

Decatur Round Tables
Group #8
At First Christian Church of Decatur, Tuesday, 2-4PM
Facilitator James Brewer-Calvert

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

“urban camping discouraged” refers to panhandling

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

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

Communal support for no-parking zones in Decatur

Why not open delivery only zones in the PM

Re-emphasize parking options – communicate!

Tourism – market Decatur as place to stay

Decatur Tourism bureau brand new

Encourage development of B & Bs

Bike patrols – more, be more visible

Lights in trees (like Sundance Sq in Ft Worth)

DIG DEEPER! 6 Study Questions

#1 HOW DO WE SUSTAIN THE THINGS WE APPRECIATE?

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

Emphasize positive aspects of diversity in development

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

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

Make civic meetings more inviting and exciting

Come up with new ways to involve the city

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

We’ve got to broaden the tax base

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

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

Get McDonalds out of the city – too much trash

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

Make sure City does not sell water utility to private ownership

Address traffic and pedestrian concerns

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

Turn empty lots into public green space

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

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

More Pedi-cabs

Pursue electric trams – link with MARTA

Require new development to include scooter and bike parking spaces

Sustain zip cars

Send message that we want/need MARTA in Decatur

Bike share system

Passenger vans and mini buses (like in nursing homes)

Valet parking

Jet packs (!)

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

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

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

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

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

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

DHS Theater – is it available?

Encourage block parties

Missing: popular community theater

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

Everyone

Baby boomers will be 70-90 years old

Fewer 2 story homes – smaller homes

Big is out – energy is costly

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

Congregant housing

More in-law suites

Allow kitchens in garage apts., basement apts.

Spread out the tax base

More high density condos

Sanctuary city

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

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

--elder hostel classes

--tourism bureau

Welcome Waffle House

Support movie industry

Be more pedestrian friendly

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

Groceries – put one in Oakhurst in addition to Kroger

More community gardens

More areas for walking and riding

Renovate recreation center

See more of local churches being involved

Group 19
Robyn Tibbetts
Session 2

3. How do you get from place to place
walking
biking
scooters **cars**
cutting across railroad

Might change

safety of traveling
counters for crossing street and sound beepers (pedestrians)
more alternative fuel cars, and places to plug in
positive reinforcement and education of road rules etc...
increase signage and more sidewalks
Dekalb relationship with city

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

Heal the railroad issues...creative ways to make railroad work with us like landscape, underpass, overpass
Balance economic health- real city, real place, not resort, real places to shop for needs
Downtown sustainable by more diverse businesses- **practice everyday affordable needs ex-target...**...can be built to look like city (example D.C shops have look of city not big giant retail)
City that works for all income levels-shops not outgrowing the income of its citizens
Encourage more everyday use –be able to walk to ½ your errands on foot...be healthier
Corner stores/grocery stores that are attractive and local
Better version of little Kroger or Trader Joes
Maintain high quality service- can't be sustained without maintaining tax structure, so broader taxing on "other" non residential
Fees for county and churches...
Prepare for economic uncertainty

5. Who will need housing in twenty years?

Elderly near downtown where you can access needs via walking and activities near by. Does not have to be large, cluster homes/dorms. Does not to be a 1 size fits all, diverse options, Allowing seniors to age in place
Starter homes for young
College students non traditional housing for students (example near King Plow arts center)
privatized living spaces
Non traditional families example- single moms, roommates, etc...

4. How do we preserve, improve, and protect
underground utilities

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

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

Create a policy on maintenance of healthy canopy

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

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

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

Energy efficient incentives

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

6. Healthy living

renovation of rec center

variety of location of programs (keenagers)

integration of activities-partnering with others

maintaining park renovation

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

4. What is most important to you

book festival and arts festival

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

volunteer program

such a variety of stuff to do

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

DBA continued support growth

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

QUESTION 1: GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

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

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

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

QUESTION 2: ENVIRONMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

QUESTION 3: TRANSPORTATION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q4. ENVIRONMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q5. HOUSING

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q6. HEALTHY LIVING

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

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

ACTIVE LIVING. Continue current City department efforts.

