefit from any existing assistance, either through churches or clinics or one on one interaction.
- Someone suggested that Decatur should be sure we have basic shopping. That prompted me to remember that I too can't shop much in Decatur. It is either too expensive for basic items or just caters to clothes, shoes, etc... that I just don't wear. Decatur should study Denver downtown or Memphis or Baltimore where they have created a very small indoor mall type location in small spaces, with parking underneath. The street front looks like a simple building, but inside there are some major basic stores that meet citizen's needs. These shopping areas have pedestrian access and can have the same street effects as Decatur currently encourages, yet provide better shopping so we wouldn't have to leave Decatur to shop. It can also be quite a draw for those outside Decatur...a mall alternative.

II. Fact sheets [review first---since I don't have I will just try to answer the questions.]

1. Can't really answer this as not sure what they are looking for. I have seen many changes since 1970's when I moved here. But the feel of the Olympics really fueled the desire to be more pedestrian and have a stronger feeling of being neighbors.
2. How do we preserve our natural environment? Trees and plenty of them. Decatur has made it expensive for the homeowner to cut any trees. Decatur needs to temper that with the safety of needing to cut a tree to protect the home or neighbors. Trees are great and

needed but we shouldn't overdo either. Protect our air, water and green space? We have improved, perhaps too much so. Air: encouraging walking and biking. We could do a lot more. Streets still don't feel safe for biking. I would like to see more blocked streets with no cars, perhaps with only shuttles. Denver has a street with many neat stores but only the free bus goes up and down the street so if don't feel like walking you can hop the bus. We have been doing more at preserving green space. I would like to see that continue. There is a big forest behind my neighborhood. While privately owned by the homes that front it, I would like long term for that to be a major forested park, with the beautiful creek running through it. Decatur should promote conservation easements with tax reductions for the donation of this beautiful land. I used to love taking my dogs for walks amongst these enormous trees but alas one neighbor put up a fence blocking access back to the street. Stricter rules on water drainage have helped regarding water. We could do more with helping residences with more composting, mulching and rain barrel installation. Some of the water drainage rules have bordered on the absurd however. And very expensive. Good idea but I don't want water Nazis that seem to occur right now.

3. Getting from place to place: as mentioned above, close some streets to encourage shopping and gathering etc... make it a very cool place like in Denver. Maybe a shuttle could be provided if long enough but Decatur is small so probably not needed. Last time it was mentioned that Decatur needs to consider alternatives to MARTA to get people, especially in South Decatur, to the MARTA train. Perhaps Decatur should consider its own type of Emory shuttle to assist residents should bus 18 be dropped by MARTA. I walk now and bike but would bike more if I could feel safer on Ponce, Clairemont, church st. etc...
4. What is most important about overall environment? Feeling safe walking around, being pedestrian, having street side, cafe eating & drinking, but I 'd like it be a bit greener. Some interesting stores and the wonderful gatherings like Beach Party, concerts in the square, Book fair, etc... it really gets people out plus promoting volunteerism makes us feel that we contribute to the feel of community.
5. Housing needs: growing baby boomers may want more cluster type homes with smaller lots in the future. Or even active retirement living centers. These latter centers exist outside the city but not in. Many of us aging boomers may want to live in one of those in the future, with activities and ways to meet those of similar age yet still be able to walk to the store or train. It would be nice if we could stay in Decatur. The new restrictions re house size and lot etc... to me is actually a problem. While nice to have large lots some of us would like to have more cluster homes or a smaller lot. I like to garden but my lot is too large to manage yet Decatur discourages people like me from creating two lots out of one, maybe selling one to pay off my mortgage as I retire and then build a small cluster home on the smaller of the divided lots. This also goes to more affordable housing. The new rules encourage larger lots and houses, which does mean that they are also more expensive. I think Decatur should reconsider this larger is better notion. We are in an urban environment.
6. Healthy living or changes: Gathering places for activities, especially for southside. Decatur should subsidize or give price breaks so poorer residents can engage in these activities.

Southside residents may need assistance to get to the recreation center or to downtown Decatur. Gatherings for dancing, games, cards, swimming, sort of like a neighborhood club.

I would like to see an organized volunteer base where people could share their expertise, either to help with repairs, tutoring, vocational training. I dream of every family being matched with another in a mentor environment or more flexibly matching needs. For example, if I had a skill for gardening, maybe I could help someone who can't afford a gardener but doesn't have the physical ability to garden. [repairs, tutors or teaches, computer skills, etc...] we have huge human resources in Decatur with a desire to volunteer, so we could take advantage of this Decatur plus. I have long held the dream of Decatur being 100% literate with excellent job training and apprenticeships so that adults and teenagers can take advantage of vocational opportunities. If small Decatur with all our skills can't be literate or improve job skills, how can we do it nationally? Let's do it here and set it as an example for others to follow.

Loudermilk 05-11-2010 7 pm

What was most interesting/stimulating from the last meeting?

- Thinking about how to attract business to Decatur
 - Take advantage of the city's density
 - Bring more commerce to lighten tax burden for home owners
 - Patronize local businesses
 - What do we leave the city to do or get?
 - Technology—changes the landscape of business
- Aging in place
 - Complex issue
 - Involves every aspect of city
 - Decatur seen as a model/example of how to do this
 - 75% of citizens do not have kids in the schools; many citizens over the age of 50. (This probably has not changed much over time.)
- Decatur is healthier than other metro suburbs, partially through self-selection. We walk more here than in other places.

(The group saw most of the questions below as interconnected, so although a comment falls under one question, it might equally be applied to another.)

Question #1: How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?

- Economics: the tax burden needs to spread away from home owners
 - But we do get good return for our tax dollars
 - Lots of non-profit entities that don't pay taxes

- More business development
 - Brick & mortar business might not be the only answer
 - Cultural activities—theaters, etc.
 - Technology can facilitate this
 - Current office space should be better used
 - How to attract?
 - Real estate expensive
- How do we achieve and keep our neighborhood feel?
 - Don't approve every permit for larger homes. Declare certain areas affordable? Subsidies? Hard to sustain.
 - Neighborhoods give Decatur character—keep what we have, but allow for change.
- Look at revenue alternatives
 - We could charge for driving in to the city, as they do in London. “Pay as you drive.”
- Nice to have activity on the streets at all times of the day and night
- Our city personnel are passionate, caring and visionary. Pay them well and keep them—don't let other cities lure them away.

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

- Provide communal green space near where people live. Make sure each neighborhood has green space, and connect them to one another.
- Lots of green space not used right now. Buy “at risk” properties.

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

- Consider limiting where you can drive in the city, i.e. Times Square or downtown Asheville.
 - Safe walking = increased commerce
 - Ability to walk allows a diverse (aging) population to live here
- Park and walk.
- Now we drive or walk.
- Would like to see a Decatur trolley or transit.
 - Green
 - Could be small business
 - Would need reliable ridership
 - Could be more sustainable if it went outside the city limits
 - Survey traffic patterns
 - Trolley should go to Zip Car locations, then people can further out. Stop at major Decatur sites.
 - Connect parts of Decatur.
- Reduce car ownership in Decatur.
- Help physically impaired get around. Ties into transit idea. Also to issues of aging.

- Now, use of Square difficult for physically impaired.
- Need easier way to get from north part of city to south, especially on foot. Railway tracks and Scott Boulevard act as barriers between parts of city.

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

- Need entertainment in the city
 - Movie theater
 - Venue hard to find
 - Tough business
 - Arts Center renovation could help
- Money follows culture, so encourage/promote the arts
- Foster social networks
 - Neighborhood potlucks, small group meetings, social get togethers
 - Mixers across neighborhoods
- Keep the roundtables going, perhaps quarterly around the issues of the day. Have food and drinks to foster community.
- Take the block party concept across neighborhoods—a “progressive block party” with different neighborhoods hosting.
- Develop a “shop hop”—people shopping at local business are entered into a drawing for city items.
- Keeping people connected helps with an aging population.
- We have great festivals, but we probably don’t need more.
- Develop small, but good, arts venues—museums, galleries, theaters, etc. Would bring people to city.
- Eddie’s Attic a great asset.

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

- Mixed income housing important. Place for teachers, city workers, etc.
 - Issue: when affordable housing rises in price, people sell and move, then there are fewer affordable homes.
- As baby boomers age and downsize, what are they looking for?
 - Mixture of housing types
 - Affordable prices
 - Smaller homes
 - Single level homes
 - Low maintenance—small yards, no painting, etc. HOA neighborhoods.
- People are moving here from the NE and Florida to retire
- Accessibility will be key
- Provide live/work spaces. Have access to a local business center within walking distance. Build into new developments.
- Permits should preserve neighborhood feel.

- Consider co-housing: supportive communities that are walk-able with perimeter parking. Communal kitchens, gardens, office space.
- Services near population centers. Types of businesses important—markets, groceries, etc.
- Include renters in city planning. Need more rental property to increase diversity—nice apartments.
 - Hard to build because available plots of land too small.
 - Neighborhoods often oppose such development
 - Concern that renters not invested in community

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

- Goal: Healthier aging population
- Need to provide facilities to keep population healthy—environment should keep us active.
- Interconnected green spaces would help.
 - Plan to connect through signage, count of steps between green spaces
- Develop a zip line or a tree canopy walk as attractions and healthy activities.
- Host a Decatur neighborhood field/sports day at high school field—all kinds of activities for kids and adults.
 - Could be a fundraiser for Active Living and/or school system

Nilsson 05-12-2010 7 p.m.

Facilitator Notes

Comments/Review from Previous Meeting

- Resulting Vision for Decatur is for the city government to be carbon neutral.
- Civic & Institutional Buildings to be:
 - self sustaining electrically; can sell power to county?
 - gray water recycling for city greenspace
 - electric or natural gas powered city vehicles and transportation

All agree that this is a long-term investment that will benefit the city fiscally.

Sustain the City? Preserve what we appreciate?

- Maintain communication avenues open between city government and citizens, developers and planners.
- Support small businesses as citizens and through government support programs
- Continue to balance population density and business growth
- Address transition between light industrial/commercial and residential zoning.

Preserve and Improve Natural Environment? Protect Air, Water & Green?

- Stronger tree ordinance should be approved and implemented
- Continue with dog parks
- Continue city “flood plane” purchase
- Consider educational arm to encourage personal conservation efforts
- Broaden existing programs and knowledge base to make citizens aware
- Provide incentives to developers for creatively balancing density and greenspace
- Approach institutions with ample land to “double-duty their property for resident use (as city green space). –i.e. Agnes Scott / Columbia Seminary
- No idling zones
- Charging stations for electric cars
- Promote light-duty transportation vehicles
- All gov’t cars should be natural gas/electric powered, including garbage and recycling trucks
- Schools should compost
- Recycling program for businesses

How do we get around now? What can change?

