



Decatur Round Tables

Session One Report

From April 27 to May 1, the City of Decatur held the first session of its Decatur Round Table discussions, an important step in its 2010 Strategic Plan Update. There were 11 separate meetings in this session, involving 741 citizens. Together, participants offered 2,815 ideas and images about Decatur's current situation and possible future. Additional sessions are planned.

Reviewing the ideas and images (which are listed in this report), five major themes and three additional themes become apparent. These themes are descriptions of what attracted citizens to Decatur, what they want in the future, and what they worry about losing, depending on the context. Here are the five most prominent themes:

The Diverse Community: This is an appreciation of Decatur's diversity of races, ethnic groups, income levels, ages, family types and sexual orientations. The citizens don't just acknowledge this diversity; they are drawn to it. In some instances, it was what caused them to move to Decatur in the first place. Looking forward, they worry that economic forces may diminish this diversity, and they want the city to do what it can to prevent that from happening.

The Involved Community: This is another reason citizens give for appreciating Decatur, the feeling of community "ownership." More than is common among residents of other places, Decaturites are connected to and involved in their neighborhoods, the downtown and other parts of the city. Their hope is that this sense of community can be deepened in the future; their fear is that it might diminish.

The Complete Community: This is still more of an ambition than a reality, although citizens see significant progress in this area. Basically, there are two meanings that citizens give of completeness: First, that the city ought to be as self-contained as possible, with services, goods and entertainment close at hand, if not in walking distance. Second, that it ought to be a place where one could work as well as live and play. In thinking about the future, citizens offered numerous ways Decatur might be made more complete.

The Alternative Transportation Community: In the meetings, citizens were clear that they want to be able to move around Decatur in ways other than driving. Basically, they wanted to be able to walk, ride bikes or take transit as easily as – or maybe more easily than – driving an automobile. They had numerous suggestions for making alternative transportation easier.

The Responsive and Cooperative Community: This is what citizens wanted from the community’s major institutions – principally governments (the city government and school system), but also from its businesses and even religious institutions. In short, they want institutions that listen to the citizens and, where possible, anticipate their desires, and they want institutions that cooperate with one another – again, on behalf of the citizens.

There were three themes that, while voiced over and over again, were not as prominent in the citizens’ thinking as the ones listed above. They were:

The Innovative and Distinctive Community: Citizens said they wanted a community that looked and worked differently than other places, in design, public art and its attraction for innovative companies.

The Green Community: Again and again, citizens said they wanted more green spaces, but there was also the sentiment that Decatur should also be a leader in reducing its impact on the environment.

The Active and Healthy Community: There were many ideas about active living and aging well. A common thread was that Decatur should be a place where people will stay for a lifetime, including their senior years, and that those years should be active and healthy ones.

Meeting Process

As mentioned above, the Round Tables are a first step in the drafting of the 2010 Strategic Plan Update. A similar citizen-engagement process was used to draft the 2000 strategic plan that has guided the city’s development for the past 10 years. Of the goals drafted in 2000, 80 percent have been reached.

The Round Tables are face-to-face meetings involving citizens who agree to attend three sessions. The sessions deal with different topics. Session One, from April 27 to May 1, dealt broadly with what citizens appreciate about Decatur, what they see as problems, and what they’d like Decatur to be in the future. Future sessions will deal with specific topics, such as housing, transportation, healthy living and community decision making.

There were 11 meetings in the first session, held at different times and places around Decatur. In each meeting, participants were seated in small groups of 10 or so, to ensure that all would have a chance to speak. Each small group had a trained facilitator and a recorder, who captured citizen comments.

In Session One, citizens were asked (after introductions) to answer five questions:

1. What are the good things or successes in Decatur?

2. What are Decatur's problems?
3. What kind of community would inspire you?
4. In thinking about what Decatur could be, how would you describe it?
5. Complete the following phrase: "Decatur is a city where _____."

The first two questions were aimed at understanding how Decatur's current situation looks to citizens. The final three questions were aimed at understanding how citizens would like Decatur to look and work in the future.

The Major Themes

As mentioned above, there were five major themes that ran through the 2,815 ideas and images that were offered in Session One. Here are the themes and some representative comments, drawn from the ideas presented later in this report.

The Diverse Community

This is an appreciation of Decatur's diversity of races, ethnic groups, income levels, ages, family types and sexual orientations. The citizens don't just acknowledge this diversity; they are drawn to it. In some instances, it was what caused them to move to Decatur in the first place. Looking forward, they worry that economic forces may diminish this diversity, and they want the city to do what it can to prevent that from happening.

Asked about Decatur's successes, one small group said, "We celebrate diversity in Decatur – we don't just accept it! Racial, age, lifestyle, health, income." Another small group added that Decatur was "open-minded, diverse, inclusive."

But citizens were concerned that now or in the future the city's diversity may be threatened as it becomes more affluent. One participant volunteered that "there is no way that our family could live here if we hadn't moved in 16 years ago." Another group said, "Gentrification causes lack of diversity; high taxes; unaffordable to live here; people having to leave homes." It added that it saw "attitudes of racism, classism, snobism" in Decatur today. A particular concern was that the elderly might not be able to stay in Decatur in years to come. In thinking about the future, one small group said the "city needs to embrace the idea of residents wanting to live here their entire lives."

The Involved Community

This is another reason citizens give for appreciating Decatur, the feeling of community "ownership." More than is common among residents of other places, Decaturites are connected to and involved in their neighborhoods, the downtown and other parts of the city. Their hope is that this sense of community can be deepened in the future; their fear is that it might diminish.

There were numerous examples offered of Decatur citizens feeling a deep sense of involvement. One small group said there is a "perception that everyone works together for the good of the community. Government, businesses and citizens all realize they have a vested interest in keeping the city what they

want it to be.” Another said there was a “strong culture of volunteerism, fundraising, community involvement.”

This sense begins at the neighborhood level and extends across the city. A small group said there was a “sense of community” in Decatur, which includes a “hello on the street, pride in the community, ability to be involved and contribute.” One participant added, “There are 66 homes in my neighborhood; I know 55 of those families.”

As with the concern that diversity may be lost in the future, there were worries that newcomers might not appreciate the cohesive ways of Decatur. One group fretted that the “influx of new residents from outside is leading to a change in the small-town feel, culture” of Decatur.

In the future, citizens hoped the city would continue to consult citizens as part of its decision-making processes and “encourage neighborhood associations (and) neighborhood events,” as a way of encouraging involvement and deepening the sense of community ownership. When one small group looked in to the future, it saw something from the past: “More front porches, people talking to neighbors, relationships.”

The Complete Community

This is still more of an ambition than a reality, although citizens see significant progress in this area. Basically, there are two meanings that citizens give of completeness: First, that the city ought to be as self-contained as possible, with services, goods and entertainment close at hand, if not in walking distance. Second, that it ought to be a place where one could work as well as live and play. In thinking about the future, citizens offered numerous ways Decatur might be made more complete.

One small group was explicit: One of Decatur’s successes has been its “creation of (a) complete community.” It is a place, another group said, that’s “located conveniently: 25 minutes to everywhere” but, as yet another group noted, it increasingly has much of what people need: “lots of small businesses, independent restaurants and retailers (as opposed to chains).” Of particular high value is the city school system. Citizens like the fact that it’s controlled locally.

But not everyone is satisfied. One small group complained there were “too many restaurants and not enough grocery stores.” And in looking to the future, another group said it would like Decatur Square to be more well-rounded, with “more public activity to draw people there on a regular basis, more than just restaurants and bars – e.g., farmers’ markets, vendors, performers.” One participant said, “It would be great if I never had to go to Lenox Mall to buy stuff.”

There was also a sentiment that Decatur should be a place for work, as well as entertainment and homes, and that adding more employment would be good for the tax base – as well as making Decatur a more complete city. “Note the sign on the city limits,” one participant said. “ ‘Decatur is a place for homes schools and churches.’ This should include businesses and commerce as well.”

The Alternative Transportation Community

In the meetings, citizens were clear that they want to be able to move around Decatur in ways other than driving. Basically, they wanted to be able to walk, ride bikes or take transit as easily as – or maybe more easily than – driving an automobile. They had numerous suggestions for making alternative transportation easier.

These were probably the most specific ideas offered in Session One: Ideas about making Decatur a model for alternative transportation. They ranged from building an electric trolley system and implementing a Parisian-style system of free bicycle access, to closing a portion of Ponce de Leon Avenue in downtown and building walking and biking trails across the city.

Many citizens give Decatur high marks for its walkability and support of MARTA. (As several noted, there are three MARTA stations in the city.) And some policies, such as the school system's favoring of neighborhood schools, has added to the city's walkability. A happy consequence, one participant noted was that Decatur teen-agers were "not as anxious to begin driving because much of what they need is accessible in walking/biking distance. If they do drive, Decatur is an ideal area because the speed limit is no more than 45 mph in the city."

But others want more. First, there is a criticism that Decatur is not as easy to bike through as to walk through. There is, one participant said, a "need for bike paths/lanes; current bike parking doesn't work." Second, they said, there are other ways Decatur could be made easier to traverse without a car. In thinking about the future, one small group said it saw "a friendly place to move through without driving. There are fewer cars and more transportation alternatives, such as a trolley, safe bike routes, shady places for people to walk."

The Responsive and Cooperative Community

This is what citizens wanted from the community's major institutions – principally governments (the city government and school system), but also from its businesses and even religious institutions. In short, they want institutions that listen to the citizens and, where possible, anticipate their desires, and they want institutions that cooperate with one another – again, on behalf of the citizens.

As mentioned earlier, Decatur citizens appreciate their local school system, in part because it makes Decatur a more complete city. And they believe, for the most part, that city government is well run. As one small group described it, local government is "transparent, non-political, accessible, open ... responsive, accountable." Said another group, "Your voice is heard, respected and responded to by city officials." (Not all agreed. One participant said there was "poor customer service at city hall." And while most citizens said they appreciated the Decatur Police Department, some teen-agers at a Round Table session said they believed there were tensions between teens and the police.)

Regardless, citizens agreed that responsiveness to citizen needs and desires – and cooperation among the governments and between the governments and other institutions – were expected. And a number said they felt the city and the school system did not cooperate enough. One group said there was a "divide,

lack of communication between (the) school board, city government and elected officials.” Another small group agreed. The “school board and the city don’t seem to be on the same page; there needs to be agreement over long-term planning, and better communication,” it said.

But others were impressed by the amount of cooperation that exists now – and that the cooperation seems to include other institutions than just the governments. One group cites the “cooperation between Agnes Scott, city of Decatur schools and (the) city of Decatur (i.e., art displays in city library done by school children.)” Another group said there were “public and private partnerships” and “good cooperation between the city government, the business association and the community.” Another group marveled that “churches are active within the community and will participate in other projects, not just their own events.”

Clearly, this is the kind of cooperation that Decaturites expect of their institutions.

Worth noting: A number of groups cited Decatur’s taxes as a subject of concern. “Some are leaving the city due to high taxes,” one group said.

Other Themes

There were other themes that, while not as pronounced as the major themes listed above, were voiced across Session One’s meetings. Here are the other themes and some representative comments.

The Innovative and Distinctive Community

Citizens said they wanted a community that looked and worked differently than other places, in design, public art and its attraction for innovative companies.

As outlined above, Decaturites believe they live in a different place, one that’s more diverse, involved and walkable than other cities. So it may not be surprising that they want it to look and work differently as well. A common suggestion was more public art – and, in fact, more art in general, including performing arts and performances on the Square. There was also support for Decatur continuing what is known as “new urbanism” – mixed-use developments, parking that is minimized and disguised, and so on. As one group described it, “Attractive architecture; street-level businesses with residential above.”

Some said they also wanted a distinctive image for Decatur. One group said it would like Decatur to be “more clearly defined in (the) public mind, differentiated from (the) Decatur mailing address area.” And there were plenty of suggestions of what that image could be, particularly when participants were asked to fill in the blank for the question: “Decatur is a city where _____.” A few of the ideas that were offered: “It has a foot in the past and an eye on the future.” “We will try anything once (to be a better community, e.g., recycling, other sustainability programs).” “You remember your childhood kindly.” “Spontaneous Zen happens.” “The character of the neighborhood is made up by the characters in the neighborhood.”

There were also detailed ideas about how Decatur could be a magnet for innovative companies. One group suggested that Decatur become “Cambridge (Mass.) or Santa Monica (Calif.) on a smaller scale: Live, work, play, environmentally friendly. Be the base for some corporate headquarters.” One way of

doing that, the group went on, was to be “more closely connected to the Emory community.” Other groups suggested closer ties with Agnes Scott and area medical centers as well. One group suggested the types of companies that might be attracted: health care companies, software developers and creative-arts firms.

The Green Community

Again and again, citizens said they wanted more green spaces, but there was also the sentiment that Decatur should also be a leader in reducing its impact on the environment.

There were numerous comments about parks – where new ones could be created, how existing ones should be cared for. There were also ideas about urban gardening, alternative energy sources, new farmers markets and additional recycling programs. But there was also a clear sentiment in making Decatur a leader in being a “green city,” one that makes a much lighter impact on the environment. One group urged Decatur to become an “environmentally sustainable city” with “incentives to encourage green building, innovation, retrofit beyond (the) current Georgia energy code. Be a leader, an example.” Another group suggested “tax cuts for people who live green.”

The Active and Healthy Community

There were many ideas about active living and aging well. A common thread was that Decatur should be a place where people will stay for a lifetime, including their senior years, and that those years should be active and healthy ones.

These were a set of ideas that seemed to be drawn from one of Decatur’s strengths (walkability), one of its concerns (that the city might lose its oldest residents) and one of its potentials (connections with Emory, Agnes Scott, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and nearby medical centers). The ideas centered around making Decatur a model for healthy and active living and a place where people age well.

One group offered a detailed description of how Decatur could be such a model, by developing “close ties with Agnes Scott and Emory and medical centers. Decatur leverages the talent in the universities and medical centers to make the city a better, healthier place (i.e., cooperative projects allowing Decatur to be a testing ground for research, opportunities for students to participate and study community life, programs for promoting health care and healthy lifestyle, quality of life).” Another group urged the city to adopt policies that help “people to stay healthy” and teach children about “healthy lifestyles.”

How is Decatur successful today?

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

- Festivals, Bandstands/Concerts
- Lots of support for causes
- Oakhurst Garden & DHS garden
- Library
- Cliff bus & MARTA
- School system
- Educational level of City residents
- Pedi cabs
- Greenspaces, cemetery, Scott Gardens, dog parks
- Girls & Boys Club
- REC Center-appeals to all ages
- South Decatur Community Center
- Zoning-limits on height, smart growth, good design
- Great schools – great teachers, active parents, walk-able neighborhood schools with lots of resources
- Community Involvement – evidence of a plan
- Community Government is accessible
- Public Safety
- Responsive City Service Providers (police)
- Vibrant Downtown
- Walk-able Community
- Great Restaurants
- Great Festivals – in particular the Decatur Book Festival
- Concerts on the Square
- Farmer's Market (Decatur)
- Proximity to the Dekalb Farmers Market
- DHS Sports Stadium Complex
- Diversity – in age, sexuality, race
- People seem to watch out for each other
- Decatur Rec
- GA Center for the Book – via the library
- Agnes Scott
- Having 3 MARTA Stops
- Our effort to be bike-friendly
- Community leaders do a great job securing grants

- Our leaders have proven to be great advocates for Decatur but we're proud to see them also involved as leaders regionally and state-wide
- Cliff Bus – through emory should be replicated throughout the city
- great activities
- People are well connected
- Walkable
- You know your neighbors
- Sidewalks
- Small school system
- Active living / Decatur Rec Center
- City can provide al daily needs
- Privately owned eateries
- Cafe Style restaurants / outside dining
- Strong Police presence
- Safe
- Festivals/Cultural activities - book festival, beer festival, beach party
- Something for everyone
- Always options for activity
- City Government - very helpful, goes beyond
- Pay-as-you-Throw - far ahead of other communities, special to Decatur
- Recycling
- Volunteer coordinator
- Community Discussion Groups; i.e. Elizabeth Wilson’s monthly discussion group; neighborhood groups. These promote civic engagement
- Opportunities for involvement
- Small Town Feel
- Schools - quality, neighborhood, parent involvement; tax structure allows everyone (people without children, seniors, and businesses) to share the burden of the costs
- Perception that everyone works together for the good of the community. Government, businesses and citizens all realize they have a vested interest to keep the city what they want it to be
- Festivals and Concerts-on-the-Square - festivals benefit the non profits and can not benefit a for profit business.
- Walkable
- Little Town/Big Services
- Safe
- Marta
- Police and Fire - community oriented service
- Business district support of schools and other aspects of city
- Diversity

- school system
- walkability
- having a voice
- easy access to public transportation
- personal attention from police and fire
- community activities: arts, entertainment, festivals, restaurants
- organic market
- farm-to-school
- community gardens
- diversity of student population, intentionally integrating schools
- homogenizing high school classes: differentiated learning
- neighborhoods are diverse across many differences: age, lifestyle, economic, racial, with and without children, etc.
- located conveniently: 25 minutes to everywhere
- nurturing: i.e. invitation to Global Village School
- people from all over the world: attracted by CDC, higher ed, Brickstore, Twains
- Varied Festivals that are community builders
- Walkable Downtown with vitality
- Maintained local identity
- Child Friendly community
- Schools are good
- Commitment to being a green community
- Commitment to encouraging a healthy lifestyle for residents
- Good neighborhood parks
- Creation of dog parks
- Housing types are diversified
- City has open and accessible government
- Commitment to encouraging economic and racial diversity
- Encouraging and supporting locally owned businesses
- Preservation of historic structures
- Encouraging farmers market and destination restaurants
- Creation of sense of public safety
- Creation of complete community
- Churches, schools, businesses, and government have good synergy
- Encouragement and support of sense of community among residents
- Walkability
- We like that we have a transparent, honest government
- We appreciate the visibility of the government in that the officials are accessible and attend community functions