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

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

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

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

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

Celia Willis
Session Two
Group 16

- How do we sustain the city?
 - o Attract independent businesses that are self-sustaining
 - o Decatur Job board- where all businesses post job openings
 - o Protect our natural environment
 - o Taking care of the older population
 - Help in transitioning to assisted living in the neighborhood
 - Help with transportation
 - Attract volunteer groups that work with the elderly
 - o Filling in the ugly spaces, make walking routes safer and more scenic
 - o Make ground level areas pedestrian friendly (it's already happening but just keeping improving it)
- *How* do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?
 - o Along with the job board mentioned above, have natural preservation board
 - A message board for volunteer opportunities
 - Have it not only on website- but make sure the website is publicized through email

- Make website more like a blog- have more news and e-mail blasts
 - Replace dying trees
 - Ordinance encouraging preservation
 - Bike lanes on the actual street
 - Decatur Transportation system
 - Closing ponce on the square and McDonough- make it a pedestrian mall
 - More communication in neighborhoods
 - Have neighborhood areas on website
 - Annual “clean-up Decatur day”
 - With a festival after it
- How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?
 - Shuttles fro companies that have employees in the city
 - CNN, CDC, Emory, Coke
 - Electric taxis or shuttle service for residents (start with the weekends)
 - More sidewalks (by the railroads)
 - Bike lanes, bike racks
- When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?
 - More classes for adults
 - Like yoga
 - Gym at the rec center (place to work out)
 - Lower prices for residents
 - Just pay each time you go
 - Open up the gym at the high school to residents during the summer
 - Have an Arts director for the entire city
 - Improve the quality of the beer and wine festivals- suppliers and number of people attending
 - Allow community to use CSD property
 - Work on scheduling (baseball field example)
 - Maintain small town character- no tall buildings
- Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in twenty years? What kind of housing do you think they will they need?
 - Who?
 - Older population
 - Empty nesters
 - Civil servants- need affordable housing
 - They will need affordable housing
 - Requirement for notifying the neighborhood citizens of zoning changes
 - Email list
 - Sales tax to offset property taxes
 - Tighten zoning restrictions for single family housing
 - To reduce the cost of houses
 - Merge school system with Dekalb
 - Abolish school system- make private and charter- both of these are in an effort to lower taxes

- Just make schools more responsive to parents
- In terms of “healthy living,” what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city? What activities, programs, or changes in the things we build could make a difference?
 - More pedestrian friendly
 - More classes for adults and a workout center
 - Encourage walking and biking clubs
 - Centralized message board
 - More awareness about what already exists
 - Bike lanes- separate from road
 - Work with emory
 - Like Peachtree City but without the golf carts
 - Kids need centrally located areas for activities
 - Repeal skateboard ordinance
 - More pet parks
 - However, maintain the balance of “live and let live”

Loudermilk 05-11-2010 7 pm

What was most interesting/stimulating from the last meeting?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Consider limiting where you can drive in the city, i.e. Times Square or downtown Asheville.
 - Safe walking = increased commerce
 - Ability to walk allows a diverse (aging) population to live here
- Park and walk.
- Now we drive or walk.
- Would like to see a Decatur trolley or transit.
 - Green
 - Could be small business
 - Would need reliable ridership
 - Could be more sustainable if it went outside the city limits
 - Survey traffic patterns

- Trolley should go to Zip Car locations, then people can further out. Stop at major Decatur sites.
- Connect parts of Decatur.
- Reduce car ownership in Decatur.
- Help physically impaired get around. Ties into transit idea. Also to issues of aging.
 - Now, use of Square difficult for physically impaired.
- Need easier way to get from north part of city to south, especially on foot. Railway tracks and Scott Boulevard act as barriers between parts of city.