- Gas car (daily)
- Bike/Scooter (medium frequency)
- CCTAM/Marta BUS (only for work and rarely)
- Walk (daily)
- Cad/pedi-cab (rarely/ some not aware of pedi-cab)

Changes proposed:

- In future, more likely to use electric cars (or other electric vehicles)
- Use (implement) small group (scale) city transportation that has frequent stops at regular schedules
- Implement late-night solution for business-to-home transportation
- Increase bike and scooter lanes
- Consider that destination is not always downtown Decatur, public transport to and from Oakhurst and other perimeter satellite centers will be needed

- DeVry property will be a nodule (satellite center) for activity and residential
- More motorcycles and scooters
- Provide incentives for development that has none or limited (or deeded) parking in order to encourage pedestrian/bike/scooter/public transport

Overall Environment? What's Important?

- Want to feel safe
- Want to have fun
- Important to connect with others
- Cultural activities need quality improvement and growth
- Take advantage of existing new facilities for community/cultural events (i.e. DHS auditorium)
- Create event-specific outdoor venues (i.e. amphitheatre)
- Evaluate available facilities at private/public institution for city use
- “keenager” programs
- Athletic programs at REC center, that are very successful
- Community gardens
- More public art
- Tap into/create Dekalb County/City of Decatur foundation for the arts (for grants/scholarships and research)

Who will need housing in 20 years? What kind of housing?

- More families with school-age children
- Consider that the above may be “squeezing” out the young professionals, the aging population and the public servants
- Current families that want to age-in-place
- The young, child-free families that will be drawn to the walkable benefits of Decatur’s city center.

Housing type:

- Higher density
- Rental (single and multi- family)
- Garage apartments
- Workforce housing (mid-range in cost)
- Public housing with market-rate housing mix
- Special –needs, group-homes (i.e. elderly)
- Single-level residences

How do we build for healthy living?

- Encourage eating locally grown
- Allow for urban “farms”
- Maintain the sidewalks
- Sidewalks and curbs should be handicap accessible (also provide for visually/audibly impaired)
- Update existing facilities without editing architectural value
- Close part of Ponce for pedestrian-only activity (certain times only)
- Involve the schools and educate early on the topic of healthy living and food choices

Provost 05-12-2010 2pm

Review Session I

Hydrogen powered buses – congestion

Session II

Ques #3 – How do you get from...

Traffic lights, timing, not good for pedestrians or cars

Ability to move around Decatur

Services within alternative transportation reach

Trams, buses, light vehicles for local access beyond MARTA

Continue pedestrian/bike friendliness, increase safety for both

More mid-block sidewalk crossings

Emory shuttle – extend services, tie in for above services

Railroad as an obstacle for pedestrians, cars & bikes

Additional crossing between Citgo and Renfro that is pedestrian only

Policies should consider beyond automobile

Enforcement of speed limits

Control of greenery to keep sidewalks clear

Tree lined sidewalks to encourage walkers

Ques #5

Enhanced, need based tax, income testing, mixed, ability to pay, not necessarily age, combined with residency length

Predatory lending

Other ways to increase tax revenue, income tax, max pay-out

Assessment issues, more careful, more creative, not tied to neighbor

Increased commercial for tax base

Entities that are not taxed

New construction/renovation causing assessment impact on unrenovated, demand

Tax on long time residents at time of sale

Maintaining diversity

Seniors do not want to be displaced from community, more options

Increased home health care

Ques #2 How do we preserve...

More alternative transportation

Reduce impervious surface

Age & capacity of storm water system

Challenge to keep development from encroaching what we consider our greenspace

Identification of important resources

Street sweeping, trash pick up more often

Compost pick up, encourage and promote

Reduction of trash

Encourage more recycling by providing containers

Centralized center for recycling

Conservation of water

Encourage rain water recycling

Best use of flood plains

Helping residents with storm water issues on their property

Naturalized greenspace protected

More pedestrian only areas

Encouragement of car pooling, business incentives, partnership with City

Ques #4 Overall environment...

Monthly major event – not just summer

Sponsored neighborhood associations to improve communication

Neighborhood gatherings to improve community/educate/input “Parks & Rec” (TV show) style meetings

Organize bicycle rides, designation rides, incorporate businesses

Cultural arts integrated and communicate

Adult education free, low cost. Decatur active learning, involve community and businesses

Educate/Advocate for programs for citizens both federal and state

Getting people to attend & volunteer, services & expertise, extract expertise from community, encouraging people that they have something to share

Continue with Volunteer Decatur

Good customer service/ make people feel welcome

Ques #6 Healthy Living...

Activities for those between kids & active adults

Staffed parks/activities manager, keys to "equipment shed"

Encourage community to volunteer, to conduct activities

Teen Center at Decatur Rec

Co-op with schools to expand active programs for community

Underutilized public facilities

Frisbee Golf

Use expanded on public ball fields

Inter-neighborhood leagues

More lenient usage of ball field, parks, etc.

More open air markets for fresh food and other goods

Fit station course for community, use bike path

Use asphalt for bike path for running & walking safety

Ques #5 Who are the people who need housing...

Taxes

Affordable housing – increase rental properties

Challenges for young people and young families

Challenges for elderly – assisted living, cost, taxes

Attracting jobs to employ residents, so live & work in community

Aging in place – children live

Senior rec. center/living center

Work with developers for % affordable housing

Neighborhood opposition to affordable housing

Tax/rent control

Parking Lot:

Schools

Moss Park @ College Heights

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

Facilitator Name: Steve Provost

Meeting Date: May 13, 2010

Time: 7 – 9 PM

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.

11- Comments from thoughts about the previous meeting:

I welcome people coming to Decatur to spend money

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

Good to keep a balance of growth and long term residents

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

2 Responses to the six questions:

Question #1

Keep our past while also moving forward

Sustain what we've been doing with controlled growth

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

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

Encourage businesses with zoning benefits, incentives

More cooperation between the City and School Board

Fear that the big chain restaurants could replace the local businesses

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

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

Question #2

Enforcement of regulations by local authorities

Encourage the school system to protect / expand their green spaces

More unpaved trails

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

Athletic facilities are overused --not enough of them

Parks are being impacted by overuse

Buy land for additional park space and athletic fields

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

Provide more places bicycles

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

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

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

Reduce traffic to improve air quality

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

Question #3

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

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

Zip cars

Shuttle bus like at Emory

Need more places to house bikes

Pedestrian zones become more public space – like linear parks

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

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

Question #4

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

Promote, encourage freedom to express religious views

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

Question #5

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

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

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

Want to be able to age in own home

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

Delay property tax until home is sold or owner passes

Question #6

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

More greenspace and athletic fields

Encourage opportunities for walking

Education effects healthy living --educated people are healthier

Use school focus for education forum

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

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

Knowing your neighbor and trusting the place you live

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

A path that weaves together all the neighborhoods in the city

THEMES from this meeting:

Overuse of greenspaces

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

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

Encouraging pedestrian and bike use --decrease vehicle use

Housing options for elderly and students

Making the schools an educational community center --social forums

Ravenberg 05-11-2010 7 pm

Ideas from session 1 that stayed with you or sparked new ideas

- how lifestyle changes have changed the response to public health: shift from concerns about infectious disease to concerns about chronic disease (heart, diabetes, obesity, etc.); how focus in urban planning should shift to tackle
- if affordable housing continues to decline, diversity will decline
- boutique hotel really is a need—had not considered that before

Question 2: national environment

[missing page 3 of notes]

- monitor water quality, air quality so we can look for appropriate solutions

Question 3: transportation

- look for creative ways to expand public transit in and out of Decatur; Cliff/Marta
- children to and from school: safety needs to be a top priority: wide sidewalks; if safe for kids then safe for all; make it cool to ride bike to school
- make the commitment for change vis a vis bike, walk, then drill down to the nitty gritty on how to get it done. Keep all options on the table like park only on one side of street; identify where gaps are (breaks in connection) for bikes
- look for ways to have cars on the road less—reduce idling (waiting) and congestion, engineer it better

Question 4: festivals/cultural life

- Challenge: as festivals get more popular (crowded) maintain feeling of community versus mob feel
 - > create smaller “events within the event”
 - > focus marketing efforts locally
 - > sell tickets at Decatur businesses
 - > cap ticket sales where appropriate
- Like Oakhurst jazz, other music events
- events define creative feel of Decatur and introduce people to Decatur businesses; encourage interaction between attendees and businesses (example: during wine fest, encourage businesses to have their own mini wine tastings)
- current calendar is good—not really looking for more

Question 5: housing

- wheelchair accessibility in homes, buildings and outside (crosswalks)

Question 6: healthy living

- focus first on low-hanging fruit: bike lanes and shoulders
- city is carved up in a weird way to get from A to B safely via bike—connect/map out bike routes; city commission should get on a bike and ride through the city. Winona Park -> downtown -> Emory; encourage bike as transportation and walking with children, connectivity
- Bike suitability map (indicating degree of bike friendliness of each street/route; best way to go by bike)
- all intersections made safer for walking and biking
- better routes
- focused outreach to those who need it most—bikes to those who can't afford to buy, access to fresh/healthy produce and food; food stamps accepted at farmers' markets, teaching nutrition, public space for gardens; support and grow existing programs; not one size fits all
- Alternate formats of activities—not just sign up for a class and show up; walks in cemetery, yoga in the park; take it to the people, decentralized—not necessarily city sponsored—meet ups
- better nutrition in the schools—both in what is being served and taught; farm to school; start with making a commitment: plant then inform

Discussion unrelated to suggested questions

- city website could be more than an online brochure: one stop shop for all things Decatur...be able to pay taxes, sign up for programs and volunteer opportunities, contribute to city; an interactive convenience for living here
- better publicize available parking

Renfroe 8th grade Humanities classes

Teachers: Robyn Tibbetts and Dominic Robinson

May 17 – 10 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. & 12 noon – 1:15 p.m. – 80 students

May 19 – 9 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. & 2 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. – 80 students

Total 160 students (individual names listed on separate document)

What I like about Decatur:

Small

Convenient

Great home communities

I like the square.

Little Shop of Stories

The square

Walkability-ness

Yogurt Tap

Decatur Book Festival

Restaurants

Stores

Schools

Square

I like how Decatur is so small and how you can pretty much walk anywhere.