- We have the feel of a small town within a big city
- We like the progressive philosophy of much of the community
- We appreciate our vibrant downtown with different business, restaurants, shops
- We like that Decatur is kid-friendly
- Decatur has a sense of nature - green spaces, parks natural areas
- Historic preservation is important in Decatur
- Activities are available for a multitude of generations
- We celebrate diversity in Decatur - we don't just accept it! Racial, Age, Lifestyle, Health, Income
- Planned growth has made Decatur great
- We are learning from our past
- We feel safe in Decatur
- We have confidence in our Public Safety and Public Works employees
- We appreciate that the city is a good employer and retains employees and the employees seem happy in their jobs and are pleasant for the public to deal with; they seem happy in their jobs
- Education is important in Decatur. We have high goals for our educational system, diversity is important in our education system, we have a commitment to succeed in our goals and the school system is a representational microcosm of the city values
- There is good cooperation between the city government, the business association and the community.
- School system
- MARTA
- City, businesses and institutions share space
- Public and private partnerships
- Strong sense of community
- Open-minded, diverse, inclusive
- Recycling
- Accessible and responsible government
- Child friendly activities and festivals
- Rec center activities for children and adults
- Walk-ability
- Community involvement - Participation
- Community involvement - Neighborhood associations
- Community involvement - Schools
- Community involvement - Commissions
- Community involvement - Strategic Plan
- Community involvement - Volunteer opportunities (coordinated well)
- Community involvement - Decatur 101
- Community involvement - Festivals
- Attraction - Festivals

- Attraction - Food/Restaurants
- Attraction - Bars
- Attraction - Farmer's Market
- Good Size – best of both worlds; suburban mentality in the city; urban vibe with a small town attitude
- Identity – sense of place, community, positive association, branding, unique (not suburban sameness)
- Arty – diversity, different, not homogenous
- Relatively well-governed – transparent, non-political, accessibility, open City Hall, responsive, accountable
- Schools
- Dog Park
- Safe – can walk around most places
- Public transportation – accessible, MARTA
- Pedestrian-friendly – basic needs met in the city limits and can get there by walking
- Satisfactory green space (could be better)
- Attractive to families
- County seat – courthouse
- Good job of bringing commercial in downtown
- 2 downtowns (Decatur square and Oakhurst)
- Rainy day fund – fiscally responsible
- Decatur blogs – social media
- Developing and preserving our green spaces.
- There is a strong sense of community, Small town atmosphere with big city amenities, We are people orientated
- Easy access to city government
- Good city services, Garbage and recycling services, Police department
- Open door policy with police department
- Not having to pre-sort our recycling
- Fire department helps with car seats and missing persons
- School System
- Scale and size of the community and the buildings downtown
- Churches are active within the community and will participate in other projects - not just their own events
- Festivals and events
- Marta being a part of the city (3 stations)
- Very walkable city
- Cooperation between Agnes Scott, City of Decatur Schools, and City of Decatur. (i.e. art displays in city library done by school children)

- Agnes Scott is more active with City of Decatur
- Strong non-profit involvement with city
- Having Hagar's House (homeless shelter) in city limits - so close to Marta, etc.
- Strong culture of volunteerism, Fundraising, Community involvement
- Embracing lower income groups (i.e. Adopt a elderly or low income [child] person at Christmas and provide gifts. Also the local churches collect, sort, and store the gifts.)
- Diversity - we have a strong starting point, Age, Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation
- Traffic is not as bad as other metro areas
- School system has good performance and reputation, support from the city.
- Schools are small and located in neighborhoods, making walking to school possible for many students
- Growth and development in Decatur have been accomplished with minimal negative impact on the quality of life
- Decatur has city center that people can walk to from nearly every neighborhood
- Decatur has a small town feel; it is a progressive and welcoming community
- Decatur has locally-owned, independent business that embody community spirit
- City officials and city service staff are approachable, involved and engaged, which facilitates quick response and changes
- An involved and engaged community results in active volunteerism, committed and vigilant neighborhood associations to keep City accountable, well-kept neighborhoods
- The community shops locally
- Level of community involvement gives the city broad appeal to people of different ages and lifestyles and creates a sense of stability and safety
- Government has made some good green decisions and considers sustainability in decision making process
- Decatur has nice green spaces, such as well-kept parks, and excellent festivals
- Decatur is fortunate to have large employers in or nearby the city and MARTA access to Atlanta
- Decatur is often ahead of the curve, for example affordable housing and streetscapes, and seeks out grant money to implement new ideas
- Churches, non-profits, and businesses cooperate with each other and often share resources, such as parking spaces, meeting spaces
- Decatur offers good value (ROI) for taxes
- Downtown renaissance amazing, nice place to hang out
- City staff responsive, user-friendly
- Active living; recreation center, parks
- Walkable; downtown, crosswalks
- Diversity
- Sense of community; interaction, openness, friendliness, involvement, pride of ownership
- Transformation of downtown streetscapes

- City school system
- Low crime rate; responsive police and fire
- Less restrictive rules for homes - no covenants
- Traffic flow; balance with needs of pedestrians
- Bikeability, walkability
- Public education on rules for cars, bikes, and pedestrians
- Encourage a diverse business climate
- Refine/define what R60 zoning means (as well as other zonings); current ordinances seem arbitrary and subjective; need to define residential zoning more exactly
- Control of city spending; fiscal responsibility
- Light pollution (example: nighttime lighting from Columbia Seminary)
- Noise and quality of life issues
- Good social involvement: Lots of community activity: Book fair, beer/wine, arts events
- Family oriented, see families everywhere, family centered activities
- Walk able city
- City Services i.e. School system
- City supports business community
- Efficient and responsible city government
- Citizen participation in community
- Walkability is the product of design and infrastructure
- Political leadership and staff
- Good public transportation
- Decatur is safe
- Advantages of a small town in a major metropolitan area
- We participate and volunteer to make things happen.
- We celebrate books and a variety of events and festivals.
- We care and want to be engaged.
- Parents care and participate as a community in the schools.
- We have a high quality of schools and good results from schools.
- Maintaining longevity of connections and relationships throughout our lives.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Service Project and tutoring program at the schools.
- People are willing to help when they see a need in their community.
- Recycling program and waste diversion are a good model.
- Walkability makes for a livable community.
- Independent businesses thrive and Decatur is conducive to entrepreneurs.
- Parks are well maintained and the recreation program through Decatur Recreation department is great.
- Cemetery acts as a great addition to the greenspace in Decatur.
- Local government is transparent, open door, and these policies lead to an engaged citizenry.

- While there is some crime, it is much less than surrounding area, such as Atlanta.
- Police respond very quickly to problems.
- variety of things to do: festivals, activities, Oakhurst Garden, volunteer events
- togetherness, sense of community
- diversity: age, race, ethnicity
- free cultural programs: lectures at the library, music
- feel safe walking about (safer than previous home in NJ)
- very walkable community, sidewalks most places
- good school system
- neighborhood association brings people together, fosters community pride
- animal-friendly; dog parks; get acquainted with people much faster when walking a dog
- City management is very responsive to problems, questions
- great recycling program; love not having to sort recyclables; sanitation service will pick up most things; electronics recycling days at the High School
- spring is great here, so much green!
- Decatur manages to maintain unbuilt space, preserves green space; Cemetery
- Decatur 101, Citizens Public Safety Academy (participants weren't sure of official name of the public safety program, at least two had participated)
- community includes universities, hospitals
- attractive place to retire
- lots of small businesses; independent restaurants and retailers (as opposed to chains)
- chickens allowed in City; goat co-op recently organized or about to be
- town square is good; fun, energetic space
- Decatur must offer a lot for kids, see them all over the place
- active Rec Center
- variety of religious institutions, lots of different denominations and faiths
- outdoor-eating areas, sidewalk tables
- festivals: Arts, Beer, Book , Wine, Beach Party, Easter Egg Hunt, 4th of July, Christmas Tree, Jazz Nights, House Walk [sic], Garden Walk [sic], Old House Fair, Used Book Sale
- Decatur Focus, although sometimes news is outdated by the time it is delivered
- Community of people and families.
- Your voice is heard, respected, and responded to by city officials. (Example: emails from residents expressing concerns are forwarded around within the city departments).
- Close proximity to friends and neighbors (i.e. small geographic area).
- Lots of opportunities for people to get to know each other.
- People look out for each other.
- Preserving and valuing what we have; for example by supporting a local business instead of purchasing outside of the area.
- Diversity of shops in small area.

- Developing a culture where driving is optional.
- Safe community ("can walk around at night").
- Teens not as anxious to begin driving because much of what they need is accessible in walking/biking distance. If they do drive, Decatur is ideal area because speed limit is no more than 45mph in the city.
- Transportation/accessible (MARTA).
- Safe, healthy, free/inexpensive activities.
- Great schools with passionate staff and teachers as well as high parental involvement.
- People in Decatur/community gets involved and takes ownership for creating this place/environment.
- Focus on sustainable living (i.e. idling campaign etc).
- Decatur is progressive; one step ahead of others.
- Strategic planning process with citizen involvement and 80% success on last plan.
- Responsive police and fire.
- Festivals.
- Marta is easily assessable, good public transportation
- Decatur is a city that facilitates walking
- Decatur has a small town feel in a big city
- Quality school system that services a diverse community
- City government does a great job of servicing it's citizens ie: sanitation dept
- Decatur has a robust parks and rec focus
- Decatur residents are passionate about their city
- Residential stability, people are happy to stay here for their lifetime
- Affordable housing considering the 'intown' lifestyle
- Decatur citizens care about environmental issues
- Decatur is a safe city
- Decatur government is responsive to its citizens
- Live and work
- Community
- Education (caring teachers)
- Safety (responsive police)
- Scale of city - not too big not too small
- Tree canopy
- Shops/retail
- Restaurants
- Approachable government
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Sustainable development
- recycling program

- energy efficient choices
- green citizenry
- Active living program
- bike paths
- recreation
- Mixed use development
- Agnes Scott is an asset to Decatur
- Parks are great
- Cultural opportunities for kids
- visiting symphony
- arts
- Decatur Focus newsletter and city website are great sources of information
- 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
- Strong sense of community
- People live outside their homes
- Good options for social activity
- Generates desire to stay within the community
- Good transportation options within and to get to out
- Small town feel with close access to Atlanta
- Opportunity for residents to become involved and volunteer
- MLK service project
- Activities that foster relationships
- Good school system
- Environmentally conscious
- Professional government that is well administered
- Feel safe; PD has presence and quick response
- Feel safe; FD has presence and quick response
- Proximity to top medical facilities
- Closeness to medical facilities promotes sense of safety for elderly and families with young children
- DeKalb Farmers Market
- Green space; community gardens that serve as model to others (i.e. Oakhurst)

- Feeling of stewardship
- Dog friendly
- Good night life
- Unique businesses and restaurants
- Small town feel
- Diverse business community
- Urban environment in small town
- Accessible gathering places
- Square
- People on the streets
- Attractive school systems
- Continue to attract new residents, diversity that works
- Strong sense of community, active participation, neighbors know each other
- Friendly place
- Volunteering
- Location
- Past strategic plan worked, hold zoning
- Pet friendly
- Neighborhood progressive dinners (16 one!!) -- Neighborly
- Agnes Scott - hospitality
- Lots of gardens (Woodlands, Oakhurst) Parks, Greenspace
- Neighborhoods remain same for 25 years
- Walkability, a walking city
- School system, well run, planned, good education
- Moved here for the schools
- Like having our own school system
- Impressed with the dog parks
- Decatur has character, is distinguishable, mom and pop stores
- Events!
- Volunteer opportunities
- Churches – a denomination on each corner. – all great -- host events – part of the community
- Can raise chickens (and goats!)
- Fresh blood in Oakhurst, have their own festivals, young energy
- Eddies Attic – great music, not expensive, local and renown acts
- Transportation system – buses, MARTA -- train in downtown
- Restaurants -- come a long way, 27 of them in walking distance
- Police Department is really good
- Grocery Store – thankful for Kroger downtown
- Library

- Can ride bikes and walk to school
- Great restaurants
- Can walk to destinations essential to daily life--bank, food, etc.
- Government and citizens actively try to make Decatur a great place to live
- Sense of community--hello on the street, pride in the community, ability to be involved and contribute
- Diversity: welcoming to all
- Attracts people to value Decatur assets
- So many people volunteer
- Small town in a big city (can have cake and eat it, too) small town with big city offerings
- Festivals
- Square offers a physical center
- Takes commitment to environmental sustainability seriously: e.g., recycle program at events
- Great school system: smallness, teachers, volunteers, passionate parents
- Independent retail; not a mall
- Great beer, great music
- You can drink and walk!
- Cultural opportunities
- Higher education in community is a plus: Agnes Scott, Emory
- Parks are great; city invests in them
- General beauty of the city (e.g. parks, Agnes Scott)
- Good tree canopy
- Community gardens: promoting good nutrition community wide
- Feel safe
- Smoke free
- Decatur 101 a great way to introduce new residents to Decatur (should be required!)
- Volunteer citizen commissions that report to the city: active living, environmental sustainability, teenagers, Decatur Gators, activities for kids, city wide baseball
- Decatur Focus--like mailed copy
- Recreation center
- New High School: potential for community to be part of HS events; services there (e.g., weightlifting)
- Access to public transit: MARTA rail
- Access to healthcare
- city investment in low income housing
- Getting Around: good local transit system, very walkable, great new crosswalks
- Community in general: laid back, many interconnections, strong sense of community, pride, diversity, publications like the Decatur Focus and blogs allow community connections, safe, it

feels like a place to be and Atlanta doesn't feel that way, Atlanta is a place to work and Decatur is a place to live, vibrant, feeling of a small town-like Mayberry, comfortably laid back

- Active Community: full of passion, many people volunteer, strong city center, strong desire to stay in Decatur, independent business owners, many festivals that bring money into the community, Decatur Business Association-very involved with programming and strong community links
- Government: responsive, accessible, accountable, the recreation department has great programming with substantive learning and structured programs
- Spaces: community gardens, backyard gardens, ability to raise chickens, dog parks, ability to eat/shop downtown, local business, quality restaurants, few chain businesses
- Decatur is not just walkable - it is functionally walkable. You can walk to places you need to go - shops, restaurants, the post office, the library.
- The walk-to-school programs are great.
- City officials are accessible and responsive. When you email or call, they often reply the same day.
- Police and fire are responsive, attentive and available.
- Police are proactive about communicating to the community.
- Public works is responsive. I called about a dead raccoon and they arrived in ten minutes. Where else does that happen?
- If you petition for speed bumps, speed limit signs etc, the city provides them quickly.
- The city schools are excellent. This brings a lot of people to Decatur.
- High test scores and excellent academics
- The schools are small
- There is a great community feel in the schools.
- International Baccalaureate program
- School are officials are responsive - they seek input and make changes based on what they hear.
- The schools host community events
- Even the private schools are community-minded.
- The arts have a strong presence in the city.
- Galleries
- Music on the Square
- Festivals
- Nonprofits and businesses devoted to art
- Great events
- The book festival
- The library
- Great parks in Decatur
- Love the dog parks
- The parks are well maintained, kept up

- The parks are well used
- There isn't a crime problem in the parks
- Great recreation opportunities for children and youth
- We have a lower crime rate than many intown areas.
- It is safe to walk around at night.
- Police are responsive when you report a suspicious person or situation.
- There is a spirit of cooperation in the community.
- Example: churches offer their sanctuaries as venues for the book festival.
- Churches in Decatur are good about participating in civic events and even host their own events for the city.
- Example: First Baptist hosted an electronics recycling event.
- The proximity of Agnes Scott and Emory is a real advantage - the cultural events they offer.
- The neighborhoods have their own personality, sense of identity and cohesiveness.
- There are ample public transportation options.
- The friendly, welcoming, small town feel
- Diversity of many kinds - not just race
- Same sex couples are welcome and integrated into the community.
- Decatur blogs are a great source of city information - they take the place of a Decatur newspaper.
- SCHOOLS. Discussion included academic success, the notion of neighborhood schools, and the recent efforts at healthier foods / local farm to school.
- PUBLIC SAFETY. Excellent police and fire service. Emphasized was the feeling of a safe environment throughout the city.
- PARKS, GREENSPACE, POOLS. Comments included an appreciation for the emphasis the City places on these items, how well they are kept up, run and the recent improvements to them.
- RESPONSIVE CITY PERSONNEL. This included both elected officials and City staff. There was a favorable discussion on how effective previous City planning has been, and the commitment by City personnel to honoring the planning process.
- CITY SIZE / SCALE. This was a pretty generalized area of discussion surrounding the "comfortable" size, scale and layout of the City, with the downtown area, neighborhoods and alternate business / retail areas (Oakhurst).
- WALKABILITY. In addition to the acknowledgement of being able to walk to most things in the City by most residents, this discussion ventured into the friendliness and support for alternative (not cars or trucks) transportation like bicycles and scooters.
- TRASH AMNESTY DAY. This started as an appreciation for super trash day, but also included the efforts at both routine and electronics recycling.
- EVENTS AND FESTIVALS. This topic not only included the group participant's appreciation for them, but also the favorable exposure the City receives from them, and how well they are run.
- CARE FOR SENIORS. As in the City's respect for, and embracement of, its senior residents.

