

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 3: Connecting to the community and sharing our gifts

Facilitator: Kyle Williams

Group: 48

Meeting Date: Thursday, June 3

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

1. Communication & common ground: How well are we connected?

We can learn from Hands on Atlanta's website how to successfully communicate volunteer opportunities

Decatur Focus is good, but sometimes is distributed after volunteer opportunities, events occur – dated material

City's website is not always updated or current

suggested “rolling” sign-up for volunteer opportunities and direct contact, communication from Volunteer Coordinator

Create and Distribute a “Decatur Handbook” for new residents – a “welcome wagon” geared to educate and plug-in new residents quickly

Volunteer Decatur email blasts not widely known or used

On-line volunteer sign-up form

physical posting of volunteer opportunities at City Hall and Public Library

Coordinate communication and advertisement of city activities, groups, volunteer opportunities with issuance of library card

City successfully utilizes signs and banners to advertise

Blogs/Open City Hall can be a good thing, but animity can be bad – electronic communications and blogs cannot replace the effectiveness of one-on-one communications and person-to-person meetings, conferences

Website, blogs, electronic communications get the conversation started, but must be followed up with person-to-person communications

City should involve businesses to host issue focused conversations, events

City should work more with groups, especially neighborhood associations to get conversations started

City could encourage “block captains” to involve individual streets, neighborhoods that then plug into larger groups/neighborhood associations

Seniors may not be as connected to community and technology

There is an absence in the City of interaction between the young and senior residents

YMCAs would be a good focus for the City to partner

City needs to inventory existing sources and build capacity, resources

Refugee outreach is missing and leads to self-reinforcing stereotypes

Disabled groups are not incorporated into the city

opportunities to outreach, communicate, recruit and partner with religious institutions – although there is a feeling from some within neighborhood associations that such partnerships violate separation of church and state

Deliver Decatur Focus to Companies, local businesses, MARTA, hospitals to reach non-Decatur citizens

Decatur should have an outdoor bulletin board

2. Contributions: What can I do as an individual, with groups and organizations, and with institutions in the City?

Individual:

volunteer, talk to neighbors, participate on a citizen board, vote, attend community and City meetings

Things missing or that prevent individual involvements: work commitments, minimum time commitments (should offer the opportunity for split volunteer shifts or shorter commitments), child care, food

What pulls people out? Building a safe environments, child care, time of the day (conducting City meetings at night is a positive and should be continued), weekends offer more time flexibility, a sense of urgency for the topic or issue, a “shame on me” or peer pressure if I don't participate, brief commitment of time

get local businesses to fund volunteer opportunity advertisement, event/festival promotion

Venue drives participation – a kids-oriented at ice cream parlors

meet people where they are – what are you interested in, what are your talents

Organizational:

Open up listing of groups, advertise groups

distribute information

balance w/ due diligence to make sure endorsed, listed groups are true groups

Wi-Fi, free computers to DHA families

Focus Newsletter – highlight, spotlight different groups

very poor focus on the Rec Center – double down on existing resources

if the City expends resources to cook up new groups it will deprive the city services, Rec Center

City could guide – keeper of knowledge, facilitate/connect groups

Central City Contact for groups and work to narrow/consolidate efforts/resources

Beyond neighborhood group – don't see other groups – don't know where to look

Light/litte groups – no heap, not so heavy topics/assignments

no group combines all age groups

City sponsored square dancing on the square

have a Rec Center open house to forecast upcoming events - “Rec Night” and involve non-City groups to gauge interest, connect groups and individuals, narrow resources

Continue to increase partnerships like Agnes Scott, Eddie's Attic, Churches, Boys & Girls Club

there is a concern from neighborhood groups about partnering with churches because of separation of church and state

schools should open up resources to the community – fields, gym, cafeteria (especially for seniors), career center

seniors could teach career classes and cooking in schools to bring together all ages and cultures

seniors in schools will bridge the gap

everyone needs a place to bring something, give volunteer – not just take, but contribute

there are plenty of places in Decatur to volunteer, but folks just need to know where to look

if everyone is a part it will draw others out

each neighborhood group should compile a listing of groups within their neighborhood and submit to the City

priority placement for vetted, validated, established groups – there has to be some type of standard

group open house – self advertisement w/ one sheet take away

city does a good job learning from experiences, is not proud or remove and is mission oriented