It's easy to walk everywhere. Smalls town.

Decatur Square

Yogurt Tap

(Pretty much everything in the square)

I like public music at the square

I like the fountain

The food

Schools

The gyms

Parks

Churches

Schools

Community

The square

Starbuck's

Little shop of stories

Neighbors

Yogurt Tap

Decatur High

McKoy Park

Glenlake Pool

What I like now is the food places. And the pool's when they open. And I mostly like everything I guess.

Great shops & restaurants

Schools

Parks

The square

Recycling, Reusing and going Green

Schools

What I like now is the swimming pool

Chickfila

Good schools

Square

I like Chik-fil-A

Square

I like food, stores, parks, pools and schools.

School systems

Downtown Area

Walking around Decatur

The parks

I like that Decatur is full of oportunities academically, and economically

Little shop of stories

Decatur square

Walkability

Decatur Book Festival

Decatur new gym

Decatur new football field

Chic fila

Mcroy park

Taco mac

I like how Decatur's government gets the citizens involved in creating their plans for the future

Have different restarants around

Have campgrounds

Basketball courts

I like the school system and the teachers and staff that are there.

Lots of parks

Everything is within walking distance

Restaurants & stores

I like how Decatur is easy to get around and has a lot of parks

I like all the food in Decatur.

Great restaurants

Great neighborhoods

Almost everything is in walking distance, is something that's good about Decatur.

Guitar Red in the square

The rec center

Stores on the Square

Music

Everythings walking distance

I like the square

I like Chick-fil-a

McKoy skatepark

The new Stadium

The nes Gym

I will not be here but it should be better than now

Sporting events

Bike trail

I like how there are allot of pools you can go to.

I like the square.

I like being able to walk to all the places I want to go for food and hang out places w/my friends.

I like all the different events in Decatur.

I like how the City of Decatur is quiet.

I like how everything is walking distance.

I like how the City of Decatur is its own school system so we won't have to worry about what other counties are going through.

I really like all of the bike trails that run through Decatur and I am so excited about Glenlake park.

I also like events like the Decatur Beach Party and the concerts on the square & AWESOME festivals!

Nice roads

Good restaurants

Nice gyms

I like the square and being able to walk to a lot of places. I also like playing at the Glenlake tennis courts every week.

Stores

Downtown Decatur

Downtown Decatur – shops, restaurants

I like that you can walk to everything in Decatur.

What I like about Decatur is all the places to go, and the places to hang out with friends all the restaurants and stough!

I also like how clean they keep Decatur, and how safe.

I like being able to walk everywhere. Having access to just about everything is extremely convenient☺

Opportunity

Everyone is close together and this town is like a family and I like the pools and tennis courts.

The square is awesome!

You can walk everywhere

Good food

Sports

Square

Stores next to school

I like the downtown area

I like all the places we can walk to eat

Restaurants

City is small

People active in communities

Many parks

Plenty of sport and Recreation activities

The best thing about Decatur is the festivals and the activities like the Beach Festivals

The square very fun

I like how downtown's so close. Kids can hang out, but still walk home.

That there are a lot of places to be and things to do

The square

The kind city workers

The sanitation department

Safety of roaming streets

What I like about Decatur is that it is small. Most of the people in the city involved,

We have a great Decatur High Auditorium, Gym and Stadium.

People

B-Ball coaches

The community is active

Highly rated schools.

I love the Concert on the Squares in the summer time, and other fun summer events like the beach party and the book festival.

I like how you can get every where by walking.

How everyone is friendly and knows each other and you can walk everywhere.

Restaurants

Friendly people

Parks

All the local restaurants.

Lots of fun festivals and stuff.

Walking everywhere

Everything is close so you can walk

All my friends

Good food

I like the square

I like that you can walk everywhere in Decatur, and I like that the schools are so good and we are transitioning to the IB program.

I like the new gyms

The fun places to go

I like Decatur football field

The Square is great

The schools are smart

The square

Ebster Gym

Decatur YMCA

Walking distance

Easy to walk places

Good schools

Community based

Everything is so close so we can walk everywhere

There's yummy places to eat

I like that you can walk almost anywhere in Decatur

Education

What I like about Decatur now is that we have the square where there are a lot of stores.

Tourist attraction

Old

Historic

Multi-cultural

Convenient

Transportation

MARTA

We have a courthouse

The many places you can go.

Everywhere is walking distance.

Chick-fil-lay

Convenient

Nice people

Multi-cultural

Concerts

Everything is within walking distance

It's very easy to get around by walking
I like the conveniences of every thing.
Rec
DHS
Lots of play areas for kids, lots of activities for kids, kid friendly restaurants.
The square
Concerts
Citizen involvement
Fun events at the square and around Decatur
Everything is local
How convenient it is to walk places
I like how much freedom kids have here
Good people
The square is nice
LOTS of restaurants
Nice parks
Good sport organizations
There is a big downtown area with a lot of shops and restaurants.
Decatur's small family friendly size
Education
The closeness of the community
Always has activities/things to do
The communication/events that happen when schools combine
There's a lot of fun stuff to do in downtown.
Parks
Rec services
Family places to go
Chick-fil-A
Oakhurst, RMS, DHS
I like all the restaurants.
Diverse and numerous.
Also the shopping stores we do have.
Fun stuffs
Schools
Its small
Lots of places to hang-out
Nice restaurants
Its new-looking
Safe
A cool nice clean place to hang out with friends
Popular fast food restaurants
Clean community
Friendly people/caring people
I like the small community
I like how Decatur is very family friendly and has tons of features and events and place for everyone to enjoy.

They have great schools and restaurants
You can walk to most places in Decatur from your home
Parks
People
All the restaurants
Downtown Decatur's "scene"
I like all the stores and activities that Decatur has.
I like all the restaurants from different places and the different foods.
Easy to get around
Nice parks
Chik-fil-A
A bustling community
The restaurants
Schools and teacher really caring about you and your future
The square
Chik-fil-A
It is a nice sized community.
I know a lot of people.
Parks
Rec Center
MARTA
I enjoy all of the parks such as Winnona and Adair
I also enjoy the square
Library
Good houses
Gardens
Pools
Parks (play parks)
Trees
MARTA
I love chick-fil-a the food and CVS
I like about Dectur is the Marta stations so I can go to Atlanta.

Woes

Littering

I do not like the folks that hang around the Marta and Decatur. They make me scared.

The rec should have a pool.

I dislike the people that hang around Decatur.

The school system

The sanitation and appearance of the inside of the schools (Renfroe & DHS)

Empty deserted parking lots

I wish there was more public transportation available

The clothing stores are too expensive.

I don't like how people don't work together for the community.

NOTHING. Decatur is great

Decatur Wi-fi is really confusing and kind of annoying.

Its so expensive

Streets need repaving

Need a bigger Chik-fil-A

What I would like to see 10 years from now (in the future)

Bigger importance of the community in cheering on students in sports (i.e. lacrosse)

More places for kids to hang out

More landscape

Electric car

Swimming pool

Bowling alley

Book store

Movie theater

Video game store

Restaurants

I will be hopefully in college 10 years from now.

When I am 22 I hope Decatur...has a garden by the square that anyone can help grow. (maybe a mall)

Bike road

Movie theater

I'd like for Decatur to have an improved mall, in walking range.

It would also be nice to have more public pools.

We would greatly enjoy a dollar movie theater w/good movies.

I want Decatur School of Ballet to be able to perform in the Decatur Auditorium

Decatur should be cleaned everyday.

More facilities at schools.

More drug enforcement.

More dog parks

Better safety.

I hope Decatur be better than it is now.

I hope to see more restaurants, bigger park to BBQ and have parties at.

More parks/playground
More pools
More restaurants
Be able to cross tracks
I hope Decatur will still have the city functions (arts festival, beach party, etc) and more boutiques
I would like an old school arcade
Less taxes
A Coldstone added
A teen club – 18 – 12 ages
A bigger recreation center with more activities for teen
More places for teens to work
More concerts
A game room place to teen to go during summer and after school
A better way for crossing the street
Designer clothing stores
Redone sidewalks
More open free gyms
8th grade prom
Recurit system
Still has square and Eddie's Attic
More cheaper things like new rodes, more houses, more updated things.
Different cultures of music
Cheaper stores
More shopping
Inground trampoline
Dollar movie
Decatur needs LESS condo's and apartments
Decatur needs a MOVIE THEATER!
More facilities
New track at agnesscot
Clean up the square
Tighter drug enforcement
History of Decatur Meauseam
No school trailers
More environmental friendly
Less taxes
Cheeper houses
I will not be here but it should be better than now.
Need a movie theater and a teen club
We need a cinema
We need a teen club
We need a Skate Shop
Has more shops and small businesses.
Krispy Kreme
Staying envianmentally friendly

There are more festivals
More facilities (track field)
Renovation of old buildings
Famous bands in the concerts on the square
Fix up McKoy Skate Park
I think we should become a really close nit community
I want a water park
I want to see more
Need a movie theatre
More fun places for kids to hang out
I hope that Decatur will expand its school system without the use of trailers
I would like to have more places to shop
Improve mall in walking range
More public pools/inground trampolines
\$1 movie theater
There is a better way to cross the tracks in front of Renfroe
I want a space station in decatur
Trolley/bus system (not MARTA) more like Little 5 Points
Water Park
Roller Coaster
Track Field
Get rid of the drugs
More facilities
I want a water park
More tennis courts around Decatur
A movie theater
NO MORE CONDOS PLEASE!!
I want the City of Decatur to have more places to hang out at.
I want it to have more fun stuff to do.
It should be a mall in Decatur
Movie theater!
More free parking
Internships at local businesses
All of the programs in Decatur are better publicized
Zaxbys
More free stuff
Mall in Decatur
Go-carts
More jobs for teenager
More girls
More clubs
More stores
More restaurants
More parks
A good lacrosse team, and football
I want Decatur to have better recreational activities