- SENSE OF HISTORY. The conversation here was wide ranging and included the specialty interests of several of the group members. Included was mention of the Decatur 101 course, the historic nature of the Beacon Hill / Oakhurst district, and the cemetery.
- RETAIL MIX. An appreciation for the diverse and eclectic variety of retail shops in the downtown area.
- VOLUNTEERISM. This encompassed both the efforts of the citizens in service, as well as the staff support the City gives in organizing the volunteers.
- GOOD HOUSING AUTHORITY. Pretty much just a statement as we moved on to the next topic.
- My parents moved here for school system
- Good Teachers
- Students are respectful in class
- Teachers are involved/supportive of students
- Teachers are involved in larger school community and in the community in the city
- Rec Center is a gift. Participated in lacrosse, soccer, basketball, cheerleading and use playground behind the Rec
- Like Arts Community, arts festival, book festival, concerts on square, beach festival and parades
- Like Eddie's Attic. Attend all ages show, like the wings, like family atmosphere, worked at Eddie's to help sell artists merchandise
- Each neighborhood in Decatur has great things. Love Winnona Park.
- Like that there is a playground and stream for every elementary school
- Neighborhood schools build community and make you attend community events
- Changing to the 4/5 Academy had a negative impact because it didn't continue support for neighborhood schools
- Can walk anywhere in Decatur
- Limited commercial zoning
- Use of space and people in community (events, variety of activities, volunteer opportunities)
- Leadership of COD responsive, inclusive, open for feedback (i.e this process)
- Decatur 101
- Start of bike routes and facilities
- Volunteer program
- Schools
- Parks and rec- age variety of programs, access to parks, variety of things to do at parks
- Always run into someone you know
- Unique shops, restaurants and businesses
- Feels like a little town big city
- Neighborhood associations and their involvement with each other and the community
- Quick access to MARTA and transportation alternatives
- Safety-low crime, walk home from dinner at 11 and not worry, access to police and their responsiveness

- Ownership of living here- people take pride, invest interest in city, good people live here
- Walkability to places is high. Square and neighborhood walks
- Good schools
- Teamwork - individual working together
- Where neighbors are friends
- There are 66 houses in my neighborhood, I know 55 of those families
- Great school system
- Neighborhood parks are a success
- Walkable city with a neighborhood feel
- Vibrant downtown with festivals, events, concerts and community events
- Effective Downtown Development Authority - resourceful in finding funding for community projects
- RECYCLE
- Environmentally aware community
- Having pathways (bikes)
- Approachable and helpful city government (blogging)
- 3 MARTA stations within city limits
- Small town feel
- Generations of families staying in Decatur
- Walkable / Bikeable
- Community is interactive with its government
- A diversity of events bring people together
- Needs are met locally
- A vibrant commercial district
- A family / everybody friendly community
- Citizens are allowed to speak their mind
- Good community and government communication
- Parks and gardens
- A community the "pushes the envelope" - a trendsetter in Environment
- A community the "pushes the envelope" - a trendsetter in Active living
- A community the "pushes the envelope" - a trendsetter in Mixed use development
- A community responsive to citizens and neighbors
- MLK service day
- Active neighborhood watches
- A safe community
- Good schools
- City involves citizens
- Reputation of schools
- Wonderful restaurants

- Events and festivals
- Proud of reputation
- Walkability of Decatur
- Children can walk safely to schools
- Has its own services: fire, police
- Provides hometown feel
- Proximity to Atlanta
- Green space
- Safe, little crime
- Response time of police
- Progressive: wi-fi, zip cars
- Mature trees
- Historic character
- Urban character, pedestrian atmosphere, sidewalks
- Diverse population race, age, socio-economic
- Great neighborhoods
- ASC, CTS and Emory anchors our community
- Cultural events the colleges open to the community
- Can live without a car. Can walk everywhere
- Access to MARTA, Cliff Bus allows ability to get to employment and entertainment outside of Decatur
- 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 pickup, lower taxes)
- Service day (MLK day)
- Volunteer opportunities-n church, seminary, Hagars House, DCM (30 churches)
- Berkley meets Mayberry
- Social and Political Diversity
- Voice in Government
- Responsive Government
- Viable, Interesting, Locally-Owned and Diversity of Businesses
- Sustainable
- Find it all here, convenience, compact
- Active streets
- Nice aesthetics
- Sense of community, one big neighborhood
- Walkable, can leave car in driveway
- Accessibility to MARTA
- Civic engagement and events form community
- Pubs, Churches, Schools within 1 mile
- Accessible neighborhood greenspace, parks and dog parks
- Diversity of families
- Respect
- Cradle to Grave
- Recycling program
- Volunteer coordinator employed by City
- Schools, special education outreach and programs
- Tight-knit community
- Walkable
- Safe
- Accessible
- A good variety of independent restaurants and stores
- Restaurants are affordable
- The square

- Everything is there
- Open minded attitudes
- Love it - a walking city; banks, bars, businesses, food, churches
- That Decatur has become a walk-able community, especially around the Decatur Square
- There are opportunity to participate and volunteer include volunteering with city government, the school strategic planning process and the many city festivals
- Decatur is environmentally conscious
- Participants specifically cited the pay-as-you-throw recycling program, community gardens, and the farmers market as good examples of this (environmentally conscious)
- Dog parks were cited as another community success
- The schools are "real community schools" and have a diverse student population
- The baccalaureate program and strong parental involvement were also cited as specific examples of positives within the school
- Decatur is "21st Century minded", meaning that the city uses a variety of modern technology to enhance itself such as blogs, the city wi-fi and by providing access to information in a variety of ways
- There are lots of things to do and places to go, and not just on the Decatur Square
- Specifically, participants cited the book festival, beer festival, wine festival and 4th of July bike parade as good things to do
- The city has an abundance of independent merchants and non-chain restaurants
- Decatur is a safe community
- Specific examples of this (safety) are the pedestrian crossings and kid-friendly parks, events where you meet your neighbors (such as this planning process), an "accessible" policy force with a "good presence" on bikes and in schools whether they are on or off duty
- Decatur has density downtown, resulting in more housing being placed downtown and more people "out"
- 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, ethic, 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
- Passionate conversation around bicycles. Everyone likes bikes they are fun and 100% efficient.
- Accessible for people with disabilities
- Easy to walk around city
- Responsive government
- Good school system
- Strategic Planning process
- Forward thinking community
- Good basic services like sanitation
- People help each other
- People get to know each other
- Diversity- everyone can live or work or play in city
- Motivated by integrity
- Lots of diversity in nature
- Feels like a unique place with concentration of energy
- Strong tax digest
- Fiscally responsible government
- Diversity of age groups
- Accessible government
- Places to gather downtown
- Dynamic environment where you can sleep, work, plan and shop
- Fun for kids
- Great services
- Town is like an oasis
- Focus on independent businesses
- Strong independent restaurants
- Large tree canopy
- Multiple types of birds
- Top notch Recreation programs for youth and adults
- Decatur 101 unique and shows that the government welcomes involvement
- You know your neighbors in Decatur, people pitch in and it gives Decatur a small town feel
- One of the few intown neighborhoods that is affordable and has a great public school system

- Kids can play free and roam (i.e. concerts at the square) there is a safe, community feel and a “village” watching out for each others’ kids
- So many people walk to neighborhood schools, very pedestrian friendly and great walkability
- Diversity of age, culture, socio-econ, sexual orientation, political and city residents seem to embrace diversity
- Police service that watches your home when you are out of town and in general the police are friendly, helpful and involved in the community
- The restaurants are many and they are accessible and TASTY!
- There is a real, authentic interest in the environment by city and residents, and commitment to environmentalism by city, not just because it is trendy (Pay as you throw, recycling, gardens, OCGP, Farm2School)
- Decatur is progressive (feels like cities in the west)
- Historic preservation matters, green spaces have been preserved, Decatur Preservation Alliance, city ordinances, etc that support preservation
- There is a mentality of all for one and one for all – people volunteer and there is a paid volunteer coordinator – sometimes people volunteer at festivals and other times they attend while others volunteer.
- There is a real partnership b/w the city and the residents. City is open to input, does proactive planning, seeks input. City Commission meetings are accessible (as our City Commissioners) and city departments are both accessible AND professional, focus on customer service and low on bureaucracy.
- Touch a truck – Decatur has the cleanest garbage trucks of any city
- The Decatur Focus keeps us informed
- The festivals provide something for everyone, variety that suits different interests, those with kids and without, various ages, all can find something in the many offerings throughout the year (mention of DBF)
- 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
- Parks and greenspaces (Dog parks, McKoy, Glenlake; needs of all residents are addressed - something for everyone)
- Goin' for the grants! -- Taxpayers like!
- schools
- density means car-free is possible
- walkability

- community
- development plan

What are our current problems?

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

- Some minority students & parents do not feel any ownership of the Decatur schools
- No "voice" for disadvantaged kids in the school system
- Traffic congestion and signalization
- Mixed use zoning with incompatible uses
- Antiquated building codes
- Don't want Downtown Decatur to become another Buckhead-noise, congestion
- Pedestrian "unfriendly" intersections and dangerous intersections
- Property taxes-reduce age limit on school exemption to 65.
- Garbage pickup (would like 2x week) and no "pay as you throw"
- Overly strong influence of the City Manager
- Lack of bike lanes and safe routes/bike safety for kids
- Too many restaurants and not enough grocery stores
- No Senior Center or Drugstore (Oakhurst)
- No shuttle for seniors
- Lack of an affluent Black/Hispanic/Asian middle class
- CSX is irresponsible
- CSX divides the city and limits walk-ability
- Taxes – if too high will price people out of the city
- Lack of clear understanding of where the borders of the city lie complicates services for those residents on the fringes of the city borders
- Lack of greenspace
- Age of Renfroe and DHS and Police Station
- Improve bike-ability on Commerce
- The relationship between the city and the county should be improved
- Traffic on College seems to be worse
- Bus service is being cut on Ponce (#2 Bus)
- Pay-as-you-throw seems elitist – we already pay for garbage collection, why do we have to buy the bags?
- Lack of recycling for commercial sector
- General inconsistency surrounding recycling
- Chick-Fil-A dumpster is disgusting
- concerns about the City Schools of Decatur being sustainable
- Need a vibrant newspaper – could be virtual
- Internet service should be improved
- City employees can't afford to live here
- 1010 Clairmont – needs to be solved

- Potential for being too exclusive (in a pejorative sense).
- Lack of greenspace, especially in downtown
- need more bathrooms at parks
- need to maximize park space that we do have
- Downtown too vertical, buildings too tall
- Design Challenges / Density challenges on square
- Connecting neighborhoods to activity centers
- Affordable housing
- Workforce housing
- More Single story housing for seniors
- Performance gaps between schools
- Need to improve social services
- Many kids fall through the "cracks" / graduating w/o being literate
- need tutoring
- need literacy programs for students
- Divide/lack of communication between school board, city government & elected officials
- Need better access to information about educational programs
- Strengthen parent/child relationships among lower performing students
- Need to fully use strengths
- better use of rec center
- more after school programs at schools
- More youth jobs
- Programs for 14-17 age group
- Programs for women
- Better localized bus service, linking neighborhoods
- Overflow parking at library/rec center
- Parking on the Square - more signage directing drivers to parking decks
- Parking on the Square - free or pay parking?
- Parking on the Square - More private lots should be made available
- Parking on the Square - Lack of parking restricts access to businesses
- Aging City employees, will plans get done if these people retire
- Empty Retail space
- Taxes - high. Decatur is soon becoming unaffordable to middle class
- Lack of annexation - fewer people have to pay higher services
- Gentrification - causes lack of diversity; high taxes; unaffordable to live here; people having to leave homes
- Traffic/Parking
- Growth - growth is not always good; even if it is "smart" growth
- Festivals - becoming too many, too large

- Attitudes of racism, classism, snobbish
- skateboarders in public/common places : downtown, schools – harming marble, paint, etc.
- development and code issues
- business opportunities (increase tax base) vs. quality of life
- lack of clarity/info about parking options (booted in CVS parking lot)
- inefficient energy use: i.e. no solar for new school construction projects
- cycling and walking transportation: need for bike paths/lanes, current bike parking doesn't work, need for sidewalks
- sharing city – school facilities: Decatur Ballet's difficult relationship with DHS performing arts facility
- poor customer service at city hall: an experience of rude – incompetent treatment by city hall staff
- not enough ethnic diversity
- rat problem: eating gardens
- animal control understaffed: loose wild dogs
- private schools often left out of the conversation, they're part of the city too
- Lack of safe pedestrian connection between north and south Decatur
- Lack of public parking and information on where such parking can be found
- Lack of affordable housing
- Decreasing racial diversity
- Lack of adequate storm water runoff controls
- Lack of enforcement of pedestrian rules on crossing streets
- Lack of enforcement of rules for motor vehicles respecting crosswalks
- Lack of harmonious design scheme for MARTA plaza and square area
- Lack of consistency in directional signage language and abbreviations
- Conflict between city government and school system over annexation
- We face financial challenges in the city - we have high taxes and they are getting higher
- Our small size is sometimes a liability in that we can't always realize economies of scale/size
- Physical development in the city places stress on the infrastructure and on nature/trees
- The state of our roads is not good. Perhaps we need to build stronger relationships with the county and the Department of Transportation to address this.
- We are a small voice in a large county. It's hard for us to get the county to do things for us.
- We're different from the more conservative areas surrounding us
- Airplane noise
- Air, water and noise pollution is too high
- Water conservation is not as important as it should be
- Parking requirements/code results in an impact on development
- We are concerned about our physical safety in the parking decks (perhaps have patrols?)
- We have residential parking issues especially on residential streets close to shops
- There is a lack of support for walking/biking/running. We need to be more exercise friendly.

- We need to work on adapting to being a truly urban area.
- Taxes
- We need bike lanes
- Not a variety of stores (many are expensive) (need stores that sell every day things)
- Volume and control of traffic limits walking, biking, etc.
- Overflow parking is not enforced—resident only signs not enforced (commercial/residential conflict)
- On-street parking issue—blocked driveways
- Not enough affordable housing
- Limited housing options (number of unrelated people living together?; garage apartments = restrictive laws)
- Too many laws?
- Too few laws?
- Taxes are high, services are great. Need to expand tax base. Told different things would need to happen to lower taxes (e.g., new condos would help), but they haven't gone down. Now told need more businesses to share tax burden and lower for residents.
- Paramedics are limited – DeKalb County might have to step in for certain things that the City of Decatur paramedics cannot do.
- Develop Commercial opportunities and property. 1 or 2 landlords in particular are problems (e.g., Vision Properties). Expand East. Develop Big H.
- Need to focus on non-downtown property. Vacant lots. City is not proactive enough, needs to take initiative (will act when issues are brought to their attention, but citizens would like to see proactive action).
- City needs to follow their own guidelines for development – some things happened too quickly, no resident input.
- Antiquated zoning laws – e.g., autos were more important 40 years ago when zoning laws were drafted, now restaurants need a waiver to get parking. Too many variances are needed. Just change zoning laws to avoid numerous, repetitive variances.
- Oakhurst sidewalks – need more, and the current ones are in disrepair
- Some basics are missing from downtown (especially Oakhurst)
- Missing - All-hours grocery store
- Missing - Chain clothing store (e.g., Gap, Chicos)
- Missing - Bakery
- Missing - Liquor store
- Green space/Environmental - Community garden
- Green space/Environmental - Utilizing space that is available (e.g., flood zone that cannot be built on anyway), walking trail
- Green space/Environmental - Water in creeks polluted – Alkaline and sewer leaking
- Green space/Environmental - Drainage/flood issues

- Green space/Environmental - When presented the idea for community garden, got run around, sent to endless officials
- More fully-utilized city property (e.g., schools – let community use) – better coordination needed between schools and city
- Traffic - Hard to cross train tracks – lights at tracks are impossible, not coordinated, only a few places to cross
- Traffic - Scott Blvd. – too high speed, not pedestrian-friendly, dangerous to cross; too slow with heavy traffic
- Traffic - Jefferson and Ansley – people roll through stop sign
- Traffic - Too many crossing guards at Renfroe and Decatur – difficult to drive, have waited 30 minutes
- Traffic - Close Ponce to vehicle traffic between Church and Commerce (European model) – turn parking in front of BrickStore to green space, expand restaurant patios
- More seating in downtown (e.g., MARTA plaza – possible model: Colony Square entrance to Ansley Park)
- Be fiscally responsible, don't need to do everything, use restraint (e.g., Oakhurst firehouse over budget)
- Trying to maintain our diversity, Economic diversity, Elderly population - higher costs, higher taxes more of an issue
- Changing Demographics - increase in number of white / affluent population
- Less neighborly in same neighborhood
- Influx of new residents from outside is leading to a change in the small-town feel / culture
- Achievement gap in school system, Need more parental involvement
- City needs a bowling alley (within city limits) that has family friendly amenities (i.e. arcade, toddler play area, etc.)
- City needs a central playhouse / theater with special events venues available for public rental
- Growing traffic challenges, Speeds are increasing, Volume of traffic increasing, Neighborhoods are being used as cut-throughs for other areas
- Higher taxes are a concern for those on a fixed income
- Balancing our scale (size) and our city services
- Growing our tax base
- Concern for all about our rising taxes (not just those on fixed income)
- Development and annexation
- Balancing growth and higher densities vs. (protecting) existing neighborhoods
- Need more housing for disabled residents (Park Trace is not enough)
- Need more senior housing, Large rooms, Affordable
- Within easy walking distance to downtown for someone in her 90s
- Addressing traffic along the Clairemont corridor, Connecting Decatur to Emory, Getting people out of their cars, Safety, Pollution, Preventing accidents (children being hit by vehicles)

- (City is not) pedestrian friendly enough (i.e. the cross-walk in-front of Parkers on Ponce), Need to change our culture - we disobey our own laws (Decatur residents are a big part of the problem in not following the laws to protect pedestrians)
- Build better understanding of our parking decks
- Shared use for parking - office building and apartment complex
- Issue of Fidelity Banking sharing parking with church and people crossing 5 lanes of traffic
- Poor community awareness of available parking
- Need more streetlights (particularly near county office buildings)
- Need another post office
- How do we increase locally grown / healthy foods, Community gardens, Building awareness
- Creating community gardens
- Healthy eating is a building block for healthy lifestyle, Create partnerships between restaurants, schools, and farmers, Example: encourage others to follow in the footsteps of Cakes & Ale (who grow their own produce)
- Build a safe environment for kids to walk to school, Infrastructure (sidewalks), Safety: traffic and crime, We used to have this in Decatur, Safe havens along walking routes (Block Parents), Can also improve health, Need crossing guards during evening rush hour for those kids who have after school activities
- Encourage more parental participation / more community involvement
- Balance the good and the bad with technology
- Increase broadband coverage (and access)
- Include broadband for residents of the housing authority (this is an economic barrier that should be eliminated)
- Attract more tech savvy / creative businesses
- Banning leaf blower (noise / pollution)
- Banning cell phones
- Very few bike lanes and bike paths
- Little support for starting independently owned businesses
- High taxes put Decatur in danger of pricing people/populations with fewer resources
- Concern about long-term financial viability of the City
- Decatur's preservation codes aren't strict enough; there are too many code variances and inconsistent enforcement of codes; review of codes needed
- Decatur lacks some important amenities (i.e. grocery stores on the South Side, movie theater)
- Few nightlife options downtown aside from eating and drinking
- Financial profits and bigger is better mentality seems to guide new development; New development often doesn't match the aesthetic or ethos of Decatur
- Decatur doesn't provide enough housing and access for people with disabilities
- Risk of becoming a homogenous community (i.e. only (white) people with wealth live in Decatur)

- Decatur hasn't properly considered the negative impact of annexation on the community
- School board and the City don't seem to be on the same page; there needs to be agreement over long-term planning and better communication
- Where do we want to go?
- High taxes; people struggling to pay, some are leaving the city due to high taxes
- Lack of bike paths; biking is dangerous in places
- Better utilization of school facilities; move administration offices and use schools for students.
- Better support needed for children with ADHD and other special needs
- Schools lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs/desires
- Help for businesses to assure success
- Incubation and stewardship for business community
- Speeding, lack of traffic law enforcement
- Control and balance development (i.e. condos and infill housing)
- Affordable housing
- Preserving neighborhood integrity
- Cities dependence on outside funding sources (i.e. county, state, federal funds)
- Top levels of city government becoming more insulated and detached from citizens; failing to listen
- Relationship with County: multitude of open issues
- Traffic and traffic flow
- Congestion in some areas
- Decatur needs a facelift. Lots of concrete. Landscaping issues
- Blount Plaza: dead space
- Some parts ugly
- Not affordable to live here
- Dangerous intersections
- No sidewalks in some areas
- Decatur Taxes
- Airplane noise
- Restaurants are closed on Sundays.
- When I tell others I live in Decatur, they say 'You can't there from here'- difficult to get to.
- Walkability needs continued improvement in particular in pedestrian cross-walks that don't work; some intersections are bad (such as Commerce).
- Need more and additional commitment to LEED/Energy Efficient buildings in the city (Fire House 2 is good but we've missed other opportunities)
- Taxes are too high which cause lower income residents to lose their homes
- Teachers, police, public service employees can't afford to live here – need more workforce housing.
- Need more affordable housing.

