

SATURDAY ROUND TABLES: SESSION ONE

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 1: Envisioning the Future

Facilitator Name: Antonio D. Leung (Tony)

Meeting Date: May 1st 2010

Time: 9:00 – 11:00

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

1- Where are we now?

“Our community successes.”

Transition was pre/post Olympics

More social interaction

Small town feel is maintained

Balance between growth and expansion

Adopted ‘Smart Growth’

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

Opportunities to know the civic leaders/accessibility of city government

Open straight forward dialogue about competing interests

“Our community problems.”

Diversity must be maintained

Public transit

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

2- Where do we want to go?

“Inspiring visions of the city.”

Education –

Set an example for the country

100% literacy

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

More options for the ‘mid achievers’

Support network for everyone that need assistance

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

Vocational partnership program

Adult educational program

Decatur Recreation to partnership with others

Commercial –

Better supply of basic needs –more regular shops

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

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

Allow live / work

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

Transportation-

Complete streets

Maintain buses - easy - accessible – transportation within Decatur

Consider public private partnerships

Contingency to backfill MARTA's shortcomings

Don't leave people stranded

Bike friendly – bike safety

Overall safety on the streets

Non car zones examples Denver, Madison Wis.

Traffic light synchronization / coordination

Pedestrian friendly - enforcement

Housing-

More Affordable housing

Make property taxes affordable

Proactively check for exemptions

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

Low-income exemptions for property taxes

Incentives to landlord for affordable housing

“We want Decatur to be...”

Nice place that doesn't cost a fortune

Need to reconnect to all segments of Decatur

School needs to accommodate a variety of learning styles

Everyone has a chance to succeed

Pair up families, not just students

Play together, not just learn together

Affordable available after-school programs

Scholarship subsidy for summer programs

“Decatur, a city where ____”

A place to work and live

Home, churches, schools and **work**

Have everything I need and easily accessible

Cars optional

We are safe

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

Police are involved, positive interaction

Police has respect for everyone

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

Environmental champions, No trash, zero waste, recycle everything

Composting and recycling alternatives

Energy independent

City buildings energy efficient

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

Stay in Decatur – have fun and grow old

Have diversity of businesses and nightlife

Decatur WIFI expanded, accessible to all people

Group 57 • May 1 • Saturday, 9 am
M. Lampe

Our Community Successes

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

Community Gifts

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

Problems / Challenges

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

Inspiring Visions of the Future Decatur

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

We Want Decatur to Be . . .

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

Decatur Is a City Where . . .

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

Kristen Thornton Webb Saturday May 1, 2010 2:00 p.m.

Our community successes

Walk-ability

Safe atmosphere for children

Emotionally invested residents

Good school system- community buy-in, active parents

Events, festivals

Can walk to so much- pubs, restaurants

Racial and economic diversity

Quirky people embraced

People are “characters” and that’s OK

There are downtown destinations (downtown Decatur and Oakhurst), sense of place, quality core, local businesses

Art, music- activities show support

Public art- book and art festival, music and beer festival

Creativity is valued

All activities- tons and tons, vibrant

Small scale- accessible

Wi-fi

Personal, accessible government

 Makes problems manageable

 Fire and police department- friendly, warm, good response

Decatur Focus, blogs/website- feels like community

Government builds community

Taxes- at least get what pay for

MARTA access- 3 stops, can bike and walk

Bike paths, sidewalks

Recycling- no sorting, quick pickup, wide variety of items

Pay as you go garbage bags

Extra courtesy for elderly (garbage pick up, lower taxes)

Service day (MLK day)

Volunteer opportunities-n church, seminary, Hagars House, DCM (30 churches)

Our community problems

High taxes (understand but a lot, strain on mid-income & who can move in)

Limited affordable housing

Concern that low-income, moderate and older residents being forced out

Demographics becoming less diverse (racial, economic, age)

Economic environment may make people want to sell because property is high

Decatur realty- force residents to sell at low prices or force to sell at high prices,

lack of honesty and clarity, cliques

Atlanta realtors won't come here (maybe has changed now)

School system – lack of foresight, lots of change/movement, concerns about trailers. Is there a long-term plan? What is the basis of decisions?

Clairemont trailers, Winnona trailers

Schools affect walk-ability/bike-ability

A dad says he may be forced to drive to aftercare (2 kids, 2 locations), wants city to add Pre-K aftercare at Rec center

Close schools, put up trailers, lose green space

Back part of Winnona school should be city and open to neighbors during school.

School acts like school property only. Winnona school should be friendly.

Number of store closures and empty spaces in Decatur and along Ponce

Are high-rise developments going to create parking and traffic problems? Reduced green space?

Want free parking, not paid

Motorcycles have different parking restrictions that scooters don't have. Should be equal. Need more bike racks.

Inspiring visions of the city

Sidewalks on all streets including side streets

Sidewalks should be for bikes also- wider, safer. Multi-use sidewalk/path.

Bike lanes- want corridor (ex. Church street from N. Decatur to Decatur 2 car lanes and also bike lanes.)

In general, support for non-car transport

Keep "Berkeley meets Mayberry" flavor

Better commercial stores (Suburban Plaza is yucky) Decatur could annex these areas- strategic annexations so more commercial tax base.

Electric public transportation and pedicabs

Cliff-type bus for everyone

Need variety of grocery stores/ more & different types- need to be walking distance

Independent movie theater (1-2 screens)

Build underground tunnels for traffic to bypass downtown

Reroute traffic around downtown

Neighborhoods linked through website and blogs

People can live and work in Decatur, don't need to commute. Cooperate people can work here too. Entice big and mid-size companies but not exclude small business.

Support hoe businesses

Place where everyone is welcome

Light rail (street level) connection between marta, Decatur, Oakhurst, Buckhead, Emory

Weekly compost service (money-making venture)

Expanded community gardens, encouragement for home food gardens, front yard food scapes

Environmentally sustainable city (need comprehensive plan to do this)

Incentives to encourage green building, innovation, retrofit beyond current ga energy code. Be a leader, an example.

More unobtrusive green energy options

City of houses with original character and scale in keeping with neighborhood

Neighborhood housing has harmony

High quality value of young children

Children's opinions are listened to, sought out

All neighborhoods are connected within and as a whole so residents have a sense of community in neighborhood and city

We want Decatur to be

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

Decatur, a city where

Having a car is an inconvenience

There's lots to do

There's a strong sense of community and place

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

Creativity is fostered and encouraged to bloom

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

Wrap up

More immediate results

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

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