More parks
Less sketchy people
More water fountains
Recycling
Riding your bike without it gettin stolen
Public trampoline
Swimming pools everywhere
Free food
Free Wifi (not just two hours)
More tree
It should be a mall in Decatur
I want Decatur High rebuild
I want to see Decatur having more parks, more water fountains, and being a public Olympic size trampoline, swimming pool at the square, cheap food, more trees
More good neighborhoods
Bike trails
Less cars
Fix up projects
More people
Better street lights
More parks
More water fountains (unjunky)
More inground public trampoline
No more school
Extended curfew
There should be a ? park here in Decatur
More eco-friendly options
In the future we should have better schools and more stores
I want there to be a Zaxbys
We need a Zaxbys in Decatur
More places to go/things to do
Another park
I hope Decatur has less cars/is even more eco-friendly than it is now.
Sirens that say "Fresh Dounets"
Signs that say "a rect law, have some icecream on sidewalk.
I hope theres a Zaxbys
More job opportunities for everyone, no matter what ethnicity.
More clubs (night clubs)
More shopping places, mall, boutiques, etc.
Clubs/Teen Parties
Better Taxes
Zaxby's wings
Rollercoasters
Mall
We need Zaxby's
Clubs

Movie theatre
Guitar shop
Extended curfew
I'd like a hooters
Less drug dealers
Better schools/streets – couldn't read this last word, looked like either one
More schools
More homes
Education reform (better schools)
Bike paths
Parks (walking)
Creeks
Fruit trees
More gardens
Bigger downtown
Theme park
Less pot dealers
More bike paths
I want a huge stadium
I hope Decatur has more shopping boutiques around the square
I would like to see more advertising for soccer teams.
I want there to be smoothie shops. Jamba Juice!!
Also, more restaurants like that aren't fast food, but not fancy
Fast food restaurants other than chick fila, johnnys, etc.
A BMX park
Recreation time in school
Target or Publix
Mall
More American restaurants and more fast food places and more gyms
An improved basketball court at Winnona Park
A program to help teenagers find part-time jobs
Mall
A roller coaster and an ice rink
To build more new restaurants, stores etc in the lots that arnt being used
Decatur is great!
More non-pollutant transportation (like bicycle cab)
Still has people walking in the Square
Is clean/not pollyted
A nice mall
Bigger library
School system (more schools)
More gardens
There are more cool shops in downtown Decatur
I hope Decatur stays the same.
More communication between the city government and the citizens
I want Decatur to less expensive

More pools
BMX park!
Soccer fields
Pond
More shops
Dont change it alot because I think it is perfect.
Doughnut shop
Sport store
Casino
Public bathrooms (like San Fran)
Tube hotels (like Japan)
Movie theater
New rec center w/pool
Softball fields
More parking lots
Golf carts
Golf cart parking
Water park
Less boutiques and more known stores like Forever 21.
Mini mall
\$2 movie theater
Artificial turf fields
High diving board
Bridge/underpass for the railroad in front of RMS
More cross walks
I would like it to be more economically friendly
Bigger pool open to public for free and cleaner.
I love the rec cool place to chill.
More businesses.
Carnivals
More places to go shopping
Pools with diving boards that aren't private pools.
Water park
More shops
More clothing shops
A better mall w/shops that all people like
More restaurants
Casino
More events
I would like to have a carnival and a amusement park
Hovercars
Robots
Drive thru sus bar
Doughnut show
Movie theater
Easier walk from RMS to DHS (pedestrian bridge?)

Diving boards
Greener city, stuff like that
CARNIVALS!
More businesses
Bigger downtown
More places to shop and hang out with my friends.
I think they should renovate the rec.
Clubs
Movie theater
Indoor basketball court
Football field
Babershop
More stores w/electronics & a carnival
A mall
Casino
Cracks in sidewalk filled in
A sports store like Dick's Sporting Goods
More sidewalks and bike lanes
More economic work programs for youth
A school that has fish in the floor and we can get out of school to get food. And better teachers.
And I want us to have everything.
Hope Decatur gets bigger, so there can be more friendly people.
Mall
Car dealership
Mall
More schools
Have a chuch-e-cheese
I would like Decatur to stay mostly the same, not have a lot of big corporations and stuff coming
Maybe more eco-friendly stuff
There should be a mini-mall in Decatur.
Decatur should expand.
The rec should get a pool.
I would like to see a mall
I would like more programs and sports leagues for children, young adults, and high schoolers
(outside of school).
I like Decatur the way it is.
Mall
Clubs
Teen clubs
More big buildings
Gun shops
Movie theatre
Sports complex w/more playing fields (maybe turf)
Their should be a footlocker
Their should be a mini mall
Their should be a Zaxbys and Checkers

Rothman 05-12-2010 7pm

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

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

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

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

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

- Continue sidewalk installation and improvements
- Need light rail that respects existing neighborhoods (no demolition)
- Continue to provide scooter support like parking
- Keep up the complete streets program
- Need better railroad crossings!
- Iphone app in development which would provide on demand ridesharing –could we be a pilot city?

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

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

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

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

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

Themes

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

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

Soldat 5-11-10 9 a.m.

Last Session:

Ideas from someone who did not attend the first session:

- Toilet Facilities: When you bike or commute without a vehicle to Oakhurst or around Decatur it is important that you have access to toilet facilities that are either separate stand alone or in a business. A good example of this is in Europe. There are plenty of facilities. There is a toilet facility industry out there that provides safe and secure options
- Swimming: The current season is based on hiring not weather. Many people cannot swim in Decatur and we have a problem with obesity in general. Year round access would help to provide my opportunities for people to be active.
- What moved you? The idea for color coded parking garages/ramps/decks

Sustaining the City...(1.)

- We need to sustain our aging population given high taxes and this economy. We need to make sure the needs of our elderly population are being met and that the cost of living is kept affordable
- Tax Base: There is a lot of non-profit tax exempt property. Examples of this are the football field, Saint Thomas Moore and Agnes Scott. Sometimes these properties actually do generate income and that income should be captured with some type of tax.
- Giving back to the community: The Brick Store gives back to the community with the Beer Festival. We need to encourage businesses to give back.
- Who owns the land above the Marta station in Downtown?
- Tax Exemptions: How long should a resident's taxes go towards the school system? It's ok to send your own kids through school and possibly a few other generations but there should be a

limit to how many years or generations you have to support through the school system. There is differing opinion as to if tax exemptions or breaks would actually help sustain the City or not.

- Who decides tax exemptions?
- Taxes should be called taxes. Don't call things a fee, call them a tax.
- There needs to be service prioritization. The current citizen participation in the budget process is great. Decatur 101 is great. The county is considering storm water fees and we already have them which is good. One of the things we like about the City is the services. We need to have the funds to continue those services.
- Annexation: We need annexation to sustain the city. This would help increase the tax base and reduce the tax burden especially since the population projection shows the population going down. That being said there is the same number of properties and value so the population should not affect the tax base.
- Density: More density would help to share the burden but density should be done in a thoughtful way. The community doesn't want 20 story buildings. We want density without going over 7 stories. There are opportunities for more dense development such as the Trinity Triangle project.
- Local Businesses: Could they get a tax break if the owner lives in the City? We need to do more "shop local" campaigning to support local business. Ex. Austin/Ashville
- Home Businesses: Some of the business categories are prehistoric. Are we capturing all home businesses that exist? How do we know so that they have to get a business license? DBA can help to keep track of home based business. Maybe an older person running a home business shouldn't be taxed the same way as younger professionals. There needs to be variations in the fees. Right now, by paying for a home business license and your property taxes you are getting double taxed.

Getting Around...(3.)

- Need more bike parking.
- Need more shuttles: Shuttles needed between grocery store and housing authority, In the past there have been shuttles between the housing authority-Allen Wilson and Clairemont Elementary School
- Need more bike facilities like bike paths and bike lanes
- Bike paths should provide safety to non bicycle traffic such as walkers
- Need carts that allow people to carry groceries home
- Emory and Owl Shuttles are good
- We need to map who is traveling where.
- Need more traffic calming. The crosswalks are a good start
- Need better designed roads: West Howard Avenue has a limit of 35 but the road is designed to invite faster speeds
- The intersection at Commerce and Clairemont is very difficult to cross
- Need to close Ponce de Leon Avenue to traffic between Church Street and Commerce Drive
- People need to be taught to stop at crosswalks
- Pedestrian crossing timers need to be lengthened to allow more time to cross for kids and elderly
- When streets are very wide they need a half way point to facilitate ease in crossing
- We need to target streets that need to be calmed
- Church Streets temporary parking due to park renovations has help to calm traffic
- We want Decatur to be known as the City where you "slow down"
- We need signage that designates Decatur as a pedestrian friendly community and asks motorist to slow down as they enter the City
- We need a true vehicular bypass around or through Decatur

- The railroad tracks are a very dangerous situation and the school crossing guards encourage students to cross the tracks. The police don't enforce track crossing issues. A tunnel under the tracks like Agnes Scott but by the high/middle schools would be good but very expensive
- We need to remove parking on East Court Square and North McDonough Street in front of the Courthouse and expand the square
- We have enough parking ramps but need more bike racks
- We need alternative transportation in the Clifton Corridor on Clairemont Avenue
- Decatur's commitment to complete streets will help to provide these above facilities

Housing.....(5.)

- We need a retirement community that has private space, community space, 3 and 4 wheel parking and events. Clairemont Place is good because you buy the condo and the fees go to dining and meals The old Devry might be a good place for this as long as it had shuttle service
- We need a movie theater: We need a multiplex movies theater. We have several make shift theaters: Holiday Inn, High School, Library. Chattanooga put their movie theater in a parking deck which helped safety issues
- We need a community village
- We need zoning that allow 4 or 5 families to live together and support each other, cook together and support each other's health/insurance needs.
- We need to create alternative ways to support families
- Extended Families: Zoning should accommodate accessory dwellings and we should reduce size limits on accessory dwellings, Decatur should be known as a place where we let you bring your family to live with you....but people are worried about too many cars
- Affordable housing can be a magnet for artists and creative people
- In Seattle, secondary structures on properties encourage density
- Small lots don't make it difficult to deal with stormwater issues
- City engineering codes are too black and white with regards to storm water, what are FEMA's thoughts? Codes should allow for rainwater harvesting which ties well into community gardens and gardening in general
- We need roof top gardens and regulations that allow them
- We need to allow multifamily living when houses have 4 or 5 bedrooms from a zoning standpoint
- We need more density in creative ways such as garage apartments and multifamily use in single family dwellings

Other....Graffiti

- A can of spray paint can bring a city to its knees
- Incidents are not being reported
- Our Graffiti ordinance needs to be graffiti proof
- We need to encourage DeKalb County to deal with their graffiti problem
- It's on telephone poles, Church Street, Sycamore Street, Swanton Way and the County Courthouse
- Murals and Artwork can be used to deter graffiti. Use open canvases for public art like on the utility box outside the Yogurt Tap.
- At Karma Boutique-if we leave the graffiti up it encourages more
- Philadelphia is a great example of a public mural program
- Murals tie into the Arts Festival

The Environment....(2.)