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

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

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

- Mixed income housing important. Place for teachers, city workers, etc.
 - Issue: when affordable housing rises in price, people sell and move, then there are fewer affordable homes.
- As baby boomers age and downsize, what are they looking for?
 - Mixture of housing types
 - Affordable prices
 - Smaller homes
 - Single level homes
 - Low maintenance—small yards, no painting, etc. HOA neighborhoods.

- People are moving here from the NE and Florida to retire
- Accessibility will be key
- Provide live/work spaces. Have access to a local business center within walking distance. Build into new developments.
- Permits should preserve neighborhood feel.
- Consider co-housing: supportive communities that are walk-able with perimeter parking. Communal kitchens, gardens, office space.
- Services near population centers. Types of businesses important—markets, groceries, etc.
- Include renters in city planning. Need more rental property to increase diversity—nice apartments.
 - Hard to build because available plots of land too small.
 - Neighborhoods often oppose such development
 - Concern that renters not invested in community

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

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

Dana Calleja

Tuesday May 11, 2010

Housing in 20 Years (question 5)

We need housing for young and growing families – affordable condos and single-family homes. We need to figure out how to enable retirees to stay in our community. The tax burden is too great for those on a fixed income.

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

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

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

Cluster developments – an updated version, would be a good solution for Decatur. This could be done in the defunct car dealerships and the old DeVrey Tech location. Get rid of the huge parking lots and build cluster homes with significant shared greenspace. However, this would mean that instead of 40 homes going into a development, you'd only get 20 or so, but then the land would end up being cheaper if it was zoned that way. It all starts with the zoning. We don't want developments like Knob Hill and the new townhouses on Church Street and Scott Blvd. We want ones that have more shared greenspace and less concrete. Having more height like 4-5 story in the downtown area would help with density especially if it was created as a live/walk to work plan similar to the space over the Yogurt Tap. So, if we took a lot of the 1-2 story buildings in downtown Decatur and built them up to 4-5 story, we could significantly increase our density while not getting rid of greenspace.

Preserve our Natural Environment (question 2)

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

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

Natural environments should be required in development.

The tree ordinance on the table should be supported.

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

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

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

We should give credits/incentives for green practices like:

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

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

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

Keep doing round tables – even after this process is over

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

Increase use of “Open Government” tool.

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

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

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

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

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

Cultural Life in Decatur (question 4)

Fun activities create a community:

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

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

- Bikes
- Tai chi
- Yoga
- Table tennis

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

Have the Marta plaza be a welcoming place where people can practice Tai Chi, Yoga, Dancing. Create a free tram and continue to support the pedi-cab business. These help people decide to go into downtown Decatur and other retail areas (Oakhurst) and address parking issues.

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

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

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

deSilva 05/11/10 2pm Group 7

From Session One:

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

Question 1:

- Decatur is a free-standing community with economic diversity. There is the danger of losing this diversity and becoming an enclave of only one economic strata.
- We need to maintain public housing.
- We need to maintain the “in-between” housing for working class (teachers, firefighters, etc.)
- We need more apartment complexes
 - Encourage more Emory students to live in Decatur
 - High disposable income
 - Create a college town environment
- Re-develop brownfield properties or abandoned properties.
- There has been an increase in the number of small families moving to the area and the current housing stock does not fit the need. (the value of the land higher than the value of the existing house – encouraging tear downs and complete rebuilding)
- Avoid the example of the VA – Highlands
 - Overpriced homes
 - Overpriced businesses (due to overpriced rents)
 - All leads to a loss of economic diversity
- How do we sustain the entire city?