- Pollution and traffic are regional problems but affect Decatur.
- Affordable housing needs to be updated and of better quality.
- High rise buildings downtown are simply ugly.
- Difficult to ride bikes, especially with children.
- Missing the Christmas tree lighting on top of Fidelity Building (it was a true community event)
- Traffic is too fast for walking and biking.
- Tough to choose a beer parlor!
- taxes are too high
- community not as diverse as previously, seems to be flattening out, becoming whiter
- challenge: how to keep economic diversity while maintaining level of services that we have
- miss having a local newspaper
- challenging to be a pedestrian in Decatur; better than it used to be but safety could be improved; need both visual and audible signals at crosswalks
- need better traffic control, better signage; traffic has increased in recent years
- seems that many small businesses have failed, is the City supporting them as well as it could?
- some areas don't feel safe, e.g., around the MARTA station entrance; should ban loitering
- parking is difficult at times; need better information about where parking is available at different times of day; feel parking spaces are there, but don't know where they are
- don't need any more upscale/high-end residential development downtown; contributing to decline in economic diversity in the community; HOWEVER, only affluent can afford to move in?
DON'T WANT DECATUR TO BECOME BUCKHEAD
- Need to keep and enforce ordinances limiting building height
- Need more small grocers within walking distance, stocking locally produced foods; City should incentivize that type of small business
- protect green space and tree canopy in neighborhoods and downtown; need more trees downtown; City should seek to acquire undeveloped tracts and protect from development
- City should oversee vacant commercial properties to improve safety and community image; can they be torn down if vacant too long?
- Decatur is clean and tidy overall, but still lots of sidewalk litter, especially around the MARTA station
- Skateboarders need to be monitored, kept from terrorizing pedestrians and damaging sidewalk areas (specific mention of Church/Ponce intersection and immediate area); need a skate park - most participants unaware of the one in McKoy Park, and speculated Oakhurst is "too far away"
- Need more community involvement by younger people, teens; participants wondered what high school students might have to say at a session like this
- Could establish an Art Park: space young people could use to express their creativity, unstructured, e.g., a wall where they could create graffiti and then photograph it for later exhibition

- Lack of affordable housing (Ex. 2 bedroom 1 bath house in city is \$250,000; can get a 5 bedroom house just outside city boundaries for same price).
- Gentrification and maintaining diversity (young people, elderly, low income).
- Tough economic times and our dependence on residential tax base to fund our initiatives.
- High taxes.
- Some facilities need major renovations.
- Disparity in services in low income areas (Ex. Ebster Pool).
- Offering services equally in all areas.
- Disparate policing (Ex. teen drivers (especially boys) are followed by police in the city; Speeding on Candler goes unchecked by law enforcement; Drivers consistently don't stop at pedestrian crosswalks on Candler and near the square and law enforcement doesn't enforce enough).
- Safety issue, due to driving speeds/traffic, for runners, bikers, Safe Routes to School/kids walking to school etc.
- Railroad tracks through the center of the city.
- Poor traffic flow (perhaps intentionally).
- Concerned about Decatur becoming like Virginia Highlands back in the '90s (i.e. (young) people not from the area hanging out late in the city/square and nightlife culture overtaking community culture)
- Decatur becoming so popular for outsiders that there are often long waits Fri/Sat night at local restaurants and this may deter residents from staying in the city (to dine/spend money).
- People don't know where parking is/parking not well identified.
- City departments lack financial resources needed.
- Parental involvement in schools could be more diverse.
- How to balance potential growth (ex. annexation).
- Decatur should exert more control over development to preserve the historic character of the city
- Decatur could do much more to encourage biking and walking
- Decatur needs a more consistent approach to managing and slowing traffic within city limits
- Decatur should pursue creative ways to reduce taxes while maintaining current service levels
- Decatur needs to expand the variety of in town businesses/services, ie a grocery store, place for essentials down town
- Decatur needs to promote smart density. There are some vacant/abandoned spaces around the city that are not being utilized.
- Decatur should do more to encourage aesthetics at the square, particularly around the bus depot
- Lack of integration of the DeKalb County courthouse complex encourages transiency around the square, it creates a disconnect, as if this section is on an island.
- Parking is an issue: more or less? More parking encourages business growth but discourages foot traffic and causes congestion. Consider dual use parking with churches etc.
- Decatur needs to control commuting traffic flow through the city. Scott Boulevard is a speedway, as well as east Commerce area.

- Traffic
- Clairemont, church are particularly bad
- pedestrian / cyclists have difficulty
- Traffic light engineering and timing is incorrect
- Run out of blue recycling bags often
- Infill - large homes, McMansions can dwarf older homes and kill property values
- Sidewalks need fixing - not level
- Cars sticking out of driveways often block sidewalks
- Discontent paying DeKalb and Decatur tax
- City maps don't include some city resources including boys and girls club
- Needs to be better communication on taxes and what they are for
- Lack of transportation alternatives like a tram system, free bikes, etc.
- Diversity must be maintained
- Public transit
- Decatur is having challenges with lower income housing, programming for social needs, public transportation
- Lack of quality affordable housing
- Hard to be 20-30 years old in Decatur or a professional in the smaller compensation jobs. Cannot afford to purchase a home in the city and there are limited rental properties
- Service sector cannot afford the city
- “Old” Decatur residents have to leave due to high taxes
- Elderly should be exempt from school taxes
- Dangerous intersections (i.e. Trinity/ S. Candler and McDonough/College; Commerce/College/Columbia; Scott and Coventry; Scott and Clairemont)
- Concern over trees that are planted too close to traffic
- Need more parking. Can we use school lots?
- Need to clarify where available lots and decks are located and when they are available at no cost
- Traffic lights not synchronized on Ponce (but good for cyclists)
- Not enough bike and scooter racks
- Need movie theater and Trade Joes or Whole Foods
- More open air Farmer’s Markets
- Street surfaces are not good – potholes and cracks
- Need bike “SHARROWS” on Clairemont, Scott, Commerce, College
- Need to close Ponce from Commerce to Commerce on specific times or weekends and make fully pedestrian during those times
- Need more sidewalks. Should fix or connect current ones; more crosswalks (Scott and Clairemont)
- Some individual homes and businesses are not maintained
- Separate city gov’t and city school systems

- Shared resource opportunity
- Communication could be better
- No trailers at schools
- Congestion of traffic
- Traffic light timing
- Rail crossings, underpasses? Ped xing
- More bike racks available
- Zoning has gaps that impact charm, concerns about high density
- Grocery store – have to drive outside area for full size grocery store
- Traffic – no reason for speeding on Ponce --need to eliminate major traffic in city (it's good that some streets have been narrowed)
- Too much traffic generated by the Post Office
- Decatur is a victim of it's own success --there's an "I've got mine now you go away" attitude
- High home prices leads to a feeling of entitlement
- Green Space – too small at the schools --Glenlake Park, money should have been spent buying more green space
- Want more trails, soft surface rather than paved
- Focus more on specific Boards (community Boards)
- Cars drive over sidewalks – too many curb cuts, don't feel safe
- Police –want more interaction with them. Want quarterly public meetings
- Need a decent hotel in the city
- More bike facilities, lanes, paths
- Railroad crossings
- Reduce crime
- Parking- accessible and affordable
- Inappropriate to have a college on the Square (DeVry – students get in fights)
- Have become selfish, entitled –need more caring about the other guy –lower income and elderly being driven out of city by high costs
- Traffic lights (e.g., College/McDonough and Candler/College/Trinity need left hand turn arrows)
- Traffic volume downtown
- Speeding on Church Street; intersection at Church/Forkner
- 25 mph in smaller neighborhoods still too high (not safe for kids); should be 15 or 20
- Parking meters too expensive and quarters a hassle; keeps people way from businesses
- Would like to close Ponce De Leon to vehicle traffic between Commerce and Church (permanently or on certain days, e.g., Sundays)
- Few/not enough places to lock bikes
- Taxes: don't want them to go up any more; high taxes limit diversity and aging-in-place
- Need stronger requirements for affordable housing

- City schools too top heavy in management taking focus away from teachers and students; not seeing the value in the many layers (too many); "overthinking it"
- City government should be a little tighter or taxes will keep going up
- Retail mix may not be sustainable; community needs to think about what they will support and encourage independents; perhaps more non-retail and/or professional services?
- Lack of affordable housing for workforce
- Don't have a diverse middle class and African American population is decreasing; solution is not easy
- Falling behind other communities on promoting bike transportation; don't have bike lanes
- Need a new tagline; current one is the worst
- Need a boutique hotel
- Concern: heard that marijuana is easily for sale on the square daily between 3 pm and 5 pm.
- Loss of Diversity: loss of or not enough diversity (economic, racial, age, sexual, housing stock), much diversity being lost because Decatur is becoming unaffordable, related to housing stock we need more apartments in downtown/Oakhurst, loss of diversity was also a topic of discussion 10 years ago
- Taxes: many people are being priced out by taxes, some people with kids feel they can't afford to pay the taxes when 67% of the money goes to the school system, difficult tax burden on the older population even before age 80, need more commercial tax base, need to bring in more commercial business, potential business owners are deterred by taxes in the City of Decatur, annexation made sense in the area between Decatur and Avondale Estates--why was it tabled?, commercial properties may be undervalued by DeKalb County
- Neighborhoods: concern that neighborhoods abutting the commercial core need to learn how to interact and transition with that core because it is not as if they are 10 blocks from that core
- City Schools of Decatur(CSD) and the City of Decatur: major disconnect, lack of communication, need to work together and plan together, parents leaving the community because of the schools, CSD has a lack of sustainability, CSD needs a long range strategic plan, trailers are a problem, a lot of money is being spent on the schools but we are not getting enough out of that money
- Physical Amenities: major walking routes need more trash cans, need dog mess clean up posts, need more lighting for safety in residential neighborhoods and that lighting should be lower to the street, surface lots need more trees and also mechanisms to fund such upgrades, need more dog parks and community spaces
- Safety: dogs in parks where kids are need to stay out of play areas, owners need to be more responsible with their dogs, the increase in traffic has lead to safety concerns, need more bike and pedestrian safety on Adams Street and College Avenue
- Parking: there is enough parking but people don't know about it, we need to raise awareness about shared parking, we need a comprehensive parking plan, there are safety concerns when it comes to parking in park garages/ramps/decks(GRD's), parking GRD's need "way finding" signs to help locate your vehicle or to get out of the parking GRD on foot, there needs to be physical

connections between parking GRD and to major destinations, parking GRD's need more lighting, parking GRD's need to be branded with art or possible a color (ex. If I say I parked in the yellow deck, everyone should know where that is), parking GRD's are too dreary, there are many opportunities for public art on parking GRD's, Ponce de Leon Avenue should be closed during the evening and traffic re-routed on Commerce Drive, we need a tunnel or bridge to get over busy streets

- Theater: missing enough live theater
- City officials started a process for discussing infill houses. Then suddenly they passed a lot of ordinances out of the blue. It seemed to circumvent the process they had proposed. It was disconnected from community input and seemed like it was done in the dark of night.
- In some instances, the zoning laws are too vague. Situations arise for which no clear guidance exists.
- Example: the situation with Peer Support & Wellness in Decatur Heights. Even the Zoning Board expressed discontent with inadequate guidance in the ordinances.
- Sometimes city officials close off communication with citizens on an issue because they say they are not required to solicit community input on that issue.
- There are a few traffic chokepoints caused by the city's traffic calming strategies.
- Specifically - the section of West Ponce near the post office and Church Street near Glenlake Park.
- The intersection at McDonough/Howard/College at the railroad tracks is a mess - a tragedy waiting to happen - especially with a school so close to it. The light is confusing and the signage is inadequate.
- There are not enough bike lanes in the city.
- Decatur is not nearly as bike-able as it is walkable.
- I would rather my child walk than ride a bike in Decatur.
- There are a lot of potholes.
- And some of the potholes seem to get worse as the city tries to fix them.
- The cost of housing is a problem.
- There is no way that our family could live here if we hadn't moved in 16 years ago.
- Teachers cannot afford to live here.
- There is a lack of affordable housing for low and middle income families.
- The property taxes are high.
- (But the group agreed that the benefits of living in Decatur are worth the cost)
- Do the regular events (beer festival, arts festival etc) cost the city more than they generate in increased business and other related revenues?
- Some events create problems and annoyances for residents - parking problems, traffic.
- People coming to events from outside Decatur often don't show respect for the place and the people who live here.

- There aren't enough tennis facilities. You have to drive to Glenlake to get the key for the Oakhurst courts.
- The sign-up process for recreation programs is plagued with problems.
- TRAFFIC. Widespread discussion included signaling problems (especially at South Candler and College), congestion, the balance of vehicle (cars and trucks) traffic flow versus pedestrian crossings and alternative vehicle (like bicycles, etc.) right of ways, and the lack of traffic calming measures on some streets.
- ANNEXATION. A mixed conversation noting the desire for obtaining more commercial tax properties but recognizing possible negative impact on the capacity of the school system. Included was a comment in favor of annexing the residential area on the south side near Midway.
- GREENSPACE, RECREATION LIMITATIONS. Little additional property available for these functions.
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING. This was a big issue for the group. It was summed up with the term "gentrification" and the expressed concern that the City is losing its diversity. Additional thoughts included concerns over losing the character of the residential neighborhoods, and the fact that the City is not attracting young African Americans.
- SCHOOL ISSUES. The specific focus here had to do with capacity.
- WE COULD BE GREENER. Though City administered building efforts are providing an emphasis in this area, greater effort can be made with respect to our school buildings, codes, construction incentives, etc.
- BIKE PATHS. More of them in more places.
- RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY. It was noted that having the CSX line through the heart of the City presented a unique series of problems like safety issues with kids crossing the tracks, while also limiting the City's options because of federal rail regulations.
- OAKHURST EMPTY LOT. There was an expressed desire for suitable development of the Oakhurst former grocery store property now occupied by Navo Church.
- Want a movie theater that plays dollar movies or independent films like LeFont Theaters/Midtown Plaza
- There is nothing to do for teenagers at night
- Want a performing arts theater that is NOT affiliated with the school
- Beacon complex is unattractive to look at. It supports a lot of activities and should be in better condition
- Decatur is only supportive of certain kinds of art. It does not support hip hop, ballroom or sculpture
- Different types of art are supported but not well publicized
- Have not seen a lot of public information about dance in Decatur. Can host dance shows on the Square.
- There are a lot of restaurants but they are not affordable for teenagers. If they are affordable, they are unhealthy. It seems like restaurants are excluding other types of retail

- We are pushing out poor people
- Lack of interesting, cheap restaurants. Like those that immigrants bring to a community
- On the city government website it's difficult to find a city employee's phone number
- Need traffic sensor for Commerce southbound into Howard Ave. Currently the light is over 90 seconds, usually with no one coming.
- Post-fire Trackside Tavern plywood temporary wall blocks half the sidewalk
- Empty Trackside building an eyesore
- Empty space next to NAVO building an eyesore, could contribute much more to the community and tax base if leased out to smaller businesses
- Lack of cooperation and communication between county and city -feeling like the “step child” ,and that DeKalb resents success of Decatur
- Lack of sensible plan for annexation, lack of information regarding annexation, lack of community involvement in the process
- Lack of affordable housing, multidimensional: grown kids can't afford to come back at buy here, elderly has tough time staying no real retirement community,
- “sitting” transportation plan- lack of more progress
- old zoning codes- aggressive commercial vs. resident, transitional zoning, lack of neighborhood input in zoning
- traffic management (timing, new sidewalk distribution)
- airplane noise
- City Schools of Decatur administration not like COD- (responsive, feedback, relationship sour)
- Partnership between city and school
- Everyday commodities not available (printer toner)
- Fear of becoming homogenous
- Builders (developers) find city difficult to work with
- Expensive parking meters
- Taxes may drive people out of the community
- Tax level can affect diversity (ethnic, age, socio-economic level)
- Aging infrastructure (sewers)
- Rush hour traffic
- Balancing vehicular, pedestrian and bike traffic
- Inconsistencies with building permits (sidewalks)
- Instances of de facto segregation in some community events, Religious, Social-economic, Family makeup
- A need for more events structured to attract diverse audiences
- Barriers to walkability, Railroad, Dead end streets
- Vacant houses - code enforcement
- Traffic issues - 2nd Avenue
- Traffic issues - Ponce @ rush hour