- Gathering places need recycling bins
- There are concerns that the recycling doesn't really get sorted
- We need more public awareness and education about what you can and cannot recycle
- The City needs to publish what happens to recycled items so we can patronize those new products
- We need centralized recycling and less hassle for condos, multifamily, businesses, and single family residential
- We need compost pickup and facilities for condos
- Compost should be tied into the city farm idea
- We need an "Orca" which is a high capacity composting machine that makes a "tea"
- Cooking oil should be used for alternative energy
- We need education and incentives for alternative energy solutions in homes
- We need a coop that provides energy efficient upgrades to be done a below market costs
- We need local tax break by the City for energy efficient upgrades
- We need a commercial recycling program
- We need a recycling program for building materials during renovations and new construction
- We need to educate the community about how to recycle building materials
- We need Electric Car facilities, like plug ins
- We need service stations that sell alternative fuels
- We need a comprehensive sustainability policy
- The Sustainability Board is a good thing, but the public needs to keep track of what is going on and get updates

Other....Schools

- There is too much apathy with regards to school board elections
- Diversity requires the value of dissent
- Don't dump on the messenger-when someone doesn't agree don't label them
- Conflict is important
- The City of Decatur has to have more influence and control over the school system
- There needs to be a forum that allows the community to raise community issues and concerns on paper other than blogs or electronic media
- School issues are ruining the brand of the City

Roundtable Session

May 13, 2010

Group 39

Kevin Spears, Facilitator

Housing

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

Who?

Middle income professionals (teachers, fire, police)

Low income families

Seniors

Very elderly – those who need assisted care of varying levels

College/grad students

Young families

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

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

What kind of solutions?

Supported living for seniors

Reduce the tax burden for seniors

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

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

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

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

Cultural and Public Life

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

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

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

Events that draw a diversity of ages.

Involvement of kids is essential

Use the public space for more informal gatherings

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

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

Ideas

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

Transportation

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

Challenges

Gridlock in downtown 5:00 – 6:30pm

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

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

Bicycling in Decatur is dangerous.

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

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

Solutions

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

Churches may be willing to contribute spaces for weekday parking

A downtown trolley or shuttle

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

Shuttles that run between neighborhoods and downtown

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

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

Healthy Living

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

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

More community gardens

Continue developing the farm-to-school program

Connect walking/running/biking groups with each other

Health programs in partnership with Emory Healthcare and Dekalb Medical

Nutrition and exercise programs sponsored by the City

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

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

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

Natural Environment

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

Ideas

More flowering plants to complement all the green

Wildflower fields

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

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

More attention to flood-risk areas

Attention to water run-off erosion

A bird sanctuary

How about a squirrel-powered source of electricity?

General Thoughts

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

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

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

More lo-tech communication – bulletin boards, local radio

Better directional signs – to library, parks, parking

Notes from Swanson, 5/11/10, 2pm, Group 9

QUESTION 1: GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

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

RETAIL MIX. Include in development plan, limit national chains, meet downtown development plan requirements, grocery store. Our group expressed pleasure with the current retail mix in the City and want to make sure that similar efforts are made going forward. An exception to the displeasure for national chains was expressed with respect to Starbucks, since they fit into an existing historic space well.

CODIFY OR CREATE ECONOMIC INCENTIVES. Explore options like required local ownership, rent controls or such things that would assist with maintaining and expanding the type of retail mix we presently have.

QUESTION 2: ENVIRONMENT

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

STOP OR LIMIT DEVELOPMENT. Our group would rather have a moratorium on any development rather than allow any development that isn't carefully considered with respect to meeting the standards that have been established.

GARDEN TOPS. Can these be incorporated in development requirements? Hooray for rooftop and ledge type gardens and greenery.

RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS TO COMMERCIAL. Comments about the restrictions on re-development that have been adopted with respect to residential rebuilding efforts led to thoughts of having similar restrictions commercially.

LEED AND ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS. Greater effort should be made towards encouraging or requiring LEED Certification or other types of environmental certification for all new construction and rebuilding projects in the City.

BEYOND DECATUR. It was noted that environmental issues often extend to or apply to issues beyond our borders, and the group encourages our City officials to work with Dekalb County, Atlanta Regional Commission, and state officials on efforts in these areas.

STREAMS. Upon noting that several streams originate within our City, the group felt that greater cleanup efforts are needed. Also increased policing of pollution problems, as it was noted that any problems with the water leaving our City had far ranging impact on both sides of the Subcontinental Divide to the Atlantic and Gulf. Concern was also expressed over the parking lot runoff from our City to the streams.

WATER RECLAMATION INCENTIVES. The City should explore options with respect to educating citizens and encouraging water reclamation efforts.

QUESTION 3: TRANSPORTATION

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

RR FRUSTRATIONS. The group re-visited briefly the difficulties presented by the CSX protections under federal railroad regulations, minimizing options with respect to any City efforts involving the rail right of way.

REGIONAL EFFORTS. Any efforts made by the City should be done in conjunction with any regional transportation plan efforts.

ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION SIGNAGE, INCENTIVES. The get around town signage should be altered to indicate distances to locations, and any other information conducive to walking or biking to the destination.

COUNTY EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES. Noting the number of county employees that commute in to Decatur, thought should be given to working with Dekalb to offer alternative commute incentives for them.

POSSIBLE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS. The group encourages the City to work with PEDS, the Atlanta Bicycle Campaign, the Clean Air Campaign and other possible partner organizations to explore and promote alternate commute options.

BLOCK CHURCH STREET AT SYCAMORE. Noting the through traffic on Church from Trinity to Ponce, the group thought explorations regarding blocking Church to through traffic on either side of Sycamore (note: such that access to the church parking lot was maintained).

STATE ROUTE RESTRICTIONS. The group commented on the difficulties faced by the City in making changes to streets that are designated as state routes.

FOLKS WITH DISABILITIES. The group felt strongly that adequate provision for individuals with disabilities should be included in any transportation change efforts.

LOCAL TROLLEY. The group was very interested in the establishment of a free trolley to encourage movement in and between the commercial retail districts of the City, particularly during events.

CHARGING STATIONS. The group felt that exploration of designated parking locations that offered charging stations for electric vehicles would be a method of encouraging the City's commercial districts as destination locations for individuals driving them.

TRAFFIC CALMING AND ROAD DIET. Further efforts in these areas would be a positive thing to pursue.

Q4. ENVIRONMENT

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

VENDOR SELECTION. There was discussion over the “carnival style” vendors permitted at many of our festivals, and the group encouraged greater effort to have local and perhaps healthier vendors providing food and beverages at our events.

SECURITY. Appreciation was expressed for the understated police presence that provide a relaxed yet secure environment at our events.

STREET VENDORS. Why are there no street vendors at the square or at Oakhurst (generally, not at the festivals where they exist temporarily). Discussion noted that if there were legal or public health issues, or competition with local retail establishment issues, that might be understandable. But if not, why not?

NO DOGS. Recognizing the balance between dog lovers and others, interest was expressed in making some of our events “dog free”.

CLOSE MORE STREETS. The group was *really* interested in the concept of closing more streets to vehicle traffic during events. They would like to see the City experiment with expanding the boundaries of non-vehicle traffic at select events to evaluate the effects of doing so. This could expand the boundaries of the event itself.

FURTHER EVENT EXPANSION. This involved continuing efforts to expand the boundaries of events via use of trolleys or other transportation efforts to incorporate commercial locations beyond the downtown area in events.

SPANISH SIGNS. Consideration should be given to adding Spanish translations to way finding and other City signage as a recognition of the increasing bilingual population and in keeping with our general attitude of acceptance.

Q5. HOUSING

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

AGING POPULATION. Recognition needs to be given to the increasing percentage of elderly residents. A lot of discussion focused on other than high rise style affordable independent living options, perhaps with an economically feasible mid-rise approach.

CITY EMPLOYEES. Options should be made available to city employees that enable them to live in the City, or send their kids to school here.

NO ONE-OFF DEALS. Concern was expressed against offering opening one time tax breaks or price reductions in affordable housing efforts.

PARTNER INSTITUTION EFFORTS. Explore options with Columbia Seminary, Agnes Scott, etc. for encouragement of housing opportunities for their employees, City and school employees, etc. Collaboration efforts could extend to other non-residential building and facility usage policies.

DIVERSITY. This was a broad topic revisited several times by the group. An emphasis was placed on the fact that a mixture of age, income, race, gender, etc. creates a unique neighborhood and City, and there is a value to be placed on this uniqueness. Discussions about how we accomplish and encourage efforts in this area suggested that we find incentives for private investment in mixed income housing efforts like the Villages of East Lake.

Q6. HEALTHY LIVING

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

WALKABILITY. Wider sidewalks are needed. Create ways to make walking more interesting via distances on way-finding signs, tree and plant identification, historic points of interest, etc.

ACTIVE LIVING. Continue current City department efforts.

TAI CHI. Picture it: Tai Chi on the square.

CAMPING OPTIONS. Once upon a time Boy Scouts camped on the square. Are there options available within the City for limited camping opportunities?

24 HOUR ESTABLISHMENTS. We need more places that are open all the time.

KIDS URBAN PLAY OPPS. We should partner with organizations that teach kids how to play safely in an urban environment.

WORKOUT PATHS. Incorporate workout or exercise paths, the kind with exercise stations usable by seniors, in our parks.

Thompson 05-11-10 9am

Thoughts from first session

City should take a proactive role in redevelopment of Big H property

Need to define the role of city vs. the private market in redevelopment of property

Need more traffic calming that slows cars, not stop cars

Like roundabouts

Close Ponce de Leon to cars, but provide trolley on it

Support closing Ponce de Leon if it still supports businesses, fun for kids and provide trolley

Preserve City

Maintain African American population

Maintain and increase socio economic diversity of city

Require affordable housing as part of development process

Support public housing

Develop incentives to promote affordable housing

Natural Environment

Preserve the existing tree canopy

Improve air quality

Use Smart Growth guidelines from the National Resource Defense Council to guide development

Smart Growth means higher density, multiple uses, transportation choices and that the town looks unique

Cultural Life

Provide support for all kinds of art

Create more localized, neighborhood specific gatherings

Decatur Arts Alliance should coordinate rehearsal space and exhibit space for artist community

Utilize church facilities for art

Utilize vacant buildings and sites for artist space

Promote neighborhood theater events

City should provide a liaison for the private market and artist community

Utilize “dead space” on the outside of parking garages for art exhibits/stalls

Expand little Kroger on Commerce

Transportation

Remove parking from North McDonough by square and East Court Square

Redevelop “dead zones” on Commerce and Church between Commerce/Ponce

Remove or renovate bandstand on the Square. It is not functional as a performance space and blocks view of Old Courthouse

Current parking decks in the city seem unfriendly

Wayfinding signs blend in

Parking decks should connect to the square visually

Connect city through elevated gondolas

Provide a suspended bridge from parking decks to square

Healthy Living

Provide bicycle racks everywhere

Create a magnet retail project downtown

More farmer's markets

More community gardens

In the future streets are so safe, no need for crossing guards

Drivers speed less because speed limit is enforced

All streets in Decatur are 2 lane streets

More bicycle lanes

Challenges to Implementation

Money to do it all

Growing the tax base

Using a holistic approach

The railroad

Committing to an overall vision for the city

Providing opportunity for ongoing conversations

Finding a way to resolve conflicting interests

Making sure ideas are not lost

Poor relationship between city and county

State highway regulations

Statistics about Decatur are confusing because the city is larger than the mailing address area (30030)

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.