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 3: Connecting to the Community

Facilitator Name: Jill Jordan, Tiffany Brott

Meeting Date: 6/3/10

Time: 7pm

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

1. Communication & Common Ground

- Open City Hall good way to solicit information
- Ensure we figure out how to bring widening income gap into the conversation, e.g. college heights did this with parents.
- Use festivals to gather and discuss issues. Cxample have a tent and do a mini City Hall type gathering
- Have a single point of contact for citizens to air concerns and then route appropriately to ensure follow up
- Demonstrate impact of volunteering so people understand how they can make a difference. Results are an incentive to people at the
- Average citizen may not have to get involved.
- There seems to be a feeling of apathy in general – society as a whole (not meaning Decatur in particular)
- At the individual level it can seem overwhelming. How do we overcome that?
- Need to show what's in it for me.
- Need to have in person meetings to bring people out.
- Consider issues brought up through roundtables and ensure groups in place longer term to address
- Effective communication is key. People need to feel heard and be followed up with.
- City needs to be honest. People often distrust government. Lack of trust.
- Ensure we make decisions for long-term even if painful for the short term
- Consistently urge people o stay involved. Use this roundtable as a way to launch.

2. Contributions – Individual, Groups & Institutions

- Encourage others with issues and concerns to get involved. Tell your neighbor to call the City if they have an issue.
 - Need to engage lower income and more “senior” seniors, single parents etc. Go the extra mile.
 - Consider home visits and neighborhoods canvassing to ensure all have been given the opportunity to participate.
 - Do post cards to sign up people for City newsletter (electronic).
 - Have more interactive website where people can share and react.
 - City should take charge of abandoned and poorly maintained properties.
 - Drive connectivity so people understand how this impacts and get them excited
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- Bike Decatur is a great example of leveraging power of advocacy
 - Basketball group s - Neighborhood pickup games at Oakhurst Park. This is great and informal way to connect residents
 - NAVO – another example. The kids hang out after school. Even give out doggie biscuits.

- Neighborhood associations have lots of social activities but need to get them engaged in City issues.
- City police are active in the neighborhood associations, how can the City also engage.
- School board - DHS is a great example of tax dollars at work
- Fix the railroad crossings to encourage all types of residential flow
- Engagement is all about marketing and connectivity. Take the issues and map them back to the orgs/groups that have a “dog in the fight” – find the vested interest.
- Increase partnerships with academic institutions. Emory, DeVry, Agnes Scott etc.
 - Opportunity for satellite campus - jobs and opportunities for classes.
 - Transportation opportunities – The Cliff or street cars?
 - Composting! Tap into Emory’s program.
 - City Agnes Scott partnership for the Softball fields – need more things like this.
- City should do regular checkpoints/course corrections and updates on their progress for the Strategic Plan vs. waiting every 10 years.

Session 3 Notes

Group 50/51 June 3, 2010, 7 PM

❖ Review of Session 2

- Key memorable points raised include but are not limited to:
 - Need for commuter parking lots in the Clairmont Avenue corridor in conjunction with a local transit lines between Decatur and Emory/CDC area.
 - Need to consider joint actions between the City and other authorities on transportation and waste-management issues/projects.

❖ Question 1: How do we engage each other, communicate together?

- All residents should receive publications (print or electronic) such as “Decatur Focus” to be kept informed.
- City has various “volunteer” e-mail contact lists – these should be maintained.
- Various on-line blogs are good communication tools, especially if they contain links to other blogs.
- City website it is good. It could benefit from including links to websites/blogs maintained by various neighborhood associations/groups.
- It is beneficial for the City to offer many volunteering opportunities, especially in connection with various public special events/festivals
- For emergencies/warnings, in case of natural disasters like tornados, the “phone blast” system and audible sirens are very helpful and should be maintained/kept
- City-sponsored meetings with neighborhood groups (e.g. W. Ponce de Leon neighbors) to resolve specific issues are a good method for encouraging citizen engagement/official accountability: they can be a very positive experience.
- School/Education-related discussions can get very contentious. This is because the parents are very involved and vocal. There is a lot of passion exhibited by all.
- City appears to be responsive to its citizens: ideas/projects proposed are supported. However there seems to be a separation/disconnect between the City and the School Board. There is some impression that the School Board actions are politicized and not always in the best interest of students and parents.