- How do we incorporate the views / needs of all city residents (across all economic levels)
- The process (government / bureaucracy) should not be / become a barrier to participation
- Can city support landlords who create affordable housing / apartments?
- Need more adult only swimming pools, services, and amenities for the elderly
 - Jitney Services – licensed by the city
 - Survival / wilderness training (for when things fall apart)

Question 2:

- With increases in the number of city gardens we need to use pesticides carefully – limited types, only certain times of day, etc.
- Protect green spaces by ticketing those who walk across them
- More focus on storm-water run-off and the use of landscaping chemicals that can pollute run-off
- Conduct a study of water run-off and encourage better run-off management by property owners
- Protect green space for walking, for farming
- Focus on noise pollution (emphasize the value of silence)
 - Leaf blowers
 - Unmuffled cars
 - Radios / car stereos
- Composting or other use for food waste generated by city schools (biomass energy)
- No Styrofoam

Question 3:

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

Question 4:

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

- Use city website for a city wide “conference call”

Question 5:

- More available senior / disabled housing (not necessarily assisted living)
- Develop resources for those with Alzheimer’s (or other disabilities) and for their caregivers
- Transportation resources for the elderly
- Walkability
- Senior day care (incorporate into recreation center like Fulton Co.)
- Create partnership between schools (after school programs) and senior orientated groups. Cross-generational exposure gets the young thinking about the issues of getting older and being older

Final Thoughts:

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

Wendy Watkins May 11, 2010

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

Laws around 40% greenspace

Increase education around how increasing parks and greenspace will increase property value

Figure out where we are in energy consumption and waste in Decatur and share numbers with community.

Educate on true time to walk places

Add 1 cent sales tax to buy old houses and take them down and create green space.

Improve Dearborn Park

Get people out of cars

Manage air space with airplanes==help to reduce air pollution

Make streets safer

More organized trash pickup-create community involvement- volunteer and get a t-shirt☺

Take more pride in city-increase trash cans around town and have kids from schools paint them.
Lower speed limits
Studies to better flow of traffic, traffic lights and commuting with bikes
Balance design of roads to include bikes and walking
Bike sharing
Education on environmental policies in place
Impact of idling in car
Tax benefits for hybrid/alternative fuel vehicles and special parking benefits
Increase number of bike racks
Bike valet at all festivals

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

Better public transportation for people who cannot bike and walk.
More time to cross street-alternative crossing lights
Traffic lights on raised crosswalks like in Seattle
Improve sidewalks
Ticket people that run crosswalks
Crosswalk at Marta stops
Educate on carpooling in schools
Use technology that is Decatur specific to support carpooling
Zip car back in Decatur
Increased awareness about taxi cabs
More pedi-cabs
Better mass transit
Have Decatur people lobby for marta
Decatur beltline

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

Empty nesters-affordable condos, affordable taxes, look at tax exemptions
Young families with children
Increase diversity of population
Increase high density condos that include 1, 2, and 3 bedroom condos
Encourage developers to build more responsibility-less parking spaces
Green building-increase LEEDS certification
Rooftop gardens

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

Define green for Decatur
Balance green requirement with diversity
Educate on how to save money in Decatur by decreasing energy use.
More efficient use of space to create more diverse housing without eroding current homeowner property value

Look at what needs to be done with single family homes.
More Rec Center offerings for general population
Dance hall in Decatur
Health care co-op
Healthy eating groups for kids and adults
Decatur Tri-atholon
Walk between green spaces/parks in city
Once a month close streets in Decatur for walking, biking eating connecting and shopping.
Food Revolution in Decatur
Bike riding classes for adults

Ted Katz May 11, 2010

Maintaining Value

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

Housing

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

- neighborhood by neighborhood performance standards for size and style of new housing / upgraded housing
- encourage developers to work with neighborhoods

How do we get from place to place

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

Environment

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

Healthy Living

- more walking and biking
- farm to school programs
- grants for Rec Center
 - kids run program
 - family activities
- promote push mowers
- have neighborhood competitions for healthy living
- too much car idling leads to poor air quality
- traffic lights should switch to flashing yellows after 11PM

- left turn signals will cut down on traffic going through neighborhoods (avery drive cut through, for example)