12- 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 – Terrific 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 “loose our way,”

13- 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

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

Facilitator Name: Thrivikraman, Tushar (Group 37)

Meeting Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2010

Time: 7-9 pm

From last week: shuttle buses between different communities

Question 1:

Don't get bigger, get better. Regulations necessary to control amount of building, size. Housing should be built for seniors from beginning, should have laws / regulations to fit the vision of changing demographics. Review existing code

Concerns over 14% commercial tax base – unusually low. Plan smart to grow commercial tax base. Should encourage high density / mixed use / mixed income development. Encourage commercial property / annex commercial areas.

Preserve historic districts / char of city, cure “McMansion” problem. Manage transitions between commercial / high density and lower density residential areas. Review regulations on how we designate historic areas, get guidelines now before expansion / development so that everyone knows standards before hand – lead to less controversy.

Renovate existing structures

Increase diversity of shops, need for general store, not just boutique shops

Affordable rent for businesses

Large stores (i.e. Trader Joe's etc) would be good to drive residences and people to Decatur area

Creative ways of charging non-profits for services (trash / recycling collection, etc)

Question 2:

No /reduce Styrofoam / plastic in restaurants. Encourage recycling in business and apts / condos. Demand is there, just need operational ability

Increase fines for tree removal

More bike / pedestrian lanes for travel

Highlighting natural resources through education, signs over waterways, etc

Stick and carrot approach, ordinances + tax incentives, combine with fed, local, and state (i.e. solar power water heaters, etc)

Water / sewer – poor pipes and infrastructure. Review current and assess county vs city conflicts

Label drainage / education. Use online resources reports for air quality other statistics, working into public events. Spread information about how Decatur is doing w.r.t. sustainability

Better light timings – improve air quality, left turn arrows at specific intersections are not timed correctly. May be a county issue, should see if Decatur community can influence county action

Would like more green spaces, but concerned on impact on taxes

Electric Shuttle between neighborhoods, help relieve traffic. Could charge nominal fee and could sustain itself. Make it unique, like a trolley.

Smaller parks / greenspace. Areas with benches with grass, along tracks, etc

Signage for parking lots, parks, etc. larger and more noticeable.

Question 3:

Shuttle

Education – Schools

Decatur Yellow Bike? / Bike Sharing , how to sustain such an effort

Special fares for MARTA from East lake to Avondale stations, charge by distance, senior citizen rates

Transportation from Oakhurst – Decatur, Aging population

Driving Age requirements, push to older

Restrictions on number of vehicles people can own, tax incentives and penalties

Car pooling incentives

Increase flex cars, more in neighborhood areas, right now in downtown which isn't that effective

Change mindset of people to not drive around city, but use alternative forms of transportation. Do a good job already, how to improve, who is missing and still driving?

Question 4:

Safety in parks, out skirts of city, square at night. Issues of loitering and pan-handling. Around MARTA station

Diversity of events to variety of people, Beer festival for young adults, Beach parties for families, big draw to city

Library

Rec center, active living – collaboration between organizations

School System, know schedule – Master Calendar

What is going on in the city today – schools, city, businesses

Maintain look and feel of city. Have plans and requirements already set, regulations and expectations in place so developers know what standard should be

Question 5:

Review laws about garage offices, homes, etc

Concern for low-income housing being lower-quality, should try and maintain quality

Racial Shift – does not speak well, good for schools. Need to backup with housing

Higher density would offer better choices for affordability

Need more single-people , other demographics than families. Age, marital status, income, etc. cost of homes leading to missed opportunities.

Affordable houses, not just condos

NORC – Naturally occurring retirement community. Existing houses, stay in community

Smart house – universally accessible designed

Question 6:

Growth of Decatur Rec center, active living, connection with schools, seniors. Maybe review people who use facility

Promote Farmers Market – have dedicated area

Expanding runs, clubs, biking, better knowledge/info – Calendar

Walking tours and Volunteers

Tourism, draw incentives, “foody” city that is green. Being a destination

Access to events are free, cheap

Movie Theater, independent, small

Boutique Hotel

Holiday Inn conf center improvement, Emory, CDC

Expand commercial Tax base – tourism

Strong doctors in Dekalb Medical center, proximity a plus, good for aging population

Connect neighborhoods with paths, and bike routes

No generally accessible field, no baseball park

Question 7 : Who are we?

What things do we want to do well?

Need better vision statement, mission statement

Diversity / Affordable housing, etc

Group 19

Robyn Tibbetts

Session 2

3. How do you get from place to place

walking

biking

scooters **cars**

cutting across railroad

Might change

safety of traveling

counters for crossing street and sound beepers (pedestrians)

more alternative fuel cars, and places to plug in

positive reinforcement and education of road rules etc...

increase signage and more sidewalks

Dekalb relationship with city

1. How do we sustain? How do we preserve what we appreciate?

Heal the railroad issues...creative ways to make railroad work with us like landscape, underpass, overpass

Balance economic health- real city, real place, not resort, real places to shop for needs

Downtown sustainable by more diverse businesses- **practice everyday affordable needs ex-target...** can be built to look like city (example D.C shops have look of city not big giant retail)

City that works for all income levels-shops not outgrowing the income of its citizens

Encourage more everyday use –be able to walk to ½ your errands on foot...be healthier

Corner stores/grocery stores that are attractive and local

Better version of little Kroger or Trader Joes

Maintain high quality service- can't be sustained without maintaining tax structure, so broader taxing on "other" non residential

Fees for county and churches...

Prepare for economic uncertainty

5. Who will need housing in twenty years?

Elderly near downtown where you can access needs via walking and activities near by. Does not have to be large, cluster homes/dorms. Does not to be a 1 size fits all, diverse options,

Allowing seniors to age in place

Starter homes for young

College students non traditional housing for students (example near King Plow arts center) privatized living spaces

Non traditional families example- single moms, roommates, etc...

4. How do we preserve, improve, and protect

underground utilities

Trees-subside the fear of the falling trees and preserve and protect good ones, plant new ones

City arborist/program to plant new trees, inspect property upon request

Create a policy on maintenance of healthy canopy

Policy of waterways/ storm run offs to be enforced by city, make decisions more uniform so many individuals problem solving and not in a uniform way. Example- peavine creek

Don't see dekalb water maintaining and checking waterways and storm draining.

The system now is dependent on homeowners and can be costly if over 50 feet so it can go not fixed

Energy efficient incentives

Wildlife management/arborist to help with all the great new green space

6. Healthy living

renovation of rec center

variety of location of programs (keenagers)

integration of activities-partnering with others

maintaining park renovation

bathrooms in location of sports activities- they are always closed or non existent

4. What is most important to you

book festival and arts festival

concerts on the square- has gotten really crowded spread out over the year they are so important it would be great to spread more out over time and space

volunteer program

such a variety of stuff to do

holiday festivities- egg hunt, marshmallow roast, 4th of July, bfast with Santa

DBA continued support growth

Trendell 05-11-2010 7pm

#1. How do we sustain the city?

- How do we support the city financially? – More commercial revenue, it's currently too lop-sided with residential
- Explore incorporating more commercial land into Decatur (annexation)
- Face up to organized resistance to annexation
- Increase downtown business, too much unused commercial land.
- Increase diversity/variety of business type and population
- Short term & long term planning, reassessing as we go in the strategic and tactical (doing good now, keep this up)
- Offer incentives to businesses that don't require retail space
- Better partnership with the county on traffic control
- **CHALLENGES** in sustaining the city:
- **1) Neighbors that are adjacent to commercial areas are opposed to change**
- **2) Waste of commercial space (i.e. Suntrust bank across from Ted's should have been 2 stories with office space above – 'fake' 2-story façade should not be allowed)**

#2. How do we protect green space?

- Promote planting of trees, not just bushes, etc.
- Maintain recycling programs
- Continue to be resourceful
- Promote rain barrel usage and A/C drainage collection
- Partner with ASC to use their vacant lots as green space for now
- Encourage walking, but increase "rest areas" (i.e. benches)
- Promote water use contest (i.e. Gallons per person per day) as a fun way to educate about conservation & recycling
- Educate about air pollution, what contributes to it? How can we reduce our impact?
- Promote green space donation
- Increase amount of green space required per population density (i.e. in multi-housing developments)
- **CHALLENGES** in protecting green space:
- **1) Aging trees**
- **2) Cost of land**

#3. How do we change how we travel around Decatur?

- More people work at home
- Promote safe alternatives to motorized travel.

- Wider sidewalks – Create double-wide sidewalks on one side of the street and bump the road over.
- Make one-way streets around the courthouse/city center (Ponce, W.Trinity, Church & Commerce)
- Implement traffic calming measures (i.e. brick crosswalks, Bulb-out like in Candler Park, “All Red” Crosswalk phases for pedestrians if someone presses the button)
- Ticker more often for people who don’t brake at crosswalks when people are present.
- Continue to encourage kids to walk to school (Safe Route to School)
- Educate and follow-up on the rules for pedestrians and drivers
- Relay the message/get attention with folk art signs posted at crosswalks
- City should get control of traffic lights in Decatur – get a traffic engineer
- Clustered businesses on each side of town so people don’t have to cross town as often.
- Add a shuttle/street car / tram like we have with the Fur Bus during Terrific Thursdays, Tour of Homes, etc.
- Explore further shuttle opportunities, shuttles for concerts, or a reliable paid-shuttle.
- We currently travel by: walking, car, bike, the Emory “Cliff Bus”, Pedi-Cab, Scooter

#4. What’s important about our cultural environment?