- Traffic issues - Railroad crossing
- Traffic issues - Traffic light timing
- Traffic issues - Speeding
- Diversity in housing - Affordable for all
- Diversity in housing - Life cycle
- Affordable taxes
- Storm drainage and flood plains
- Perception of inadequate parking
- Future school capacity and maintaining quality
- Sidewalks that are unusable
- Unkempt lots
- Unhappy with school charter: the internal means for input (SLT) largely ignored by school superintendent
- Disconnect with city commission and school board: 4-5 academy moving to former 5th Ave. school, not walkable or central to community
- Former West Chester School used entirely for school administration--Why?
- More communication from School Administration
- School system always in turmoil
- School board has open discussions then ignores all input
- CSD riding on reputation it no longer deserves
- Needs to be mutual support between city and school district
- Schools impact real estate and business so schools have to continue to be strong
- Success of schools impact success of city
- Negative change in education in schools in the last 20 years: No longer being taught facts, going through the motions over being taught depth of subject matter
- Charter school system perceived as private school. This is not true
- Schools need round table discussions
- Need to avoid urban blight: graffiti and trash
- Infrastructure problems: traffic, poor or no sidewalks, bad intersections--especially Candler and E. College, E. College and Commerce for children walking to school, dangerous railroad crossings for pedestrians
- Improve green space and add to it
- Make lot next to Dairy Queen a green space
- Complete all bike trail connections
- More bike friendly for recreational and commuting bikers
- City government needs to be more open regarding planning and zoning with newer zoning ordinances
- Need more 5 story high buildings to bring in tax revenue
- 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.
- Success breeds unsustainable numbers – events, festivals, restaurants overcrowded with non-Decatur visitors that choke out locals
- Decatur is a “defined space,” managing and balancing the space and the competing interests of preservation and development
- No density within the central city core
- No variety and diversity of housing stock
- Gentrification and squeezing out folks out of Decatur
- Lack of information as to available parking
- City’s website is not user friendly, updated and accurate – difficult to find information, minutes not updated and current, information outdated
- Wireless internet is not effective or useable
- Parking inventory is not clear
- Rec Center (Web Track – on-line pay system) does not work and is the hardest system to use, pay on-line
- Technology lags behind
- City promotes events well, but does not promote/educate on what is going on in government
- Parking
- Not enough public parking

- Private decks are often empty and could be used for other people
- MARTA doesn't go enough places
- If MARTA was expanded it would bring more people to Decatur
- Not enough bike lanes*
- Police
- Bad relationship- students feel like they're(police) just there to get them in trouble
- No free, late-night activities/locations for underage people
- Mallternative idea was badly executed
- signs poorly designed
- Traffic is awful
- Traffic and noise from traffic
- Specifically, people speed on Clairemont and Ponce too much
- There are proposals to over-develop the single-family home neighborhoods
- Specific example cited of a development proposal near the old train depot that dragged out for 2 years. According to this participant, the city did not understand the role of density in this area.
- Concern about a lack of ability to continue being able to afford to live in the city for both the elderly today and people's children in the future
- Taxes are very high and unaffordable for some residents
- A challenge here is to balance out the needs of different groups, those with and without children
- In relation to this, there is a need for workforce housing, and the city needs to understand how it compares in affordability to similar cities
- Empty commercial space needs to be filled in
- There needs to be easier access to city statues for residents who want to look them up
- Risk of becoming a "mini-Buckhead" and Virginia Highland
- 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,"
- If Decatur is pushing out creative people, where are they going? This is something to make sure we think about and prevent but might not be happening now
- Concerned about eliminating buses b/c of the people who need to use them. Before downsizing buses need to look and see who is actually using them first
- Need greenspace on buses
- More structured, but passive greenspace like Hidden Cove Park
- Lessen the use of cement and steel in parks. Use natural materials like stone for stairs.
- Want massive tree house, like Swiss Family Robinson, in parks
- Difficult to mix bicycles and cars
- Don't like how the PATH ends at Carpe Diem
- Buses are loud, ugly, and too big, impede traffic and go over the sidewalk. Although people do use them and we are concerned about impact on transit dependent, Trains and trolleys are preferred
- Decatur website is not well formatted and it's hard to find stuff
- Need a local activities channel and posters for events in local businesses
- City website homepage is not useful and difficult to find things. Need current events in the center of the page, like Facebook
- Housing is expensive; my parents tell me that, we used to afford a bigger house before we lived here
- Hard for young people and poor people to find housing
- I want to live in a house with a yard. Affordable means \$500 a month
- Need housing for retail salaries
- Worried that we will lose all the liberal, creative residents if the community becomes too expensive. Conservative people live in expensive places.
- Bothered by large houses next to small houses
- Pollution causes sickness and it is hard to control it living next to Atlanta
- Decatur seems healthier than most places but there is a still a lot of air pollution
- School lunches could be healthier
- The healthy food at school doesn't taste good choices are pizza, chick Fil A and McDonalds
- Need more shopping for daily needs
- Need reasonably priced stores
- Tax base is too dependent on residential property

- No access to sales tax
- DeKalb County employees cause traffic congestion
- No housing for people making \$50k or less
- Lack of apartments
- Hard to maintain diverse housing stock
- Seniors lack housing choices
- Seniors have to move due to high taxes
- Residents have lost houses because of reverse mortgages
- Difficult to get from one side of town to another
- Aging infrastructure: sidewalks, storm sewers
- Weak tree ordinance
- Growing school population with constrained school sites
- Lack of communication between city and school system on annexation
- Westchester school building is underutilized
- Determining the appropriate tax rate
- Churches take up a lot of property but do not pay taxes
- DeKalb County buildings take up a lot of property downtown and don't pay taxes
- There are some developments from that past that were mistakes or are eyesores.
- There is insufficient housing for lower income and middle income (workforce housing) and those who are young and starting out in their adult life. City needs to insure there is housing for all income levels
- Decatur is becoming hard for seniors to afford as the taxes rise so rapidly and there is not a sufficient amount of tax relief.
- Worry about the future mix of businesses – retail and restaurant but also service businesses for residents. Balance b/w tourist draw and core services for residents.
- Tax burden on residents is high – is there a sufficient mix of nonresident taxpaying businesses (offices, professional businesses, etc)
- Decatur is a victim of its success and is losing diversity in housing prices, pushing out the diversity that is one main reason people choose to live in Decatur.
- There is not a decent, clean hotel. Need for choice and higher quality accommodations.
- Decatur is not safe for cyclers, there are many bad intersections, not enough bike lanes and shoulders and an overall lack of infrastructure for cycling creates a disincentive for cyclists.
- A lot of fine dining restaurants but concern that there are not enough family/kid friendly dining options (not chains but independent eateries that can accommodate kids)
- Concern about infill housing, McMansions – want to insure appropriate oversight
- Several stalled development projects due to the economy – become abandoned eyesores
- Transit problems due to limited MARTA lines – not enough lines that go where we need them (ie Decatur to Emory) AND need thoughtful rail planning to respect neighborhoods

- Traffic cutting through residential streets, need to continue traffic calming measures that exist (city response has been good but concern for future)
- Speed problems on Church Street and Scott Blvd specifically
- 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

What could Decatur be?

What kind of community would inspire you?

- More sustainability-food crops, living wage, more jobs, affordable housing (rentals)
- Economically mixed neighborhoods
- Attention to the needs of the homeless
- Democracy and inclusion in schools
- Increased and improved connections between schools and the broader community
- Advocates in schools for kids without one
- Implementing Smart Growth
- Ease of access/transportation by foot, bike and shuttle
- Fewer parking lots
- Save, preserve and plant trees
- More options for kids-after school activities/tutoring/activities in parks
- Dedicated Senior Center
- Depot as cultural/community center
- Community building events
- Movie theater
- Small groups can address issues easily, good communication and paths for activism and local problem solving
- More of what people need (grocery stores, co-ops) right in the City of Decatur-entertainment and services
- Fewer cars/vehicles and less diesel from trucks
- Access to fresh food and local food
- Extension service in the community to help create/educate on gardens
- Development diversity-Keep best of old buildings, not "Disney-fied"
- Funds in help fix up homes for those with fixed incomes
- Bike lanes and safe cross walks
- Tree lined streets
- Lots of Public art
- Education on bike safety and rules
- Restore courthouse square continue the old "look and feel"- no more glass boxes-strong design standards
- Quality lodging for visitors
- Free transportation/shuttles between downtown and the neighborhoods
- YMCA in Downtown and subsidies for "Y" membership
- No High-Rises (keep it at 80ft.)
- More smart development inside the commerce loop and the Devry Campus

- less cars
- street-scape – continue with plantings, lighting, etc.
- Alternative Transportation, i.e. street-car on Ponce?
- Signage zoning restrictions
- safeguard greenspace
- pursue historic preservation
- retain architectural integrity
- do a better job defining borders of the city
- a place for public art.
- We are already lucky
- More entrepreneurs / locally owned businesses
- Small Town
- Green City
- Racially harmonious
- Arts Community
- Establish a boutique hotel
- Become a cultural/arts destination
- Church St developed from Ponce to commerce and beyond
- Greenspace/park downtown
- More parking for business employees
- Residents are a family
- Affordable housing
- Keeping diversity - balance the gentrification/diversity
- Schools - keeping the stability and quality with proper planning
- Community tool bank - folks could borrow tools free to work on their homes
- Better partnership between schools and city government -- too much division and lack of cooperation. Each has their own agenda.
- Sharing of resources - i.e. using school buildings after hours for community events; sharing parking lots
- mutual respect of all walks of life
- not have to own a car
- public temporary art
- own center for the arts facility
- leader in sustainable food
- less surface parking
- top 10 for storm water management
- top 10 for reducing carbon footprint
- prepared for all types of disasters
- physically fit citizens and city employees

- safety – kids can travel safely
- energy neutral transportation system
- More clearly defined in public mind (differentiated from Decatur mailing address area)
- A city known for tolerance of people with a diversity of lifestyles and values
- The best all around city but not necessarily "Number 1"
- A place that feels like home
- A place where everyone wants to live
- Part of the world but its own little place
- Pedestrians, cyclists and cars can all share roads and obey all rules/laws
- A city where different parts (Oakhurst, Glendale, etc) are connected by a path of walkways without impacting greenspace
- Our parks are prioritized and wild greenspace is increased
- We invest in active living
- We are able to maintain our economic diversity
- We have passive and active greenspaces (some as parks, some as wild areas) and we sustain what we already have
- We invest in shared parking - including encouraging alternate transportation options like public shuttles along the lines of expansion of the Cliff bus (adopting similar for Decatur)
- We have wider sidewalks and narrower streets to encourage walking/running/cycling and slower car speeds
- Ban motor vehicles on Ponce between Commerce and Church – create pedestrian mall
- Bike lanes and bike parking everywhere
- More independent senior living
- More socio-economic diversity in neighborhoods
- More gender and age diversity also
- Senior living near elementary schools
- Pedestrian cut-throughs
- Create a staff position in city government to act as a liaison between residential and commercial interests. This office should support the residents' point of view rather than relying upon ad hoc neighborhood organizations
- Harmonious and collaborative development between commercial and residential
- City in the forest
- Arts center
- Clean up sanitary sewers—smells
- Great schools
- Good dog parks
- Good infill – smart development, resolve eyesores, find good tenants
- Art scene - Theater
- Art scene - Performance art

- Art scene - Provide space for arts
- Art scene - Amphitheatre space to be used for movies and concerts (why go to Piedmont Park for Screen on the Green, gazebo not ideal stage for concerts)
- Art scene - Movie theater
- Continuum of care for older citizens – housing, healthcare
- Safety – especially at night, Oakhurst
- Diversity of housing so working class, older citizens, etc. can be here (don't want to turn into Highlands)
- Expanding houses well to blend in with rest of neighborhood
- Partner with Emory and Agnes Scott – branding (similar to Stanford/Palo Alto)
- Continue being a movie locale
- Technology – Google project
- Better communication/cooperation with DeKalb County – shouldn't resolve differences in court (e.g., HOST litigation, zoning issues).
- Better communication with City of Atlanta and other neighboring towns
- Environmental leader - Programs
- Environmental leader - Building codes
- Environmental leader - Energy usage
- Environmental leader - Clean water
- Maintain/increase diversity
- Manageable size of city – not too big, controlled growth
- More refugee services – education, basic services
- Decatur has an outstanding professional theater company
- Decatur has a pedestrian area (i.e. remove parking between E. Court Sq. and N. McDonough)
- Decatur has a big green space—Central Park
- Decatur is a friendly place to move through without driving; There are fewer cars and more transportation alternatives such as a trolley, safe bike routes, shady places for people to walk
- Decatur has very close ties with Agnes Scott and Emory and medical centers; Decatur leverages the talent in the universities and medical centers to make the city a better, healthier place (i.e. cooperative projects allowing Decatur to be a testing ground for ideas and research; opportunities for students to participate and study community life; programs promoting healthcare and healthy lifestyle, quality of life)
- No ugly, empty places/lots. Instead, vibrant parks or active businesses in these areas
- Easy to use a bike as a primary form of transportation; alternative transportation Mecca
- Decatur transit system
- Walkable community, wider sidewalks
- Encourage ground floor retail in developments
- Railroad crossings that don't require trains to blow horns
- Maintain city hall downtown; keep it accessible

- Maintain items on our success list
- Maintain accessibility of city officials and services
- Friendly, open, neighborly; encourage neighbor interaction
- Diversity
- Maintain small town feel; no tall buildings
- Stay family friendly
- Smart growth and development; attractive architecture; street-level businesses with residential above
- Promote free parking in decks and lots
- Pedestrian only zones; parking on periphery and walkable, attractive areas in interior
- Coolest place in Georgia
- More bicycle friendly
- Use Public Art bike racks
- Lots more trees-it's hot here
- Enforce pedestrian rules (countdown lights)
- Room for more parks
- Smart commercial growth
- Aesthetically appealing
- Look at Chattanooga
- Make the city look "more take care of"
- Improve trash can appearance
- Green would be really good
- Maintain diversity-age, race and economics
- Affordable housing
- More rental and/or single family options
- Apartments above retail space
- Incentivize development
- Put a pocket park across from DQ
- Plan and prepare for increased growth and density to ensure quality of life
- More pedestrian friendly streets i.e. block cars on weekends
- The city has shut down traffic for one day a week for biking and walking.
- City has turned some parts of downtown into sitting/greenspace pedestrian malls, central town model.
- No children have fallen through the cracks; the community has a high priority for every child succeeding – ‘it takes a village’
- City has combined the elementary schools into 2 schools and built 2 larger elementary schools.
- Decatur has become a model for Green Community.
- Decatur has more celebrations like the Beach Party.

- The city needs a balanced amount of walkable, green, model city while at the same time maintaining its grit, diversity (income, race, socioeconomic, education, etc).
- Decatur is a place where everyone knows your name.
- Decatur is a city where you can leave your doors unlocked like we did years ago.
- Decatur is financially stable in every aspect- schools, city administration, etc.
- We can work in Decatur (as well as live and play)
- Note the sign on the city limits: “Decatur is a place for homes, schools and churches” and this should include businesses and commerce as well.
- We have diversified taxes through commercial employment.
- Providing incentives for business or for greening homes: tax reductions at intervals of living in Decatur.
- We continue to get great service for taxes we pay.
- Make Ponce downtown a pedestrians-only zone, from Commerce to Commerce, similar to downtown areas in Boulder (CO), Asheville (NC), Burlington (VT); not necessarily permanent, but at certain times or all the time except during emergencies or special situations; could create outdoor seating areas encouraging people to mingle and linger, great for small businesses located there
- modernize the Rec Center
- modernize the firehouse and the police department
- increase salaries for police officers
- produce and/or attract great minds that will go on to have significant positive impacts beyond Decatur; an intellectually active community where not only book clubs thrive but intellectual salons
- more diverse citizenry than currently, especially economic and racial; less white than it has become lately; more African-American, Hispanic, Asian residents
- a model for sustainability - cultural, economic, environmental; capture rainwater, convert waste to methane, etc.; achieve through partnerships among educational institutions, government, business community, and local residents
- trolley to provide transportation around Decatur including to/from Oakhurst; could be public but also could be small private business; use energy-efficient transport, e.g., electric vehicles
- protect historic buildings, e.g., Courthouse, Depot, Leon's, Methodist Chapel; residents need more information about and access to historic properties
- preserve character of neighborhoods by restricting "hideous construction" of homes that don't fit their settings
- be sensitive to aging community, a challenge because economic base will change as population retires; protect quality of life by helping/encouraging people to stay healthy; attract younger people to preserve age and life-stage diversity; barter system--overseen or managed by City?--to help people provide for each other; City will need to establish a department to manage these challenges

- increase activities/amenities for seniors, and publicize them!, e.g., group outings
- set up system for matching families and elderly citizens, i.e., "Adopt a Grandparent"
- Maintaining and increasing diversity.
- Promoting and educating on healthy lifestyles especially with kids - walkable/bikeable.
- Tournament tennis and salt water pools.
- Not having to leave the city to buy or experience things.
- Better lodging options (Ex. boutique hotel plus renovate Holiday Inn).
- Maintaining sense of community and family (ex. neighbors bringing food every night for 2 months when family member ill).
- Continue to be one step ahead of "trends" (comment also made that they weren't trends when Decatur started doing them).
- Continue to involve citizens.
- "Inspiring visions of the city."
- More essential amenities within walking distance of neighborhoods and downtown Decatur.
- Would like to see more diverse small businesses, we have plenty of restaurants.
- Would like to see Decatur be the model of sustainability in the Southeast
- Would like Decatur to be "Cambridge" or Santa Monica on a smaller scale: Live, work, play, environmentally friendly. Be the base for some corporate headquarters.
- Decatur should be more closely connected to the Emory community, perhaps a public/private partnership
- Encourage locally grown food in Decatur schools
- Create more urban farms within the city
- Commit to improving and creating more parks and green space to improve Decatur's reputation as a destination as well as encourage healthy living and community togetherness.
- Create pocket parks with mixed use development surrounding them
- City planners should create a proactive department pursue funding for green spaces, city improvements
- Improve and beautify Harmony park and the Oakhurst biz district
- Make the Decatur Square more inviting, certain areas need a redesign, more lighting, specifically the back part near the bus depot
- Extend the character of the square over towards the corner of E Commerce and Church street and the Kroger, this is a desolate area with vacant buildings and the probation office. Not friendly for walking.
- Create a dedicated active farmer's market in Decatur
- Enact Progressive property tax laws that encourage and afford lifelong residency, don't price people out of their homes
- Encourage and maintain a diverse resident population through low profile governmental programs as we want to have diversity in race, income, religion, age, lifestyle.
- to be a science/math hub for Atlanta

- Diversity
- Diversity - income level
- Diversity - age
- Diversity - ethnicity
- Diversity - ideas
- Tolerance and respect
- Safety
- Lots of community activities
- Environmentally Bold
- Carbon neutrality
- old trees and new trees
- Better standards for retailers and restaurants
- better health regulations
- Better police presence downtown will lead to more foot traffic
- **pedestrian only Ponce on Friday and Saturday nights**
- Better retail mix
- bookstores
- movie theater (cinema tavern)
- Development for area around parole office
- Need more rental units downtown to increase foot traffic
- Make Decatur a better draw for businesses
- More affordable housing
- More post office drop boxes
- Emergency phones on the street
- Education – Set an example for the country
- Education – 100% literacy
- Education – Start early - Every child is successful in elementary school and going into middle school
- Education – More options for the ‘mid achievers’
- Education – Support network for everyone that need assistance
- Education – Pairing families to support the need and as volunteering - more volunteering in community
- Education – Vocational partnership program
- Education – Adult educational program
- Education – Decatur Recreation to partnership with others
- Commercial – Better supply of basic needs –more regular shops
- Commercial – Shops for daily needs – not boutiques – affordable shops – storefront faces streets – scale of buildings