Ravenberg 05-11-2010 7 pm

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

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

Question 2: national environment

[missing page 3 of notes]

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

Question 3: transportation

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

Question 4: festivals/cultural life

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

Question 5: housing

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

Question 6: healthy living

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

Discussion unrelated to suggested questions

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

Thompson 05-11-10 9am

Thoughts from first session

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

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

Need more traffic calming that slows cars, not stop cars

Like roundabouts

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

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

Preserve City

Maintain African American population

Maintain and increase socio economic diversity of city

Require affordable housing as part of development process

Support public housing

Develop incentives to promote affordable housing

Natural Environment

Preserve the existing tree canopy

Improve air quality

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

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

Cultural Life

Provide support for all kinds of art

Create more localized, neighborhood specific gatherings

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

Utilize church facilities for art

Utilize vacant buildings and sites for artist space

Promote neighborhood theater events

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

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

Expand little Kroger on Commerce

Transportation

Remove parking from North McDonough by square and East Court Square

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

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

Current parking decks in the city seem unfriendly

Wayfinding signs blend in

Parking decks should connect to the square visually

Connect city through elevated gondolas

Provide a suspended bridge from parking decks to square

Healthy Living

Provide bicycle racks everywhere

Create a magnet retail project downtown

More farmer’s markets

More community gardens

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

Drivers speed less because speed limit is enforced

All streets in Decatur are 2 lane streets

More bicycle lanes

Challenges to Implementation

Money to do it all

Growing the tax base

Using a holistic approach

The railroad

Committing to an overall vision for the city

Providing opportunity for ongoing conversations

Finding a way to resolve conflicting interests

Making sure ideas are not lost

Poor relationship between city and county

State highway regulations

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

Cohen May 11, 2010

Recap of Session One

Things that are going well:

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

Things that are challenges:

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

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

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

- Update/upgrade school/recreation facilities (e.g., basketball hoops at local school in disrepair)
- Need variety in new businesses (not just new restaurants). For example, a bookstore.
- Maintain recycling and other programs
- More than 2 electronic recycling days per year
- Trash amnesty days where residents can dispose of anything
- Keep initiatives manageable so they get accomplished
- City ordinances to keep property attractive (lawns, broken cars) – Keep Decatur Beautiful

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

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

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

- More pedestrian space around Square. Shut down street, eliminate competition for parking spaces
- Eddie's Attic side of courthouse loop backs up with court-goers trying to get a close spot. Eliminate those parking spaces (and ones in front of Brick Store?)

- Make entry into courthouse parking deck easier to alleviate traffic on McDonough and cut down on idling cars
- Add a deck or two and eliminate small parking spot clusters
- Better advertise free parking at courthouse after hours
- Promote walking, less driving - *show* people where to park (signage)
- More trees/benches on MARTA plaza
- Some worry about push back from the city that current green space is not used enough in order to justify developing even more – need to prove demand
- Pedi-cabs
- Make it easier to get to all areas of Decatur (e.g., a fare-based trolley, link to other neighborhoods and Emory)

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

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

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

- Don't think people live and die in Decatur (some disagreement on this point)
- Will I be able to afford Decatur taxes on a retirement income?
- Attract young folks – to expand tax base and alleviate taxes for older citizens
- House values going up – becoming less affordable – how can young families afford to move in?

- Starter homes are endangered (people build on, less and less 2/1s in City, etc.)
- Smaller and more affordable homes will attract not only young folks (singles, couples, beginning families), but also empty nesters who wish to downsize, widows/widowers, etc. which will contribute age diversity to Decatur.
- Help older folks continue to afford their homes
- Continuing care, independent living, assisted living (nicely done, not a high rise or condo)
- Apartments and rentals
- There is the threat that with many in the same demographic moving in at the same time, we are boxing out new residents (will there be mass exodus/turnover).
- We are a victim of our own success
- Force builders to balance new expensive houses with affordable housing (e.g., for every \$700K home, ensure a \$200K house built)
- Remain attractive to young singles and young families
- Market City of Decatur as different from Greater Decatur. Perception that Greater Decatur is rough, dangerous.
- Annexing underutilized property to build affordable housing
- Live/work areas for artists (e.g., Castleberry Hills, Studioplex)

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

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

Allison Trendell May 11, 2010

#1. How do we sustain the city?