- Incorporating school facilities into our community for performing arts, etc.
- Expand our downtown areas during festivals (like we do for the Book Festival) or maybe expand down street in front of high school
- Diversity in events is important – mostly family oriented, but fits all kinds
- Maintain integrity of events
- **CHALLENGES in maintaining cultural environment:**
- **1) Space**
- **2) Crowds**

#5. Who will need housing in 20 years? What will we need?

- Maintain multi-housing units zoned towards downtown areas
- Affordable housing, people who work here should be able to afford to live here. Shouldn’t be too expensive for teachers.
- Require certain % of new development to have affordable housing
- Maintain tax exempt level for seniors
- Create a rental market in downtown
- Promote higher density living by demonstrating benefits (i.e. like tour of condo gardens that was done)

#6. What would make positive differences in terms of “healthy living” for the residents in our city?

- Create live/learn retirement community with ASC, Columbia, Art Institute, DeVry – a community that partners with learning institutions. Continuing Education opportunities in retirement.
- Walking maps that indicate location of benches, water fountains and bathrooms, even on private property and in neighborhoods
- Continue to promote Safe Route to School and crossing guard program, need to educate community about it.
- More stores in downtown supplying daily needs would promote more walking
- Partner with medical centers (i.e. DeKalb Wellness center, Emory, Kaiser) for health seminars, screenings, etc.
- Get flu shot clinics available downtown
- **CHALLENGES in promoting “healthy living”:**
- **1) Lifestyle / culture**
- **2) Lack of time**
- **3) Participation (i.e. community involvement, coaches for teams, etc.)**

Vogel 05-13-2010 2 PM

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

- Keep shopping locally; encourage local small businesses
- Spread the word about our City
- Volunteer !
- Promote life cycle housing
- Educate the citizens about the challenges we face and the solutions
- Promote and encourage affordable:
 - Housing
 - Taxes
 - Retail
- Maintain a variety of retail:
 - Types of Merchandise
 - Price points
- Obtain access to sales tax revenues
- Intelligent annexation
- “Meet your government” Day

How do we preserve and improve our natural environment?

How do we protect our air, water, and green space?

- Green roofs
- LEED/energy efficiency incentives
- Environmental education in the schools
- Community gardens
- Flood plain reuse for gardens and/or recreation
- Stronger tree ordinance
- Incentives for automobile-less lifestyle
- Parking incentives for alternate transportation/scooters/small cars
- Encourage energy audits
- Month Focus article about environmental topics
- Decrease airplane noise pollution
- Establish habitat certification with organization like Audubon Society
- Minimize storm water runoff and encourage capture and re-use
- City sponsored rail barrels ala recycling bins
- Expand recycling program

How do you get from place to place in Decatur now?

What might change in how we travel in the next ten years?

- The RR crossings are intimidating
 - Marked crosswalks
 - Bridges
- Implement a shuttle service
- Encourage bicycle/scoot travel
 - Dedicated lanes
 - Close streets to automobiles
 - Parking racks
- Golf carts
- Promote alternative transportation success stories
- Education citizens about alternative transportation methods
- Establish Ride-a-[bike/scooter/electric car/walk]-Day
- Promote and encourage short and long term parking near public transportation
- Have businesses provide incentives to customers and employees using public/alternative transportation

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

- Festivals/community gatherings
- Schools
- Convenience
- Walkability
- Outdoor cafe seating
- Participation of religious communities
- Feeling of common community
- Safety
- Small town feeling
- Community volunteerism & outreach
- Variety of businesses
- Strong neighborhoods
- Continuation of community/government interactivity
- Approachability, responsiveness, and stability of City leadership
- Display of "Decatur spirit"

Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in twenty years?

What kind of housing do you think they will need?

- Smaller families
- Starter/affordable homes
- Young singles
- Impact of annexation ?
- Multi-generational housing
 - Code issues?
- Continuing care senior communities
- Live/work incentives
- Local jobs
- Life cycle housing
- Disabled accessible housing

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

- Access to good health care
- Limit automobiles to improve air quality
- Promote walkability
- Access to fresh food (e.g. farmer's markets)
- More opportunity for physical health activities – City sponsored or promoted
- Business incentives to offer healthy living products and services
- Efficient use of existing resource – people planning, etc.
- Carpooling incentives
- City shuttle service
- Create a pedestrian mall – Ponce Clairemont to Church
- More bicycle routes and racks
- Preserve existing trees and encourage more
- Building code options/incentives to encourage efficient building
 - LEED
 - Green roof
- Encourage and promote community gardens
- Sidewalks in good repair
- Continued recycling emphasis
- Expansion of greenspace

Vogels 05-13-2010 9am

In the first session. . .

- Street trees need to be a part of Decatur’s future
- Use pervious pavement (Cornell Structural soil) for future parking lots
- John Madigoski city engineer . . .in my opinion barely functional. Very negative in that office

- Storm water fee . . .where does that money go? Constantly have damage from storm water drainage

Question #1: How do we sustain this city?

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

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

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

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

- City should dictate all utilities Companies when dealing with City's trees. GA Power comes through and chops trees tops
- We want all utilities in conduits like Peachtree City
- Trees were torn down with Housing Authority buildings

- Need to be actively planning and planting trees for future tree canopy. Current canopy in decline

- City needs tree ordinances for private property owners.

- City needs to educate private property owners regarding types of trees to plant

- Developers should replace trees taken down with 4-5 new ones

- City has to be more responsible with builders regarding trees

- Canopy dictates our storm drainage, AC and power bills

- Do not sell public property, maintain and add to public land, create green space

- Take long-term view with public property

- When making policy, be empathetic to how it would affect you and others as citizens

- Create a citizens' advisory board

- Create a green space commission

- Create a green or emerald necklace through the city

- City should buy property on Scott and Clairmont next to woodland gardens. If developed, has to be mixed use space of green space and building
- Urban development should have the same ordinance or codes and builders.
- Pedestrian traffic must be addressed at corner of Candler and College

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

- Used to walk child to school—now drive
- Clairmont School encourages individual drivers with new car drop off
- Parents still drive even though they could walk
- Need better pedestrian and bike paths
- Columbia and college intersection very dangerous
- Parents of Winnona Park do walk
- With restructure of schools from K-5 to K-3 Decatur added car congestion and added number of schools parents need to get their children to
- Need to celebrate how our kids have the choice to walk to all schools and our crossing guards are great
- Need better crossing opportunity with railroad tracks and renfroe
- In next ten years—increase parking opportunities outside Decatur and run shuttles into the city. Make downtown district a walking district. Free up space from parking for trees. Ban Gas cars. Add conduits
- Dekalb employees should have to use MARTA and shuttles into the city
- Begin using golf carts

- With school reconfiguration and 5th Ave. school not being centrally located we should provide shuttles for kids to ride
- Safe routes to school should expand to all schools, churches, and employers
- 5th Ave should be a K-5
- Education has improved with reconfiguration but not geographically friendly
- Need multi use trails. City needs to accomplish goal of completing sidewalks on all streets— should use pervious concrete. Sidewalks would be a good test for pervious concrete
- Use shuttles or designated cars that loop Decatur for major stops. Like in DC
- Decatur should have loop shuttle to YMCA, schools, and athletic fields like a cliff bus

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

- Square
- Festivals: Arts, Books, Wine, and Beer. Book festival brings in a wide variety of people to city
- Concert on Square
- Beach party
- Commercial aspects of Decatur brings residents out regularly
- Beach party very Decatur, all ages, see a lot of people from Decatur. The events give back
- 4th of July event, parade and fireworks. Can watch them from front yard
- Churches are vital to downtown

- Schools and school events
- Flea market at Baptists Church on Clairmont. Citywide flea market
- Cooperation of churches
- GA Center for the Book
- ASC venues open to the community
- DHS needs to open stadium and auditorium to the community for city even
- Community needs to know about school events are venues for the community.
- Bring Semi pro soccer team to Decatur, Attract sports teams in Decatur or traveling youth teams, Bring in English league teams, bring in world cup

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

- Boomers will need housing as they get older
- Will want to sell home and move into downtown condo
- City needs to loosen codes with multihousing
- Need more affordable housing for younger people
- Decatur needs a healthy balance between single and multifamily housing. There is a stigma if don't own a home in Decatur
- Decatur needs to glamorize downsizing
- Build smaller homes

- Bring in more fee simple townhouses
- Create a retirement home like Parksprings in Stone Mt. Build on edge of the city near Dekalb Hospital and use shuttle to move people back and forth. Use Decatur hospital and all the space for currently used for parking lots for retirement community.
- People move outside of Decatur when they retire to avoid taxes like Avondale Estates—
- Cheaper to rent than to own in Decatur because of taxes
- Statistics correct on Data sheet?

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

- Keep parks safe
- Allow kids to move around Decatur alone
- Police force needs to be visible. Add bike police force, have police walking sidewalks.
- Need active neighborhood watches
- Parks need visible safety measures
- Put Emergency number in cell phone
- Public Housing needs to be mixed use for young and elderly
- Drug deals are going on within Public housing and on Patillo way
- Do not want people coming into Decatur to buy drugs
- High School needs better surveillance

Wrap Up and Review

- Empty parking lots and get rid of them
- Decatur is ripe for change and improvement. Do it in a new way
- Have new vision with utilities
- Make public space safe
- Transportation. Consider shuttles, bypasses, multi use trails, get rid of parking lots
- Trees: intentional canopy replacement
- Storm water drainage needs attention
- Provide variety of housing for elderly
- Address intersection of Church and N. Decatur. Parking lot wasteland
- E. Ponce to Farmer's Market corridor needs attention. Get rid of stripper's joint.
- Decatur must not use blinders and think broader than city limits

Watkins 05-11-2010 2 PM

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

Laws around 40% greenspace

Increase education around how increasing parks and greenspace will increase property value

Figure out where we are in energy consumption and waste in Decatur and share numbers with community.

Educate on true time to walk places

Add 1 cent sales tax to buy old houses and take them down and create green space.

Improve Dearborn Park

Get people out of cars

Manage air space with airplanes==help to reduce air pollution

Make streets safer

More organized trash pickup-create community involvement- volunteer and get a t-shirt☺

Take more pride in city-increase trash cans around town and have kids from schools paint them.

Lower speed limits

Studies to better flow of traffic, traffic lights and commuting with bikes

Balance design of roads to include bikes and walking

Bike sharing

Education on environmental policies in place

Impact of idling in car

Tax benefits for hybrid/alternative fuel vehicles and special parking benefits

Increase number of bike racks

Bike valet at all festivals

Question #3 How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change how we travel about in the next 10 years?