- Commercial – Ability for shops to survive – support start-ups – jump start – review tax incentives to encourage small businesses to survive
- Commercial – Allow live / work
- Commercial – Look into big boxes – but with right type – allow small businesses to coexist
- Transportation - Complete streets
- Transportation - Maintain buses - easy - accessible – transportation within Decatur
- Transportation - Consider public private partnerships
- Transportation - Contingency to backfill MARTA’s shortcomings
- Transportation - Don’t leave people stranded
- Transportation - Bike friendly – bike safety
- Transportation - Overall safety on the streets
- Transportation - Non car zones examples Denver, Madison Wis.
- Transportation - Traffic light synchronization / coordination
- Transportation - Pedestrian friendly - enforcement
- Housing - More Affordable housing
- Housing - Make property taxes affordable
- Housing - Proactively check for exemptions
- Housing - Advocate for the elderly – make sure they are getting the exemptions
- Housing - Low-income exemptions for property taxes
- Housing - Incentives to landlord for affordable housing
- City will continue and will stay conscious of being fiscally responsible
- Better/higher standard of visual arts with sustained commitments from institutions (i.e. develop an Arts Center)
- Continue to support diversity
- Continue to have a strong school system
- Continue growing the school curriculum to expand the PE and Arts depts.
- Continue to creatively think of alternative transportation modes (i.e. Zip Car)
- City should provide incentives for water reuse and reclamation for residential and businesses
- Continue to enhance sustainable and storm water efforts
- Further support urban agriculture
- Continue to grow active living and add less formal events; more micro-community oriented activities
- Educate people on recycling
- Good effort on trash collection, but plastic bag program is counterproductive environmentally. Consider bins or biodegradable bags without discouraging recycling
- Art house theatre, live theatre, movies on the square
- Broaden community arts programs – community theatre
- Encouraging bicycle commuting, other forms of commuting
- Address those commuting to Decatur

- Get people to work and stay in Decatur
- Transportation arteries are unclogged
- Expand tree planting programs
- Landscaping that make commercial district attractive
- Streetscaping like Church Street
- On street sidewalk dining – European style, slows down traffic
- A place to age and stay
- A diverse city --affordable housing –students –retired persons –working people
- A beautiful downtown
- Close off traffic in downtown one day per week
- A populated downtown
- Open spaces –more walking spaces, --more bikeable space
- The businesses of today to still be here 10 – 20 years from now
- Efficient spending by city to improve tax structure for businesses
- Organic markets, gardens, and animals
- Open to the arts –incentives to help those (artistic, creative) endeavors --the city as a center for creativity
- Be able to walk --to Little Five Points, to Avondale
- Trolley
- Golf carts
- Alternative transportation
- Outdoor places to interact
- A GREEN city
- More front porches --people outside talking to neighbors --relationships
- Encourage neighborhood associations –neighborhood events
- Open spaces to have neighborhood events/gatherings
- Friendly, open city --say hi to your neighbors
- Organized Neighborhood Planning Units
- Show the region that it is possible to tackle social justice issues (grow diversity) while being green, etc. (and the other progressive things we like about Decatur)
- Breadth of [a more complete and pervasive] city [meaning citizen] understanding and support for housing authority priorities
- Less friction between school administration and parents; more trust, more cooperation, more transparency
- City Schools of Decatur 101 program
- A community with more walkers, more bike riders, farmers' market on the square, parks connected with trails
- Completion of sidewalks on every street (process has intimidated residents)
- Safer bike riding: same city commitment as for pedestrians

- Government with a role in designing community to fight chronic disease (due to lifestyle)
- [Community where] people don't drive their kids to school
- Electric busses; "no idling" policies
- Volunteerism in a broader program, one designed to connect people in relationships: mentors, literacy, seniors with children, professional, social
- Not afraid to become more dense downtown; get more creative; supports businesses
- is bicycle and pedestrian friendly
- has affordable homes
- has housing choices
- has a tax structure that keeps long time residents in place
- values and strengthens its diversity
- has homes that meet physical space related needs but are not out of context or scale
- has lots of green space and environment awareness
- has a housing authority (Decatur Housing Authority specifically) that sets a high standard for good design and respect for urban context downtown, employs green building methods, has quality architecture, is not suburban
- has a arts center/facility and continues coordination/partnerships with entities like Eddies Attic and Agnes Scott, the high school auditorium is a great start
- has lot of fine arts
- promotes our cemetery as a destination-not just in death
- a place where you come to live but you find yourself inspired for a life time
- An ideal mix of local businesses and national chains (for affordable basics - shoes, household goods, sports equipment).
- It would be great if I never had to go to Lenox Mall to buy stuff.
- More greenspaces closer to the Square
- Lots of places for people to be outside and interacting
- People are out of their cars for everything they do - shopping, eating, playing
- More outdoor seating at restaurants, cafes, parks
- More informal interaction in public places - book discussions, other gatherings
- The south side of the old courthouse is more inviting, drawing people there on a daily basis.
- On the Square there is more public activity to draw people there on a regular basis - more than just restaurants and bars- e.g., farmers market, vendors, performers.
- You know that when you show up on the Square there will always be something going on.
- More shade on the plaza above the MARTA station
- Want more variety in downtown. Cooking school, variety of restaurants, more arts
- The price of things should be cheaper
- More things for teens to do: movies, dance clubs, staying in parks later at night, more lights around parks
- More music venues

- Decatur people are content to adjust their bubble and stay in it. They don't want to leave the city to do things
- Want a bicycle sharing program (like Paris), need bicycle lanes or paths on major streets, bicycle parking, bicycle Lojack (the anti-theft car device)
- What will Decatur look like in the future?
- Roads become greenspace. Check car at the border of city and only alternative transportation or electric cars inside city. Love trees and want more. Robot servants.
- Pedestrian only, cobblestone streets, solar powered
- Like now but more bike paths and diversity of businesses
- Love big old trees, more noticeable greenspace, less concrete, environmental friendly stuff integrated throughout the environment, increase green infrastructure, more nature everywhere
- More of a central park. The Square is not grass and want a big greenspace downtown
- Free trolley throughout city.
- See people active throughout the city, exercising, my neighbor gives me fresh eggs in exchange for art that I've made
- Small MARTA buses within the city. Ultimately, no buses and everyone uses trains
- Grocery store on the Square
- Greener Decatur
- More pet friendly, allow pot bellied pigs, permanent farmer's market with organic food
- Scott Boulevard and train tracks are not dangerous to cross and stop dividing the city into pieces
- Build a bypass so that cars have a way to get around Decatur
- Access to Agnes Scott for pedestrians
- No need for school crossing guards at all, because all traffic is correctly engineered for safety
- Traffic calming, but efficient intersections
- Traffic roundabouts wherever possible
- Traffic roundabout at Medlock/Scott/N. Decatur
- Traffic roundabout at Church/Commerce
- Traffic roundabout at McDonough/Trinity
- Traffic roundabout at Ponce/Commerce, both intersections
- Traffic roundabout at Commerce/Clairemont
- Traffic roundabout at Scott/Clairemont
- Traffic roundabout at N. Decatur/Clairemont
- Traffic roundabout at N. Decatur/Church
- Traffic roundabout at Ponce/Church
- Traffic roundabout at N. Decatur/DeKalb Industrial
- Traffic roundabout at Lawrenceville Hwy/DeKalb Industrial
- Traffic roundabout at E. College/Commerce
- Traffic roundabout at Ponce/Sam's Crossing
- Traffic roundabout at Church/Trinity

- Bike lanes on S. Candler
- Save bike lanes everywhere
- Bike lanes on College
- Fix the City Map to show all blocked streets, unused rights of way, so that on the map they don't look like streets that go through
- Traffic that moves calmly, but never actually has to stop except for cross traffic, e.g., with roundabouts
- Reduce E. College to one lane each direction but with protected turnouts and roundabouts to keep traffic moving
- Reduce Clairemont to one lane each direction but with protected turnouts and roundabouts to keep traffic moving
- Reduce Church to one lane each direction but with protected turnouts and roundabouts to keep traffic moving
- City-owned right of ways, alleys, and unimproved parcels should be turned into trails suitable for pedestrians and bicycles
- All right of ways are accessible by wheelchairs - see Berkeley, CA
- Sensible plan for annexation-do it, and include people in communication and process
- Build cooperation and communication with Dekalb, and citizens know about the communication
- More multidimensional housing, and affordable housing
- Utilities built underground, require new developers to put utilities underground
- Continue what's good: sustainable choices, long term buy in from businesses
- Gold level biking community
- Walking trails that connect neighborhoods
- Pleasant walk from North to south, vice versa
- Connecting physical space, emotional, and spiritually
- Easy access to better support local businesses : example picking up takeout not so easy on square so likely to leave city for food and other goods..
- Downtown parking solution- more
- Diverse businesses –local grocery, butcher, and they live in the City not driving in to work
- Solar energy- required green building practices with schools and buildings
- Feel demographic diversity, maintain it don't loose it-age, race, gender, sexual orientation, economic
- Places for seniors and young adults to live.
- “true” partnership of schools and city in terms of land sharing, collaboration, performing arts center, providers for events and activities
- “incubator” for small businesses. Healthcare, small firms. Software companies, creative/arts
- Plant trees
- Multiple parks, fields
- Buy the Devry space and make green space and high school track

- Put sidewalks on streets that don't have them
- Organize more venues for performing arts (movies, music, authors)
- Organize event communication better (incl. county events, etc - challenge, too many blogs to visit to get info on events)
- Integration between city and community groups (i.e. more Eddy and Agnes type events)
- Bike lanes throughout the city
- Kids feel safe walking around town
- Info kiosk in the city: smartboard/electronic
- Decatur Events - "there's an app for that" - (something downloadable for people who visit or live in Decatur)
- Temporary office space (i.e. to rent by the day)
- Sister City programs - help other communities (i.e. Burkina Faso partnership)
- Recognize and value everyone in community
- More volunteer days
- What if the Methodist Children's Home was part of the community
- More children
- Knowing everyone's neighbor
- More streetscapes
- Path to interconnect areas
- More open space and community gardens
- Community gatherings - parties/dinners
- A business mentoring program
- Inspiring Visions of City
- Less paved space: redo parking lots, add trees, improve water drainage, increase permeability
- Keep buildings to 5 stories
- Commercial area of city needs to change so businesses can thrive: tax credits if hire local people, summer jobs for Decatur teenagers, create internships for teenagers
- Get rid of parking lots. Only use MARTA lots and shuttle people into downtown
- Parking lots provide better signage. Decatur residents would not have to pay for parking.
- Move DeKalb courthouse out to jail on Memorial
- DeKalb county should have to pay taxes for services in Decatur
- DeKalb and Decatur address mutual impacted services that exist in city of Decatur
- Need more office space.
- County needs to pay city for services: courthouse
- Bring in more business, more commercial and taxable property
- Provide more jobs for all ages
- More mixed commercial and residential properties
- Keep small town character
- Add quality retirement assisted living communities

- City needs to embrace idea of residents wanting to live here their entire lives
- Address elderly needs: sanitation, recreation, health, housing, pair young and old to assist each other
- Enlarge elderly programs at Decatur Rec
- Create housing opportunities for upcoming Boomers and empty nesters who no longer want to maintain a house
- Maintain restaurants and grocery stores that are affordable for folks on fixed income
- Change Oakhurst zoning so Mom and Pop stores can exist. Create tax incentives for independent shops
- South of Rail Road tracks needs grocery store, pharmacy and hardware store
- Better options for parking--perhaps along commerce perimeter
- Create parking in Maloof building parking lot
- Create a walking green space (an emerald necklace) from Oakhurst garden to Mason Mill Park in DeKalb county
- 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
- A model for racial justice – Decatur remains segregated
- Ability to bicycle safely to Farmers' Market
- Locally grown food
- Pedestrian friendly downtown core
- A leader in recycling and waste management/disposal
- Connectivity of bike and walking paths
- Leader in traffic management (i.e., bikes, parking, movement of traffic through City and rail)
- More folks working in Decatur that live in Decatur
- Awareness and use of changes in business – the evolution of how we work (more work from home)
- Respect, promotion and recognition of historic neighborhoods
- Formal tree replacement program that is proactive, caring, protective and replaces tree
- A working storm water plan that eliminates current flooding issues of streets, Winnona Park Elementary
- Naturalization of existing concrete streams
- Increase of active, passive greenspace, including use of flood plain properties
- Use of economic incentives to encourage green building
- A designated City Employee/Official charged with connecting groups, coordinating issues/programs, a neutral/mediator
- Full use of resources – for example, the High School Auditorium should be used every night by folks outside the school; athletic fields; Agnes Scot; Boys & Girls Club
- Workable group internet
- Open City Hall should be more of a forum
- Residential/Neighborhood representative on the Downtown Development Association
- Greater cooperation/efficiency/communication between City Hall and City Schools
- Access to affordable, safe housing for all stages of life
- More vibrant business district, business outside core Ponce corridor/square, businesses fill “dry” stagnant
- Greater role of City in growing, linking employment and jobs, a City career center
- Fully educate all kids with access to employment opportunities
- Retain, promote ethnic diversity

- Unbundling of parking spaces from residential uses – disagreement and split that parking minimums should remain
- Balance of zoning ordinance to respect/protect not just single property, but surrounding neighborhood
- Codified height transition zoning between residential and commercial
- Want a small, independent, all natural grocery store
- More community events on the square with a focus on teens?
- Food carts on the square, just in general there are more things that could be done with the square to make it a good place to be
- A public art venue*, Non-profit, Like Wonderroot. Could also be for music- place for high school bands to play in Decatur
- Movie Theater, Independent and cheap movies, Could also be a local art gallery
- Bike Lanes on every main street
- Low cost clothing store
- Thrift store
- They mentioned the example of young blood
- The youth needs to be more involved*
- Maintain the social environment- friendly, approachable- we need to educate kids about acceptance
- Incentives for small businesses, financial or other
- Annexation- will help bring new faces into the city and will foster its diversity
- Start using the square more
- Food carts
- Events- keep the ones we have but also have some geared toward youth
- Preserve the natural environment - build parks not associated with schools
- Preserve the natural environment - build trails (like the bird trail)
- Preserve the natural environment - build bike paths (it would save gas)
- Preserve the natural environment - give kids community service opportunities, or make jobs out of them for students, the jobs must be promoted in the school system, something like a camp counselors program
- Preserve the natural environment - tax cuts for people who live green
- Preserve the natural environment - sponsor events on the square about going green
- Preserve the natural environment - give major incentives for developers to go green
- Preserve the natural environment - institute stricter building codes
- Farm-to-school program
- Bring organic foods into the schools- serving healthy food at lunch and breakfast
- Have culinary and farming classes in the schools
- Have youth promote car pooling, maybe even have a "walk to school" day
- Improvement of Travel

- bring back the yellow bike program, involve the youth in the process (they could restore the bikes or manage stands)
- more bike taxis
- more free parking, potentially work with churches
- festivals promoting the arts
- make rock and roll review (the high school yearly concert) a public event
- keeping doing the cows and doors events (where people paint a bunch and put them all over the city), maybe find a way to aim it toward being green
- Make a better/safer environment for young skaters
- More things for teens to do on the weekends
- Have a movie theater/venue for concerts, Cheap indie movies
- Bands could range from high school kids to big names
- Make it harder for big corporate chains (like Kroger) to start up here and make it easier for small businesses
- Healthy Living, promotion of a green movement
- address childhood obesity (like with the farm-to-school program mentioned earlier)
- make community gardens safer (problem with other people taking the food grown there)
- The relationship between the students and the authorities, the students believe it is fear based, they feel harassed, the impression is that the cops have nothing better to do then mess with them, they think there are too many, think they need to stop targeting students, maybe change the standards for a cops success- right now they gain status by making arrests or giving tickets.
- Communication
- A community internship class at the high school
- A Youth Counsel- similar to the roundtables but more frequent, Even up to once a week
- We help citizens talk to each other: Online forum- blog, chat, e-mail list
- Have a permanent mediator between the youth and the people who can make it happen
- Leave no one out of the conversation. How do we get them involved? Students are left out
- Show students some proof that their words are having an impact
- Have people come to school to talk to students- similar to what I did in getting them involved in the round tables Target government classes and other related classes first.
- Encourage Individual/Group Contributions
- Find common goals then act on them
- Form a Decatur forum
- Hold groups meetings based on areas of interest
- Start an arts program for the youth
- Community service day for students instead of a school day
- Raise money through a run

- For environmental and other causes, ask what can high school students offer? A different perspective, more media savvy, more up to date, more time and energy- they have less responsibilities, they are a uniquely politically affected youth
- Green spaces
- Going green
- The arts
- Keep all the good we previously mentioned.
- Maintain strength of being a walking city
- But it is mostly in downtown and not outside the immediate area
- Concern re. traffic on Commerce St. Sycamore, also
- Blinking, countdown light for pedestrians
- Pedestrian only in downtown Decatur - no parking at city hall and Brick store
- Do a better job of advertising the free parking that is available
- Communication (x 3) on parking options
- Park and Ride like Emory U. - must be attractive and convenient
- Link Decatur mass transit with other parts of the city
- Disney-like trams with guide
- One day ticket or all year pass
- Link options together
- Encourage businesses to come to Decatur; address laws and red tape and codes to bring and support merchants and producers
- Need young people and folks of all ages without negating or forcing out senior citizens - property taxes are difficult
- ATL metroplex does not appeal to many young families
- How can Decatur attract and keep young families?
- \$ has a lot to do with this (attracting and keeping young families).
- Great schools and services can be and are expensive.
- If we really want diversity we need to recognize that an expensive city may and will impact this.
- Diversity is a gift - include all ages, races, sexual orientation, skills
- Concern that we may be growing closer to Virginia Highlands
- Housing affordability important
- Do you want to contribute to pay \$ in school tax?
- How do we address and share the burden/responsibility/joy of public education?
- Make it possible for seniors' taxes to be delayed, to go with property sale
- Local tax credit for local purchases that benefit Decatur
- Shop locally and get relief on property taxes
- Address why places of worship do or do not pay local taxes?
- In Decatur, 85% homeowners / 15% merchants imbalance of tax payments
- Recruit more business to city that bring jobs