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

#2. How do we protect green space?

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

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

- More people work at home
- Promote safe alternatives to motorized travel.
- Wider sidewalks – Create double-wide sidewalks on one side of the street and bump the road over.
- Make one-way streets around the courthouse/city center (Ponce, W.Trinity, Church & Commerce)
- Implement traffic calming measures (i.e. brick crosswalks, Bulb-out like in Candler Park, "All Red" Crosswalk phases for pedestrians if someone presses the button)

- Ticker more often for people who don't brake at crosswalks when people are present.
- Continue to encourage kids to walk to school (Safe Route to School)
- Educate and follow-up on the rules for pedestrians and drivers
- Relay the message/get attention with folk art signs posted at crosswalks
- City should get control of traffic lights in Decatur – get a traffic engineer
- Clustered businesses on each side of town so people don't have to cross town as often.
- Add a shuttle/street car / tram like we have with the Fur Bus during Terrific Thursdays, Tour of Homes, etc.
- Explore further shuttle opportunities, shuttles for concerts, or a reliable paid-shuttle.
- We currently travel by: walking, car, bike, the Emory “Cliff Bus”, Pedi-Cab, Scooter

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

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

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

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

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

- Create live/learn retirement community with ASC, Columbia, Art Institute, DeVry – a community that partners with learning institutions. Continuing Education opportunities in retirement.
- Walking maps that indicate location of benches, water fountains and bathrooms, even on private property and in neighborhoods

- Continue to promote Safe Route to School and crossing guard program, need to educate community about it.
- More stores in downtown supplying daily needs would promote more walking
- Partner with medical centers (i.e. DeKalb Wellness center, Emory, Kaiser) for health seminars, screenings, etc.
- Get flu shot clinics available downtown
- **CHALLENGES in promoting “healthy living”:**
- **1) Lifestyle / culture**
- **2) Lack of time**
- **3) Participation (i.e. community involvement, coaches for teams, etc.)**

Group #13

Facilitator: Amy Hoying

Meeting Date: May 11, 2010

Meeting Time: 7-9 pm

Location: Navo Church, Oakhurst

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

Q6: Healthy Living

- Install bike lanes on most major roads in the city
- Sidewalk improvement to encourage walking (repairing cracks, adding curbs, cutting back overgrown vegetation to improve safety)
- Improved railroad crossings to get from north side of city to south side and vice versa for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improve building codes to improve building health, air quality, water conservation, and energy conservation
- Incentives for new construction and retrofitting existing buildings to meet/exceed federal standards for environmental conservation measures
- Healthy eating educational programs for children and the elderly
- Easier access to tennis courts (longer hours)
- Marked trails
- Incentives for building owners to create cultural venues downtown in addition to retail and restaurants
- Household waste disposal for toxic chemicals semi-annually
- Water quality improvement for local streams (eliminate pet waste contamination and building codes to move pet parks and buildings away from polluting local streams)
- Storm water control (permeable driveways, sidewalks)
- Park renovation and maintenance (organized volunteer school groups/neighborhood associations to help with maintenance)
- Beautification of walking routes leading to downtown area (lighting improvements, curbs, trees) and landlords forced to maintain store front areas

- Reduce car speeds through downtown area (make roads brick)
- Quality grocery store downtown
- Tax incentive to reduce cars per household
- Reduce intra-city car use through advertising alternate transport, providing safe infrastructure
- Make trails a destination as well as a conduit by adding artwork, nature trail signs, walking botanical garden, fountains
- Central fountains in the city (European model to encourage congregation, beautification)
- Community connections for work at home people: places to congregate and work, regular gatherings to engage this group by creating a “water cooler” gathering place)
- Gathering spots other than the square, more social urban spaces throughout the city
- Terminal vistas (roads ending in a landmark, fountain)