Better public transportation for people who cannot bike and walk.

More time to cross street-alternative crossing lights

Traffic lights on raised crosswalks like in Seattle

Improve sidewalks

Ticket people that run crosswalks

Crosswalk at Marta stops

Educate on carpooling in schools

Use technology that is Decatur specific to support carpooling

Zip car back in Decatur

Increased awareness about taxi cabs

More pedi-cabs

Better mass transit

Have Decatur people lobby for marta

Decatur beltline

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

Empty nesters-affordable condos, affordable taxes, look at tax exemptions

Young families with children

Increase diversity of population

Increase high density condos that include 1, 2, and 3 bedroom condos

Encourage developers to build more responsibility-less parking spaces

Green building-increase LEEDS certification

Rooftop gardens

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

Define green for Decatur

Balance green requirement with diversity

Educate on how to save money in Decatur by decreasing energy use.

More efficient use of space to create more diverse housing without eroding current homeowner property value

Look at what needs to be done with single family homes.

More Rec Center offerings for general population

Dance hall in Decatur

Health care co-op

Healthy eating groups for kids and adults

Decatur Tri-athlon

Walk between green spaces/parks in city

Once a month close streets in Decatur for walking, biking eating connecting and shopping.

Food Revolution in Decatur

Bike riding classes for adults

Webb 5-15-2010 2pm

Responses to session 1

Trader Joe's and Whole Foods would be nice variety of organic food and stores, very accessible

Annexation- what is best? Avondale? Urban Plaza?

Want greater control of entrances to Decatur

Spend energy thinking about lower emissions

The community is for everyone not just people with kids. kids/no kids – two aren't mutually exclusive

In-fighting between neighborhood groups is a concern

Themes from 1st session

Diversity

Transportation

Affordability/taxes

Sustainability/development, master plan for city

Communication/connection using social media tools

Active living

How do you get from place to place? What might change in 10 years?

Convenient bypasses (and traffic flow) around Decatur

Shared bike membership program. Fee, locks- intelligently designed program

More bike lanes, infrastructure

Speed control especially Oakhurst

Safe travel for walkers, bikers. wheelchairs, & strollers

“complete street policy” all modes of travel accommodated

actual and perceived safety

College Ave & S. Candler- fast traffic near schools and in general, need a tunnel under the tracks by the high school and Renfroe (like near ASC). (Note: lots of discussion about train tracks and crossing safety)

Shuttle for the city using alternative fuel

Network trail around city for jogging/walking. Tied to green spaces.

Link green spaces with a trail like a Decatur beltline. Off-street with no car traffic.

Light rail (at grade, on street)- Decatur, Emory, Oakhurst, Lindberg

Force cars to bypass downtown Decatur by closing part of downtown Church so pedestrian traffic only and/or close part of Ponce. (Close Ponce between Commerce and Commerce. Close Church between Commerce and Trinity)

Question1- How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve what we appreciate?

Establish more historic neighborhoods preservation- local historic districts

Aesthetic harmony in neighborhoods

Keep harmony in neighborhoods

Keep involving public in decisions

Sustain sensitive populations (long term residents, elderly, low and mid-income) with tax breaks

Benefits/savings for long time residents so they don't leave

Increase environmental sustainability.

- Composting (can be money maker)

- Alternative energy (methane gas)

- Yard and food waste composting

- City compost area should be better used and advertised

Compost should stay within the city- not go to county compost

Better local composting in general

How are we preserving water (no one is group knows) Needs encouragement and funding

Green roofs downtown on flat roofs

Subsidize energy and water preservation, incentives

Government buildings should be green leaders. Dekalb/Decatur City should work together.

Is there available info for smart sustainability? What is best?

We want to learn, plan. Lead green development, Decatur should be positive example.

Create green cooperative so can learn about sustainability such as bike co-op and a place to learn how to make rain barrels. Trustworthy, reliable information.

Question 5 Who will need housing in 20 years?

Over 60 population is projected to be huge

They won't want lawn, won't want to have to move from Decatur

Need place to retire that's not a traditional retirement home

Easy access to medical care

If annexed Suburban Plaza then DeKalb Medical Center is more integrated and not isolated

Cooperative for senior services- active seniors help older seniors and earn “credit” for helping them. The credit can then be redeemed when they need help themselves.

In general, like ride share concept

City workers like police should afford to live here. Work force housing- we need more.

Service industry workers should be able to live here too

The group has concern about the lack of housing affordability in general.

East Lake & Avondale could be more dense because they are near public transportation

Density increases affordability- condos, etc and can still feel like a neighborhood

Avondale Columbia Park would have provided density near public transportation

Density near public transportation that still keeps neighborhood feel. OR live/work design in commercial area. Strategic density.

A participant asks, “What will be green building in Decatur and how will we incentivize it?”

The city could give mandates on new construction (ex. LEED silver) How do we balance green with affordability?

Back to transportation . . .

- close East Court Square loop to extend square & make parking for bikes only (GA Power and courthouse decks could be alternative parking)

- must connect decks, improve signage and safety concerns & make more attractive. Better walkways.

Back to sustainability . . .

- how will we protect & replant our canopy? Tree ordinance is too weak

Wrap up

This group is not racially diverse. Are the Decatur Roundtable diversity efforts effective? (maybe other groups are more diverse)

Even if there is diversity is there interaction?

Are there underlying race issues that exclude people from this process and communication and community events?

If communication is online then exclusion happens (sometimes)

Themes from Session 2

Sustainability

Transportation

Annexation

Active living

Green-ing of Decatur (in affordable way)

Appreciation of Decatur's beauty and preserving it

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

Facilitator Name: Kyle Williams

Meeting Date: Thursday, May 13

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

Group 48

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

Young families

Downsizing from within Decatur

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

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

Policy = zoning overly policies that are specialized and individualized

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

Policy = protection of public house

Decatur is attractive to young families, but not to seniors

Increase PR to attract retirees and seniors

Equitable taxation based upon ability, age

Increase commercial tax base

Demand increases squeeze out the middle

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

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

Multi-generational, mixed families

Preserving community

College housing (DeVry, Agnes Scot, Columbia)

Annexation will create greater stock and supply

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

Annexation may help lower/stabilize housing costs

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

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

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

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

Lower taxes

Offer tax incentives for stormwater reduction, corrections

Credits for volunteering against taxes or traffic fines/penalties

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

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

Citywide coordination of parking

Rationalized parking, cooperation between and among businesses, locations

Tax breaks for work force

Public safety remain a budget priority

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

Greater economic development by City, partnering with private

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

Tree replacement program

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

Curbside composting

Fully utilize MARTA, CLIFF

City involvement in MARTA

Expand sidewalk program to both sides of all streets

Expand bike lanes

Stormwater policy, improvement

Rooftop gardens

Inventory and designated greenspace

Tax incentives for LEED certification

Environmental construction costs more, but that will diminish over time

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

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

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

Pedicabs offer a viable alternative form of transportation

Safer rail crossings

Designated bike lanes, walk lanes from car lanes

Aging population will decrease the number of commuters

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

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

Continue to offer variety that appeal to all ages

Continue to be respectful of proximity to residential

Safety is important

Responsive public safety

Increased street lamps

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

Keep city meetings in the evenings

Invest in proper land use planning

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

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

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

Active living – bike lanes, tennis courts

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

Rec Center should focus on more than just kids

Larger swimming pools with real, useable lap lanes

An arts program that rivals Callanwolde

Arts partnership lags benefit

Local farm-to-table food instruction from city

Encourage schools, restaurants to use local foods

Gardening courses, teach where food comes from

Expansion of local, community gardens

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

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

Study effectiveness and usage of ZIP car

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

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

Lower taxes

Outdoor arts, amphitheater

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

Explore gambling

Celia Willis

Session Two

Group 16

- How do we sustain the city?
 - o Attract independent businesses that are self-sustaining
 - o Decatur Job board- where all businesses post job openings
 - o Protect our natural environment
 - o Taking care of the older population
 - Help in transitioning to assisted living in the neighborhood
 - Help with transportation
 - Attract volunteer groups that work with the elderly
 - o Filling in the ugly spaces, make walking routes safer and more scenic
 - o Make ground level areas pedestrian friendly (it's already happening but just keeping improving it)
- *How* do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?
 - o Along with the job board mentioned above, have natural preservation board
 - A message board for volunteer opportunities
 - Have it not only on website- but make sure the website is publicized through email
 - Make website more like a blog- have more news and e-mail blasts
 - o Replace dying trees
 - Ordinance encouraging preservation

- Bike lanes on the actual street
- Decatur Transportation system
- Closing ponce on the square and Mcdonough- make it a pedestrian mall
- More communication in neighborhoods
 - Have neighborhood areas on website
- Annual “clean-up Decatur day”
 - With a festival after it
- How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?
 - Shuttles fro companies that have employees in the city
 - CNN, CDC, Emory, Coke
 - Electric taxis or shuttle service for residents (start with the weekends)
 - More sidewalks (by the railroads)
 - Bike lanes, bike racks
- When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?
 - More classes for adults
 - Like yoga
 - Gym at the rec center (place to work out)
 - Lower prices for residents
 - Just pay each time you go
 - Open up the gym at the high school to residents during the summer
 - Have an Arts director for the entire city
 - Improve the quality of the beer and wine festivals- suppliers and number of people attending
 - Allow community to use CSD property
 - Work on scheduling (baseball field example)
 - Maintain small town character- no tall buildings
- Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in twenty years? What kind of housing do you think they will they need?
 - Who?
 - Older population
 - Empty nesters
 - Civil servants- need affordable housing
 - They will need affordable housing
 - Requirement for notifying the neighborhood citizens of zoning changes
 - Email list
 - Sales tax to offset property taxes
 - Tighten zoning restrictions for single family housing
 - To reduce the cost of houses
 - Merge school system with Dekalb
 - Abolish school system- make private and charter- both of these are in an effort to lower taxes
 - Just make schools more responsive to parents
- In terms of “healthy living,” what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city? What activities, programs, or changes in the things we build could make a difference?
 - More pedestrian friendly
 - More classes for adults and a workout center
 - Encourage walking and biking clubs
 - Centralized message moard
 - More awareness about what already exists

- Bike lanes- separate from road
 - Work with emory
 - Like Peachtree City but without the golf carts
- Kids need centrally located areas for activities
 - Repeal skateboard ordinance
- More pet parks
- However, maintain the balance of “live and let live”