❖ Question 2: Individual/Group/Institution action to make ideas become reality.

Individual Level	Group/Organization Level	Institution Level
Control of trees on one	Can citizens “interest” groups	Find ways to encourage local

property (cutting/trimming for safety reasons) should not be over-regulated by the City	be set up to lead the way on issues?	recycling businesses.
	We need to look at the way involvement by individuals/patrons can get businesses to do more recycling	Work with Emory and Agnes Scott on various mutually beneficial initiatives/programs
	Actual cost/market and incentive-driven changes as well as changes in recycling attitudes are needed to expand recycling. YDFM Recycling business is effective.	City should encourage the “Cliff” Emory bus stops in town, tied to commuter parking lots.
	Decatur is a very “grass-roots organizations” type of town. There is not as much chance that a business organization or entity can “railroad” a project through	Decatur should work with MARTA and City of Atlanta on working to increase ridership, especially for some key bus routes into downtown, midtown and Buckhead to encourage work commuting via public transportation
		Explore encouraging creation of Van pools for commuting to Emory, CDC, Atlanta
		The City needs to cooperate with regional authorities on issues affecting the town (railroad, state roads through town like Scott Boulevard)
		The city should look at other towns’ “neighborhood stabilization” programs for dealing with blighted properties – to encourage availability of housing/commercial real estate.
		The City should look at a program, such as the City of Atlanta has, for providing for affordable housing for its services employees, such as firemen, policemen, teachers – so that they don’t get priced-out of living in the town they work in.

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 3: Connecting to the community and sharing our gifts

Facilitator Name: P. Gilbert/J. Gregory

Meeting Date: 6/3/10

Time: 7-9pm

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

1- Communication & connection:

How well are we connected?

Open City Hall

Connections via Internet are good

Received info about Round Tables in multiple ways, which is good, and it was announced more than once

Wish there was a city newspaper

Decatur Focus is good

Need information booth (for visitors) in more prominent location than currently (in City Hall somewhere), staffed with volunteers

Decatur 101 is great for knowledge exchange, but needs to be held more frequently.

How well does the City communicate about difficult topics, where there is not or may not be agreement?

May need town hall meetings, good way to get face-to-face resolution on difficult topics; hold open meeting 1-2x year with open agenda, less structure than City Commission meetings

How do we get more people involved in public life – volunteering, serving on boards?

Through neighborhood associations

Offer child care so more people can participate

Offer incentives, e.g., coupons

“Emory Cares Day” is good model: one-day commitment for variety of volunteer activities, something for everyone in terms of what they can do, what they can offer. Similar to MLK service day but more varied.

Promote a “Volunteer of the Month”

Publicize citizen boards better; street banners in multiple locations to announce events, meetings

Opt-in to text messages with info from City; use multiple communication methods

Does the City have a Facebook page? If not, get one. Also use Twitter

Offer Web-based “live chat” sessions on a regular schedule with various City departments.

Who is missing out on the conversation? How can we get them involved?

Those not on the Internet

City could provide a mobile digital library, a “technology bus” that would go to people who need access and/or help learning to use Internet, digital tools.

What are areas most likely to spark debate in Decatur?

Annexation

Taxes – how to lower taxes but get more services

Schools

Bond issues

Growth: building codes, density, residential versus commercial uses (zoning)

2- How change happens

What can one person do?

Know one's neighbors
Be informed, stay on top of things, be aware of what's going on
Be involved
Participate in green solutions
Vote
Walk more
Attend/support community functions
Patronize local businesses
Invite others to be involved, to join in

What can organizations and small groups do?

Communicate with other groups, be aware of what each other are doing
Voice your opinions directly to local officials
Establish volunteer coordinators in neighborhoods: person who stays on top of things that need doing, people who need help, etc., and rallies neighbors to act
Establish "regions" by quadrant of the City
Create a register of groups in the City (example given was a church stewardship handbook, which lets members know all the ways they can get involved)
Welcome wagons in neighborhoods

What can institutions do?