- Address zero sum mentality - Merchants "fight" incoming/new merchants
- Zone properties accordingly - enterprise zones for development
- Mixed use pre-approval enables both faster growth and rapid response to new business opportunities
- Communicate with neighborhoods
- Zone with fluidity based on needs
- We are inspired by Decatur's unique character and architecture
- Decatur has a great personality and great energy downtown
- Decatur has a little bit of everything.
- We want more walking and bike paths in the city
- To see a car free zone in the center of town
- We want more places to walk to throughout the city; meaning we need more destinations besides just downtown and more options for entertainment
- To see the West side of Ponce as a controlled traffic zone similar to the East side of Ponce
- To have mixed income housing, including rental units throughout the city
- Encourage more commercial business space so that more people can work in the city and we're not just a bedroom community
- To see all surface parking lots gone
- To have a Decatur city trolley bus that takes you to the different shops and restaurants
- The city should look into incentive programs to keep people shopping locally
- One participant suggested printing Decatur bucks, which would be subsidies from the city to make up the cost differential between shopping at a chain store and an independent merchant
- Create a municipal compost site
- Something said that Athens, GA has something similar to look at and compare (compost site)
- Encourage more community gardening
- To key principles of this were that gardens should be city promoted but neighborhood supported, and provide affordable and accessible fresh food for all
- Maintain the independent business community in town
- Maintain and grow community events
- 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
- Need a perimeter bicycle trail around Decatur
- Make sure bicycle trails go everywhere that streets go
- Make sure alternative transportation meets daily needs and recreational needs
- Don't sacrifice vehicle space for bicycle space
- Eliminate on street parking and have shared parking
- Provide affordable housing to ensure a diversity of opinions
- Face to face meetings for small scale issues and projects, Open Forums, Majority Rules, Conduct Polls, Publicize the issue, Targeted communication to stakeholders, Give more weight to the opinion of the most affected, Hire an unbiased 3rd party
- Have neighborhood committees and representatives
- Encourage involvement in public life?, Give them Candy (incentives)
- Provide publicity everywhere - CVS, TV , radio, website and newsletter with opportunities
- Consensus around need for greenspace, more variety of food and retail. Little Kroger is uninviting and whatever is in that space should connect to the cemetery
- Attend events, advertising activities, (city should) keep up with social media
- Keep parks open later so they are used
- Need more clean up days in parks and they need to be better publicized
- Need more greenspace around Decatur
- Need landscaped medians, but leave room for the trolley
- Love the idea of having a raised monorail system
- Green roofs, solar panel on roofs, incentives for green architecture for commercial and residential properties, need incentives for green features like cash for clunkers programs and tax breaks
- Trinity triangle area should become a park
- Encourage composting. Most trash can be biodegradable
- I get information from NPR, TV, my mom, New York Times, bus ads, teachers, Tyler Perry movie poster, Decatur wi-fi page
- Decatur wi-fi needs improvement, not a strong signal
- Need cheap healthy food
- Use a community grill to cook healthy food. Put grills in parks

- Oakhurst community garden could partner with the school to provide healthy food
- We can stay involved by: signing up for an email list, attending events, posting information on the bulletin boards at school and in community and attending meetings
- Increase amount of protected greenspace
- Never have to drive my car again
- Provide safe place to bicycle
- Provide for all modes of transportation
- Use Suburban Plaza as a trolley/streetcar stop and large parking facility
- Use shared minivans to get around town for \$1 per ride
- Ban autos from downtown
- Use environmental sustainability as driving force for decision making
- Make it convenient to shop at farmer's markets everyday
- More people living and working downtown
- Use density as an incentive to provide affordable housing and greenspace
- Find way to measure environmental impact
- Fix signal timing
- Want dedicated bicycle and scooter lanes on streets
- Where people really do live work and play
- A place where there are professional employment opportunities (not just restaurant and retail)
- A place that has live/work developments and creative spaces where people who freelance or work from home can come together to collaborate and share resources
- A place where there is business incubation – using existing resources to help new businesses get started
- A place where there is more greenspace and streetscape improvements in eyesore pockets (church street b/w commerce and E. Ponce among others)
- A city that attracts creative businesses and professionals
- A still richly diverse citizenry reflected in civic engagement and participation
- A safe place that retains a community feel
- A place where I can walk to buy my groceries, shop daily not weekly
- A place that offers tax credits to those who shop locally
- A place that values disagreement – we agree to disagree but there is mutual respect of different ideas and opinions
- A city that welcomes input through community forums (i.e. continue open city hall)
- A place that caters to residents (i.e. offers discount nights for residents who come out to support local business)
- A place where businesses thrive and serve the needs of residents along with those who come to Decatur from elsewhere)
- A city that has a great infrastructure for alternative transportation.
- A place where you can get around easily

- A place that has retained trees and has a strong tree ordinance
- A place that has maintained and increased greenspace, and planted new trees
- Decatur as a model for efficient, alternative energy that attracts “green” related business
- A city that encourages residents (with tax incentives?0 to use green building materials and models this in city buildings
- Keeps citizens engaged and informed, has more “101”s (i.e. green 101, csd 101, etc)...be on the cutting edge of issues as they arise and educate residents
- A city that is current
- A city where citizens continue to be active and engaged, where the barriers to involvement are low and where the attitude is not “what’s in it for me”
- Where there is better information about what is going on in the city – more PR
- A city where every student does community service and we instill a service ethic in our kids from an early age.
- A place where the school system has better communication with future parents and those w/out kids
- A school system that facilitates the development of young adults who are prepared to be successful and ready to become engaged citizens
- A city that has flowers sold on the street and other street vendors
- 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

Postcards from the future

When you think about what you hope Decatur can be, what kinds of stories might you tell?

- Walkable and Sustainable
- Diverse neighborhoods-economically, racially, by age and type of employment
- Change is possible in Decatur-Community/resident driven initiatives
- Keep the Family feeling
- Life cycle housing
- City Tax Credits for energy efficient existing homes and new construction
- Community education on alternative housing and energy to ensure acceptance
- Alternative energy sources in the City
- Electric car charging stations
- Smaller "smarter", efficient homes-fewer "McMansions"
- Be known for civic energy efficiency
- Leading a green movement that affects H2O, Air, Energy-usage, etc.
- Maintain a diverse community
- known as an "ARTS" community
- Show creativity in all aspects of life
- Embrace new-urbanist ideas
- explore whether Downtown Ponce should be pedestrian only
- Clean up areas just on the perimeter of downtown but inside the Commerce-Loop
- Influence the N. Decatur/Clairemont Rd. area
- Inspire other contiguous communities
- find a way to embrace those living on the fringes of our borders
- continue to be a city where one can grow old
- Explore residential solutions for the older population so they can stay in their homes, i.e. transportation services, etc.
- Continue to enable volunteerism
- make the city more racially diverse
- need to be sensitive to the socio-economic/racial divide
- A place to live and let live
- Mix of ages, races and lifestyles
- Tolerant
- A place kids can be kids
- Full of people who want to know each other
- A front porch community (people know their neighbors)
- A place with activity options for all
- More walkable
- Have less traffic/better flow of traffic

- Less people driving/fewer cars
- Better crossings -- streets and RR
- Where there is less testing in schools and an opportunity for discovery
- An expanded active living center - with the proposed expansion plan implemented; with strong leadership; central to city activities; more accessible
- A city with a R.R. passenger service
- A city with affordable housing - more workforce houses so that the people who work here can afford to live here. Make sure that the housing stays affordable with accountability and city commitment -- more public discussion
- A city with alternative energy sources - so that we can provide some of our own energy
- multinational
- electric trolleys for neighborhood to neighborhood transportation-tying N. and S. together
- bike lanes on all streets
- narrower streets for traffic calming
- farms – csa, cooking classes, fresh foods for food pantries for the needy
- real food in all of our schools – cut back on waste
- national leader in healthy food for kids
- convert surface parking lots to community gardens and other green space and meaningful retail
- carousel at Christmas time
- outdoor amphitheatre
- public performance art
- shade on Marta plaza
- screen on the green
- building community by working on something together, on projects
- public spaces for games, hanging out – bocce ball, chess, shuffle board, conversation
- more affordable housing - people who work in the city able to afford to buy a home in the city
- MLK day of service for the elderly more often through the year
- self contained condo for adults w/out children – pool, health club, etc.
- golf carts
- More diversity in housing—age and socio-economic, and travel methods
- Have a middle class
- Bus, shuttles and/or better connections to other points in Metro-Atlanta
- More pedicabs
- Cleaner and greener
- Work force housing—if you can work in Decatur, you can afford to live in Decatur
- An incubator for businesses, particularly new technology and creative businesses
- A place of refreshment and rejuvenation
- An attractive destination for tourists and conferences/business meetings/outings
- A city that takes what it has and uses it to the best of its potential

- A city with a central place to gather that is attractive and used by the community on a daily basis
- A green/sustainable town
- A model for active living
- Self-sufficient
- A place that seeks to balance and serve everyone's needs
- A city that knows who it is; a city with an identity
- A place where people want to be/experience
- A place where residents stay
- A place with a strong culture (i.e. welcoming, open, friendly) and strong cultural offerings (i.e. great restaurants, entertainment)
- Known as the "Portland" (Oregon) of the South
- The coolest place in Georgia
- A place where people walk around, everything is accessible
- A place with a broadly diverse population
- An easy place to live
- Everything you need is in walking distance
- A place with more parks and greenspaces; connected greenspaces, a greenway belt
- High citizen involvement
- A place where city government is responsive and listens to residents before approving changes
- A place where bond issues are voted on in general elections; a city that takes on large issues through referenda
- Accessible government
- A place where taxes are spent more effectively; maximum bang for the buck
- With more "boards": more options for citizen involvement
- With more people involved, especially younger people
- With a contemporary, revamped website
- Where there is a relationship between the city and its citizens
- Where it is easier to get involved (i.e. ad hoc meetings, community bulletin boards)
- Where there are more urban gardens
- Where communication is improved and informal "meet up" groups are common
- Where there is a better use of social networking
- Where we have neighborhood block captains
- That is more green-trees and environmentally green
- That is a "LEED" neighborhood community
- Cultural richness that is tangible e.g., all the cities I love- Paris, e.g., the city is walkable, dynamic, pedestrian mall, visually interesting, it never sleeps.
- We want to bring out the richness of culture through increased availability of the visual arts.
- Decatur is a model city in terms of housing, traffic, education, jobs, environment, greenspace.
- Decatur continues to be innovative and first- it is not afraid to try things that might work.

- “Decatur, where it’s greater”.
- We are the tide that lifts all ships- everybody comes, schools, housing, cultural
- We don’t leave anyone behind – we are a city that is ‘Too busy to hate”
- Everyone joins together to get things done e.g. slowing traffic on a particular street called for a community effort that was very connectional and they even had a ‘Speed Bump Party’ when their speed bump was installed.
- Where we leave things out in front of our house and people pick them up for re-use.
- Home.
- Self supporting and sustaining.
- Diverse.
- Successful.
- A leader in the active living/healthy lifestyle/green movements.
- Center of residents lives (don't have to leave).
- Safest city in metro area.
- A place where small businesses thrive.
- Familiar to other states.
- A place with great festivals.
- A place where people want to live.
- A place that continues to have great schools.
- The place where urban policy wonks come to escape the rest of the state of Georgia
- A place where every street has a sidewalk and is a complete street
- A place with a unique character, we need to create that.
- 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
- Sexually and racially diverse
- Age Diverse
- Professionally diverse
- Income diverse
- Culturally diverse
- Light on cars
- A dense City Center with decreasing radial density
- A city that maintains a village vision

- Supportive of micro-village centers that surround the main Downtown (i.e. Oakhurst and promote others...)
- Zoning friendly to small businesses
- Better connected between North and South of the tracks and North and South of Scott Boulevard
- A City without speed bumps
- A City that encourage active living
- Young adult programs included
- Leagues with community partners
- Continue to get citizens involved
- Continue communication with citizens
- Dialog between police & young people is improved
- Continue to be green
- Improved natural green space
- Less engineered green space
- Commercial recycling program – small business
- Preserve green space not “develop” green space
- Communication between community groups & City & between groups
- Increased small business
- Increased activities in arts
- Alternatives to post office down town
- Improved access to courthouse & parking deck
- City of friendly neighbors
- Transportation
- Green
- Citizenship / Stewardship
- The arts
- Business
- Gov’t/Police/Fire
- Walking
- Vitality
- As a place where everyone is welcome
- Anti-Cobb County
- We welcome diversity
- Communication is open and clear-you don't feel lost-basically you know where you can go to get your questions answered
- Creative: artistically, able to raise chickens, forward thinking, kids have options to do things, open-minded, weird
- A leader in smart growth, sustainability, healthy lifestyle - an example that people look to.
- A mecca for culture, literature, arts and music

- A place that attracts innovators and creative types
- Protected as a brand/name
- Negative example: the recent Taste of Decatur situation
- Beautiful - full of colorful trees, flower, natural habitat
- Minimally intrusive to the rights of property owners while maintaining smart growth
- Continue in its embrace of diversity
- Not just high income residents
- Mixed in socio-economic levels and diverse lifestyles
- Still open-minded
- Not exclusive
- A place where residents know each other and interact
- Community-focused and defined by its neighborhoods
- Interconnected for news and information - both lo-tech and hi-tech media
- welcoming
- green
- more diverse and inclusive
- caring
- well planned- example art/theater integration and connected
- genuine, human scale
- vital and healthy- economically vital, healthy vital people.. active living
- encourage local/home businesses “techno peasantry”
- vibrant downtown
- enlightened
- encourage “light” development
- a place to go and watch a movie
- Leadership is (continues to be) thoughtful, diligent and progressive
- Small town (everybody knows your name)
- Skyscraperless
- Diverse
- Annexed to achieve balance with residential/commercial property
- Accommodates children at all education ranges of ability/disability
- Accommodating to aging population
- Beautiful streetscapes (not like Church St. before Ponce)
- Kids return to community when they are grown
- Broad in business base - corporate jobs not just shops and restaurants
- An inclusive community
- Vibrant
- Sustainable
- A destination

- More easily accessible
- Prosperous
- Solvent
- Stay a City
- Continue forward thinking, especially as regards schools
- More parking in less space
- More connected green space
- More friendly for the elderly
- More friendly to innovative small businesses
- Very pedestrian friendly: trees with sidewalks, small town character, but with dense urban use
- Alternative ways to get around city, i.e. cliff bus
- I tell people to come over and walk to the restaurants with me
- I tell people that I walk home from the bars
- I'm taking my kids to the parks that each have something unique
- I live two blocks from MARTA
- Everywhere I go I can take a great walk
- I talk about the overall diversity in the city, and that Decatur is one of the only cities in Georgia that has a non-discrimination policy that includes transgender people
- 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
- Close Ponce and remove parking on the Square
- Double pedestrian traffic
- Say “We used to have parking lots”
- Grocery store in Oakhurst
- Carbon Neutral City
- Fiber Internet
- No elderly person had to leave city because of taxes
- Zoning ordinance based on carbon neutrality
- School system meets the needs of every child

- Art facility that serves art needs of community
- Access to arts on a daily basis
- Dance groups able to perform inside the city limits
- Collaboration between city and schools to promote the arts and share space
- Created shared religious spaces/facilities instead of each church having their own site
- See the local food movement increase
- Not just Farm to School, but Farm to Community
- Farmer's market open every day
- Farms on top of school buildings
- Green roofs of every building
- Establish unique local codes that allow sustainable buildings
- Updated development codes to promote 21st century needs
- 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

A city where ...

Please complete the phrase: "Decatur, is a city where _____."

- All are welcome and comfortable
- Everybody is friendly
- We care
- We have everything we need
- We can count on each other
- Meets all our needs
- Its easy to be healthy
- Everyone is respected
- There are as many trees as residents
- Where communities are interconnected
- Citizens are empowered
- The car is not king
- You don't need a car
- you want to live, you want to retire
- you can find great food/restaurants
- you can find family activities
- it's a great place to raise a family
- the "arts" thrive
- schools thrive
- planning and input is valued
- local businesses thrive
- diversity and vibrancy exist for the benefit of small businesses
- we have a diverse population
- architectural integrity is valued
- New Urbanism is celebrated
- it's easy to consume locally-grown food
- it's easy to get online anywhere
- public facilities are used in a variety of ways, i.e. arts, adult education, etc.
- people know their neighbors
- people feel safe
- the character of the neighborhood is made up by the characters in the neighborhood
- there is a good mix of rural and urban.
- a small town lost in a city.
- spontaneous Zen happens.
- streets are alive and businesses thrive.