Q1: Sustainability and Growth

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

Q2: Environment

- Create a carbon neutral city
- Make the city a zero-waste zone
- Mandate composting, provide a pick-up service

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

Q3: Transportation

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

Q5: Housing

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

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

Nathan Soldat May 11, 2010

Last Session:

Ideas from someone who did not attend the first session:

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

Sustaining the City...(1.)

- We need to sustain our again population given high taxes and this economy. We need to make sure the needs of our elderly population are being met and that the cost of living is kept affordable
- Tax Base: There is a lot of non-profit tax exempt property. Examples of this are the football field, Saint Thomas Moore and Agnes Scott. Sometimes these properties actually due generate income and that income should be captured with some type of tax.
- Giving back to the community: The Brick Store gives back to the community with the Beer Festival. We need to encourage businesses to give back.
- Who owns the land above the Marta station in Downtown?
- Tax Exemptions: How long should a resident's taxes go towards the school system? It's ok to send your own kids through school and possibly a few other generations but there should be a limit to how many years or generations you have to support through the school system. There is differing opinion as to if tax exemptions or breaks would actually help sustain the City or not.
- Who decides tax exemptions?
- Taxes should be called taxes. Don't call things a fee, call them a tax.
- There needs to be service prioritization. The current citizen participation in the budget process is great. Decatur 101 is great. The county is considering storm water fees and we already have them which is good. One of the things we like about the City is the services. We need to have the funds to continue those services.
- Annexation: We need annexation to sustain the city. This would help increase the tax base and reduce the tax burden especially since the population projection shows the population going down. That being said there is the same number of properties and value so the population should not affect the tax base.
- Density: More density would help to share the burden but density should be done in a thoughtful way. The community doesn't want 20 story buildings. We want density without going over 7 stories. There are opportunities for more dense development such as the Trinity Triangle project.
- Local Businesses: Could they get a tax break if the owner lives in the City? We need to do more "shop local" campaigning to support local business. Ex. Austin/Ashville
- Home Businesses: Some of the business categories are prehistoric. Are we capturing all home businesses that exist? How do we know so that they have to get a business license?

DBA can help to keep track of home based business. Maybe an older person running a home business shouldn't be taxed the same way as younger professionals. There needs to be variations in the fees. Right now, by paying for a home business license and your property taxes you are getting double taxed.

Getting Around....(3.)

- Need more bike parking.
- Need more shuttles: Shuttles needed between grocery store and housing authority, In the past there have been shuttles between the housing authority-Allen Wilson and Clairemont Elementary School
- Need more bike facilities like bike paths and bike lanes
- Bike paths should provide safety to non bicycle traffic such as walkers
- Need carts that allow people to carry groceries home
- Emory and Owl Shuttles are good
- We need to map who is traveling where.
- Need more traffic calming. The crosswalks are a good start
- Need better designed roads: West Howard Avenue has a limit of 35 but the road is designed to invite faster speeds
- The intersection at Commerce and Clairemont is very difficult to cross
- Need to close Ponce de Leon Avenue to traffic between Church Street and Commerce Drive
- People need to be taught to stop at crosswalks
- Pedestrian crossing timers need to be lengthened to allow more time to cross for kids and elderly
- When streets are very wide they need a half way point to facilitate ease in crossing
- We need to target streets that need to be calmed
- Church Streets temporary parking due to park renovations has help to calm traffic
- We want Decatur to be known as the City where you "slow down"
- We need signage that designates Decatur as a pedestrian friendly community and asks motorist to slow down as they enter the City
- We need a true vehicular bypass around or through Decatur
- The railroad tracks are a very dangerous situation and the school crossing guards encourage students to cross the tracks. The police don't enforce track crossing issues. A tunnel under the tracks like Agnes Scott but by the high/middle schools would be good but very expensive
- We need to remove parking on East Court Square and North McDonough Street in front of the Courthouse and expand the square
- We have enough parking ramps but need more bike racks
- We need alternative transportation in the Clifton Corridor on Clairemont Avenue
- Decatur's commitment to complete streets will help to provide these above facilities

Housing.....(5.)

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

Other....Graffiti

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

The Environment...(2.)

- Gathering places need recycling bins
- There are concerns that the recycling doesn't really get sorted

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

Other....Schools

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

Joy Provost

Tuesday May 11, 2010 2 PM

Review Session I

Hydrogen powered buses – congestion

Session II

Ques #3 – How do you get from...

Traffic lights, timing, not good for pedestrians or cars

Ability to move around Decatur

Services within alternative transportation reach
Trams, buses, light vehicles for local access beyond MARTA
Continue pedestrian/bike friendliness, increase safety for both
More mid-block sidewalk crossings
Emory shuttle – extend services, tie in for above services
Railroad as an obstacle for pedestrians, cars & bikes
Additional crossing between Citgo and Renfro that is pedestrian only
Policies should consider beyond automobile
Enforcement of speed limits
Control of greenery to keep sidewalks clear
Tree lined sidewalks to encourage walkers

Ques #5

Enhanced, need based tax, income testing, mixed, ability to pay, not necessarily age, combined with residency length
Predatory lending
Other ways to increase tax revenue, income tax, max pay-out
Assessment issues, more careful, more creative, not tied to neighbor
Increased commercial for tax base
Entities that are not taxed
New construction/renovation causing assessment impact on unrenovated, demand
Tax on long time residents at time of sale
Maintaining diversity
Seniors do not want to be displaced from community, more options
Increased home health care

Ques #2 How do we preserve...

More alternative transportation
Reduce impervious surface
Age & capacity of storm water system
Challenge to keep development from encroaching what we consider our greenspace
Identification of important resources
Street sweeping, trash pick up more often
Compost pick up, encourage and promote
Reduction of trash
Encourage more recycling by providing containers
Centralized center for recycling
Conservation of water
Encourage rain water recycling
Best use of flood plains
Helping residents with storm water issues on their property
Naturalized greenspace protected
More pedestrian only areas
Encouragement of car pooling, business incentives, partnership with City

Ques #4 Overall environment...

Monthly major event – not just summer
Sponsored neighborhood associations to improve communication
Neighborhood gatherings to improve community/educate/input “Parks & Rec” (TV show) style meetings
Organize bicycle rides, designation rides, incorporate businesses
Cultural arts integrated and communicate
Adult education free, low cost. Decatur active learning, involve community and businesses
Educate/Advocate for programs for citizens both federal and state
Getting people to attend & volunteer, services & expertise, extract expertise from community, encouraging people that they have something to share
Continue with Volunteer Decatur
Good customer service/ make people feel welcome

Ques #6 Healthy Living...

Activities for those between kids & active adults
Staffed parks/activities manager, keys to “equipment shed”
Encourage community to volunteer, to conduct activities
Teen Center at Decatur Rec
Co-op with schools to expand active programs for community
Underutilized public facilities
Frisbee Golf
Use expanded on public ball fields
Inter-neighborhood leagues
More lenient usage of ball field, parks, etc.
More open air markets for fresh food and other goods
Fit station course for community, use bike path
Use asphalt for bike path for running & walking safety

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

Taxes
Affordable housing – increase rental properties
Challenges for young people and young families
Challenges for elderly – assisted living, cost, taxes
Attracting jobs to employ residents, so live & work in community
Aging in place – children live
Senior rec. center/living center
Work with developers for % affordable housing
Neighborhood opposition to affordable housing
Tax/rent control

Parking Lot:

Schools
Moss Park @ College Heights