- dogs like it.
- Every child has equal opportunities to fulfill their potential
- Everything I need is within walking distance -
- Healthcare is within walking distance
- Groceries (Trader Joe's) are within walking distance
- Churches are within walking distance
- We have yearly discussions among citizens - town hall meeting style
- Everyone is involved in the community
- There is technology access for all - training sessions to educate seniors and underprivileged how to use technology; free or inexpensive equipment for those in need; use of school's computers after hours by citizens.
- "Seniors" and "taxes" are compatible
- Seniors are engaged in the community - acknowledging value of seniors and what they can bring to the community
- There are more services for seniors (evaluate and centralize resources to make the accessible)
- Greenspace is accessible to all - more casual areas for sitting and "hanging" out.
- There are adequate services and resources for early childhood development
- Everyone has and uses bikes
- We grow all our food for our citizens - no one has to go to bed hungry; food is affordable
- Social and emergency services are available to all
- everyone is fit
- everyone is welcome
- everyone knows their neighbor
- anyone can ride a bicycle
- you get a world class education
- you live in a carbon neutral environment
- you can be who you want to be
- fresh food is locally grown and available to all citizens
- it has foot in past and eye on the future
- we can co-exist with wildlife
- Public schools are a destination (people want to move and stay here because of the school system)
- Natural systems are being restored (recycling water, replacing/increasing tree canopy, growing food) with the goal of becoming self-sustaining
- People come to shop
- The small town feel has been maintained
- There is no speed limit above 30 mph
- Its residents think globally and act locally
- Its residents are involved in the community
- You can live, work and play (live close to work)

- Diversity is celebrated (as opposed to tolerated)
- Big city convenience, small town flavor
- Nature is honored
- We have the best small school system in the country
- Sustainability is taken seriously - development codes, incentives for conservation
- Where artistic impression reflects the community (diversity of music, artistic experiences)
- We work together to develop our future
- Empower our citizens to participate
- Capture the diversity of thought
- Decrease pollution - zero impact building (stormwater, carbon footprint/offsets)
- We maintain our assets by reinvesting in what we've already accomplished
- We adapt to the future
- You can walk to the airport
- We have 100% graduation rate from public high school
- Every child who graduates from Decatur High School goes on to higher education including job training, voc-tech, college, etc.
- You don't need a car
- Gardens are everywhere
- Greener energy sources
- Underground utilities
- More green space, including downtown
- All parking underground
- There are still wild spaces – not developed
- People are safe/secure
- People are environmentally conscious (greenest city in the Southeast)
- The schools are great
- Entertainment destination
- Where you don't have to leave unless you really want to
- Emory is
- Trains don't blow their horns
- Fiscally sound (City)
- The taxes are low and the services are high
- Community is involved
- Where things get done
- Where you can walk/cycle everywhere
- Green spaces are plentiful
- Technology and the arts (and the people who use them) prosper
- People come to see where things are done right (we are a model to other communities)
- ALL are welcome

- We grow our own food
- Pedestrians are safe walking everywhere
- It's easy to be healthy and happy
- Volunteers make it happen
- People talk to each other on the street
- You can age in place
- Share parking is embraced and taxes are low
- We love our trees
- We protect our environment
- More people walk than drive
- You are always learning
- People can buy almost all of what they need in the city affordably; businesses are diversified (mix of locally owned independent and bigger retailers); community can walk to most of the businesses
- The image the city promotes of active living is a reality
- People walk to get to where they want to go
- Community enjoys use of public facilities, such as the high school and rec center
- It's the coolest place in Georgia
- You can walk or bike anywhere safely
- There are lots of good restaurants
- There is no crime
- People want to live here; you can be yourself
- A wide variety of people live here
- There are lots of good parks, lots of greenspace
- The government listens and responds
- We have clean air and water
- An environmentally friendly city
- Home values are high
- You can afford to live here
- The city is attractive
- You can live in a postcard-like setting
- People send their kids to school in their own neighborhood
- We use solar rays
- Capitalize on rainwater
- Smart street plantings (are everywhere)
- Professional input on landscaping
- There are more pocket parks with shade where people play checkers
- There are more dedicated bike paths (Howard)
- There are wide sidewalks on Ponce so people can walk, ride and bike

- (Check out Portland Oregon street design)
- Building codes and ordinances match the vision
- The process is updated and cleaned up
- In mixed use projects, there's a plan for incompatibilities (i.e. restaurant/traffic noise in residential areas)
- We use "pedal people" (kids on bikes) to pick up trash
- We recycle all locally-there's no waste
- We practice sustainability
- We have more farm to school initiatives
- We educate not to litter and pick it up if you see it
- Young business is encouraged
- You don't have to leave
- There's a diverse and healthy population
- People can work, live and play
- People visit to see how it's done right
- All is possible
- Public art is encouraged
- There are lots of people friendly, landscaped parks
- Sustainability
- Empty storefronts are full
- Buildings are available for incubating new businesses
- It is a safe place to live.
- I am proud to be a member of the community.
- You can own your own business.
- All people feel welcome.
- The community as a whole is valued.
- A thriving commerce and community, working together where the commercial and residential balance allows both to prosper.
- Where we live play and WORK.
- Where the internet is free and trains within Decatur are free.
- The children love the schools and there are great teachers and sports and other activities.
- We collaborate with neighbors such as Emory and Clarkston with their international community.
- Greater Decatur includes the area outside Decatur- and we should know and appreciate what is going on there.
- We make movies.
- Our stories are told.
- The President wants to come to see how communities happen!
- There is a Trader Joe's* (or equivalent)
- we want to live

- you feel safe
- everybody wants to be
- you can have a family
- diversity is valued
- we care for each other
- everyone is welcome
- you can live, work, and play
- we will try anything once (to be a better community, e.g., recycling, other sustainability programs)
- we can experience cultural opportunities
- the environment is protected and valued
- you know your neighbors
- you are happy
- you don't need a car
- small businesses flourish
- you live longer
- young and old minds can grow together
- education is for all ages
- education is a priority
- cultural opportunities abound
- we have diversity, environmental stability, and economic stability
- we have safety
- Everyone is respected.
- People never want to leave.
- You feel like a member of the community.
- People can live where they work.
- People want to be.
- You don't have to lock your door.
- Children are valued.
- We're known for our people, businesses, and community events.
- Diverse populations are welcomed, involved and interact with each other.
- Everyone is invested and take ownership.
- People want to visit, play, live and work here.
- We maintain what we have while also improving; continuing to plan for the future and executing our plans.
- We have affordable housing and mixed development (i.e. low or high income not concentrated in one particular area).
- THEME: Big focus on the people of Decatur (i.e. culture, relationships, and sense of community).
- People can afford a high quality of life in a vibrant, urban setting

- You can have it all: access to the city of Atlanta with a small town feel
- Everyone wishes that they could live.
- We embrace the old as well as the new, promoting Decatur's history and be proud of it.
- we celebrate holidays together
- the city sponsors environmental and recycling efforts
- we live consciously
- plan
- recycle
- set out to do what will make our lives happier
- people who don't live here want to come spend time
- we educate our kids
- the community is involved in education
- we can model environmental stewardship
- farm to school initiatives
- we have better access to emergency medical services
- we safely walk and ride bikes, even with kids
- we have citywide environmentally sound mosquito control
- 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
- Can live at every age and stage of life and have a good time
- Drink and eat and not drive
- We know our neighbors
- Are environmentally conscious
- Care about those around us

- Live, work and play
- Proud to live in
- (you) can be you
- Have residential individuality and architectural autonomy and uniqueness
- Where active living is a way of life
- Small town but cosmopolitan
- A city where I am free to be me, expressive, diverse
- There is no dress code.
- You can wander endlessly
- Easy to meet people
- You can run
- The outdoor beckons
- People who want to live here can afford to live here
- Where culture thrives
- People are connected --emotionally --spiritually --businessly
- People feel heard and connected
- Diversity is embraced
- You remember your childhood kindly
- Small businesses have the opportunity to thrive
- The school system is a vital part of the community
- Citizens have a good relationship with city officials
- People can get around --free transportation zone downtown --trolley
- Oakhurst and downtown are connected
- You don't ever need or want to leave
- There is innovation AND preservation
- You live your life
- Sustainability is a way of life
- You want to raise your family
- The next ten years are on the cutting edge and are moving forward
- I feel safe
- Where your neighbors smile at you
- I feel energized to be involved
- I can make a difference
- City officials are responsive
- Everyone is able and welcome to live
- Everyone can move freely from a transportation standpoint
- I want to live until I die
- You can grow up and grow old
- Business meets the needs of the community-not just high end business

- You can grow old and stay young
- people gather
- people want to hang out
- there is always something to see or do in our public areas
- a place with lots of art in public
- life is fun
- I can catch a trolley (i.e., move around the city without a car but still easily and quickly)
- people are involved in the city, in the schools.
- I can see a movie
- there is more to do than eat and drink
- there is more traditional theater
- I can do all of my shopping
- big-box stores have their place alongside our local businesses
- you never need to leave
- people say, "Hmm, yes, I have vaguely heard of Atlanta."
- people can live through their whole life (i.e., into retirement and old age).
- I can afford to live.
- little has changed in the last ten years.
- families can live, work and play without leaving the City.
- vacant lots are green, not paved.
- that is carbon neutral.
- for all stages of life. (This sentence refers to ages, babies to elderly.)
- of thoughtful expansion.
- of greater diversity in every way (specifically mentioning age, race, economic, and political).
- the senior members of our City and communities share their knowledge, experiences and history with younger and newer citizens.
- accessible
- green
- teens can do stuff
- no cars
- cats can run free
- people care for each other
- I make my home
- People walk
- I want to raise my kids
- I know everyone
- Im proud to live
- We have block parties
- I bike

- I shop and eat
- Spend the weekend without leaving
- Live, eat, work, play
- Realize our goals
- We manage growth and preserve character/history
- Have fun
- Atlanta isn't
- Everyone wants to be
- You can connect the dots - networking digitally and personally
- Decatur is a network
- That is totally wireless with reliable connection
- You are free to walk
- You feel at home
- Lively
- Safe and help is close by
- There are homes, schools and places of worship
- Where people want to and afford to stay, live and retire
- Green and Active
- Know your government by their name
- Great one-of-a-kind shops
- Individuality / Unique / Sense of Community Pride and Responsibility
- Volunteerism
- There is a Trader Joe's
- Live, Work and Play
- Everyone is Welcome and Comfortable
- Everybody knows your name
- Neighbors help each other
- Everyone feels welcome
- Small businesses want to be and are successful
- You can work, live, and play
- You can raise a family
- You are proud to call home
- You want to live forever
- Dreams come true
- The environment is respected
- The government is responsive
- Citizens, government and businesses coexist
- I feel at home
- People matter

- I see people I know because it is a small town
- There is always something exciting going on
- People feel welcome
- Excellence and compassion reign
- I let my kids walk around town and hang out
- Education provides our children with promising future
- Public schools are valued and supported
- all schools are top quality
- we provide vocational education and well as college prep in our schools
- We think BIG about transportation: become an all electric city (no gas), lessen traffic through downtown, divert traffic around to commerce, install better traffic lights with better timing
- 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
- Creativity is fostered and encouraged to bloom
- People who work in the community can afford to live in the community
- Cradle to Grave
- Live, Work, Play
- Come as You Are
- Setting the Standard for Small, Urban Cities
- Change is What Southern Looks Like
- We Do the New South Better
- Residents are Engaged
- We have a cultural center – music, entertainment
- Children/Everyone can thrive
- You can check out but never leave
- I have a voice
- People can walk home at night without being harassed
- Everyone is accepted
- Art is appreciated
- Everyone wants to be
- Everything you need is here
- You can live and work
- Diversity is encouraged and fostered
- The youth are involved
- Everyone knows each other
- There is green living (ex: recycling everywhere)
- Must do something about traffic/pedestrian access

- Concerts, festivals, come walk downtown
- 1998 plan that made this possible - communal things to do
- Small town feel in a huge metroplex
- Homes still sell in this economy
- Not many bank-owned signs - we're not in the red
- Varied ages in population
- Oakhurst resurgence and good schools attracted families
- Decatur focus has been on what we can do to help East Lake and Oakhurst
- Things get done (despite the Commissioners' reluctance)
- Progress can be made
- City management does listen
- People have input - don't quit - persevere
- People keep up their homes
- Buy in people here are invested
- Volunteer opportunities - MLK Day = 1,000 plus!
- Wonderful library - GA Center for the book
- Decatur Book Festival
- Churches share space with community
- Not a typical USA suburb -- "Why I move here and why I stayed here"
- Cultish? "Hey there goes a Decatur sign! License plate! T-shirt!"
- Great city services
- DCM - DEAM - Hagars House
- Community works together to address hunger and homelessness
- Urban camping law discourages
- Educational opportunities - CTS/Agnes Scott/Emory/DeVry
- Access to public transportation - pedicabs!
- Share the road - are bike laws observed?
- Eclectic nature of downtown merchants
- I like to live and work and play
- for re-creation
- the schools are excellent, the children are safe
- 73 year old people can still afford to live
- social engagement is accessible
- positive spontaneous interaction happens, and we have the spaces, places and environment to encourage this phenomena
- I can do everything I need to do in a given day - a self-contained city
- we can find a movie house and a full service bookstore
- it is like a bodega
- parking in downtown is eliminated and pedestrians have total access

- city hall continues to be open to our voices
- we can send a shout out to our great sanitation services
- Life thrives
- You live, work, learn and plan
- Mayberry meets Berkley
- Small town dream lives on
- You know your neighbor
- Mr. Rogers would feel comfortable
- There is always something interesting happening
- We communicate and cooperate
- There is no wrong side of the tracks and all the different groups work together
- 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
- Everyone is welcome
- There's a festival for that
- You can sleep, drink, work, live, shop
- You can see every species of bird in the southeast
- I'm proud to live
- Roof farming capitol of the world
- Interesting people are always passing through
- It's hell to drive
- You park your car and walk
- Built for people and not for cars
- Schools set an international standard
- Cars are at the bottom of the list
- Bicyclists and pedestrians have the right of way
- 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

High Interest Ideas

Here are the ideas, from those listed above, that the groups felt generated a high level of interest during their discussions:

How is Decatur successful today?

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

- Great schools – great teachers, active parents, walk-able neighborhood schools with lots of resources
- Community Involvement – evidence of a plan
- Community leaders do a great job securing grants
- great activities
- Less restrictive rules for homes - no covenants
- Traffic flow; balance with needs of pedestrians
- Bikeability, walkability
- Public education on rules for cars, bikes, and pedestrians
- Encourage a diverse business climate
- Refine/define what R60 zoning means (as well as other zonings); current ordinances seem arbitrary and subjective; need to define residential zoning more exactly
- Control of city spending; fiscal responsibility
- Light pollution (example: nighttime lighting from Columbia Seminary)
- Noise and quality of life issues
- togetherness, sense of community
- great recycling program; love not having to sort recyclables; sanitation service will pick up most things; electronics recycling days at the High School
- Decatur manages to maintain unbuilt space, preserves green space; Cemetery
- lots of small businesses; independent restaurants and retailers (as opposed to chains)
- festivals: Arts, Beer, Book , Wine, Beach Party, Easter Egg Hunt, 4th of July, Christmas Tree, Jazz Nights, House Walk [sic], Garden Walk [sic], Old House Fair, Used Book Sale
- Walkability, a walking city
- Moved here for the schools
- Events!
- Restaurants -- come a long way, 27 of them in walking distance
- Good Teachers
- Rec Center is a gift. Participated in lacrosse, soccer, basketball, cheerleading and use playground behind the Rec
- schools
- density means car-free is possible

- walkability
- community
- development plan

What are our current problems?

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

- Traffic on College seems to be worse
- Potential for being too exclusive (in a pejorative sense).
- taxes are too high
- challenge: how to keep economic diversity while maintaining level of services that we have
- challenging to be a pedestrian in Decatur; better than it used to be but safety could be improved; need both visual and audible signals at crosswalks
- protect green space and tree canopy in neighborhoods and downtown; need more trees downtown; City should seek to acquire undeveloped tracts and protect from development
- Green Space – too small at the schools --Glenlake Park, money should have been spent buying more green space
- Want more trails, soft surface rather than paved
- More bike facilities, lanes, paths
- Want a movie theater that plays dollar movies or independent films like LeFont Theaters/Midtown Plaza
- There is nothing to do for teenagers at night
- Lessen the use of cement and steel in parks. Use natural materials like stone for stairs.
- Buses are loud, ugly, and too big, impede traffic and go over the sidewalk. Although people do use them and we are concerned about impact on transit dependent, Trains and trolleys are preferred
- City website homepage is not useful and difficult to find things. Need current events in the center of the page, like Facebook
- I want to live in a house with a yard. Affordable means \$500 a month
- Worried that we will lose all the liberal, creative residents if the community becomes too expensive. Conservative people live in expensive places.
- School lunches could be healthier

What could Decatur be?

What kind of community would inspire you?

- Decatur is a friendly place to move through without driving; There are fewer cars and more transportation alternatives such as a trolley, safe bike routes, shady places for people to walk
- Decatur has very close ties with Agnes Scott and Emory and medical centers; Decatur leverages the talent in the universities and medical centers to make the city a better, healthier place (i.e. cooperative projects allowing Decatur to be a testing ground for ideas and research; opportunities

for students to participate and study community life; programs promoting healthcare and healthy lifestyle, quality of life)

- more diverse citizenry than currently, especially economic and racial; less white than it has become lately; more African-American, Hispanic, Asian residents
- a model for sustainability - cultural, economic, environmental; capture rainwater, convert waste to methane, etc.; achieve through partnerships among educational institutions, government, business community, and local residents
- trolley to provide transportation around Decatur including to/from Oakhurst; could be public but also could be small private business; use energy-efficient transport, e.g., electric vehicles
- protect historic buildings, e.g., Courthouse, Depot, Leon's, Methodist Chapel; residents need more information about and access to historic properties
- be sensitive to aging community, a challenge because economic base will change as population retires; protect quality of life by helping/encouraging people to stay healthy; attract younger people to preserve age and life-stage diversity; barter system--overseen or managed by City?--to help people provide for each other; City will need to establish a department to manage these challenges
- A place to age and stay
- A diverse city --affordable housing --students --retired persons --working people
- Be able to walk --to Little Five Points, to Avondale
- Trolley
- Outdoor places to interact
- Open spaces to have neighborhood events/gatherings
- Want a bicycle sharing program (like Paris), need bicycle lanes or paths on major streets, bicycle parking, bicycle Lojack (the anti-theft car device)
- More of a central park. The Square is not grass and want a big greenspace downtown
- Make sure bicycle trails go everywhere that streets go
- Make sure alternative transportation meets daily needs and recreational needs
- Encourage involvement in public life?, Give them Candy (incentives)
- Consensus around need for greenspace, more variety of food and retail. Little Kroger is uninviting and whatever is in that space should connect to the cemetery
- Need cheap healthy food

Postcards from the future

When you think about what you hope Decatur can be, what kinds of stories might you tell?

- Leading a green movement that affects H2O, Air, Energy-usage, etc.
- Maintain a diverse community
- make the city more racially diverse
- An incubator for businesses, particularly new technology and creative businesses
- A green/sustainable town
- A model for active living

- A city that knows who it is; a city with an identity
- A place where people want to be/experience
- A place where residents stay
- Transportation
- Green
- Business
- Walking

A city where ...

Please complete the phrase: “Decatur, is a city where _____.”

- People can buy almost all of what they need in the city affordably; businesses are diversified (mix of locally owned independent and bigger retailers); community can walk to most of the businesses
- Diverse populations are welcomed, involved and interact with each other.
- We have affordable housing and mixed development (i.e. low or high income not concentrated in one particular area).
- THEME: Big focus on the people of Decatur (i.e. culture, relationships, and sense of community).
- Easy to meet people
- Where culture thrives
- Diversity is embraced
- Small businesses have the opportunity to thrive
- The school system is a vital part of the community
- Everyone wants to be
- Individuality / Unique / Sense of Community Pride and Responsibility
- Volunteerism
- Live, Work and Play
- Tapestry of different kinds of people and everyone is honored
- People who work in the community can afford to live in the community