City should invite representatives from institutions to participate in the strategic planning process, to pursue alignment of goals and sharing of resources
Partner with the City to offer free educational opportunities on variety of topics, e.g., using technology [colleges and universities]
Internships [colleges and universities]
City should reach out to institutions to find local talent that can support any or all initiatives
Churches: can provide social services for the homeless
Police department should make citizens aware of what they need in the way of support, e.g., neighborhood watches, citizen safety patrols, etc.
Need a council of churches, a council of non-profits

How many non-profits in Decatur can you think of? [moderator's question, out of curiosity]

Disability Link, Oakhurst Garden, Sugar Creek Garden, Woodlands Garden

3- What talents, gifts can you offer to the community? What commitments...?

We are here
Showing up
Conversation partner for people learning English
Continue to participate in this process

Decatur Strategic Plans Session 3

In what ways can we build and maintain common ground, even on difficult issues?

- Know your neighbors
- (Create) a directory of names and addresses. If everyone doesn't respond to email, knock on their door.
- Layout of neighborhood (is key), more sidewalks more communication
- Sponsor block parties
- Websites, Monday socials, movie night, margarita parties, book clubs, wine and cheese parties
- (Find things) to attract all ages
- Public disclosure, forums (for discussion), closure (around projects and initiatives)
- (Find) what we can all agree on
- Face to face communication early on (is important) i.e. school closings and other controversial issues
- (Create) block captains and use as source of information
- (Create) a phone tree or Google group

How can we get more people involved in public life?

- Promote how it affects them (in a positive way)
- Decatur 101-(create an) overview, have more than once a year, (create a) mini version for younger people
- (Continue to communicate) volunteer opportunities and non profits
- Talk about how activities build income and positive changes
- Advertise value of hours (volunteer)
- Incentivize involvement
- (Offer) homestead exemptions (for volunteering)]
- (Offer free) concert tickets

How can the city and citizens communicate more effectively?

- Consider Neighborhood Plan Units like Atlanta has
- (Not everyone in agreement on this idea because sometimes hard to get things approved, but others said it would give neighborhoods a more formal structure)
- Term limits
- New emergency call system (Code Red) works well
- Patty Garrett- (good communication) via website and letter

How can citizens communicate better with each other? How can we take better advantage of the internet? Who is missing in our communication and how can we include?

(Group felt like they had already answered first part of question)

Teens and young adults (may be missing)

Make it fun or rewarding

“Beer for Votes”

Part II

Individual Change: What can one person do?

- Educate that one person can make a difference
- Educate on process and where you can go to get changes
- (Make) environmental changes

Organizational change: What are some formal and informal organizations in Decatur?

Religious congregations, Neighborhood associations, Friday Rotary group, DBA, Garden clubs, book clubs, running clubs, walking groups, chat rooms, momma groups

How can organizations make a difference?

- Grass roots efforts
- Inet or face to face
- Nurture leadership and youth involvement
- Business owners: mentoring system
- City wide job bank

- Temp services

How can Institutions make a difference...what kind of partnerships?

- Decatur 101 for school age children
- Coordinate efforts more closely
- Break down silos
- More people involved in schools
- More qualified people in the seats (leadership positions)
- Long term planning
- Open up schools for community events i.e. summer theatre
- More volunteers in the school systems
- Update on current information
- Get people in the same room (i.e. community gardens, volunteers share resources, create synergy (among different groups))
- Incorporate non profits
- Help people understand they can make changes
- Churches-physical plant only 8 hours a week. Churches could allow parking
- We could all walk more
- Offer free bikes

How about you? How can you make a difference going forward?

- “Practice what you preach”-be a voice
- Donate land for community gardens
- Continued involvement in Strategic Planning
- Read outcomes (from Strategic Planning)
- Come (to meeting) in August
- Volunteer
- Talk it up, publicize, ask (drag) friends and neighbors

Steve Vogel

What are some Decatur ways to build and maintain communication?

2. Decatur Focus – add electronic distribution?
3. DeKalb Neighbor and similar publications – uneven distribution
4. Neighborhood newsletters – like ONA and WPN
5. City Commission meetings
6. Directed audiences – demographic, issue oriented, etc.
7. Town Hall meetings
8. Voice mail – incoming “hot line” and outgoing announcements (e.g Code Red)
9. Outdoor signs
10. Utilize schools and neighborhood associations to disseminate information
11. Utilize Active Living department and attendees

How can we get people involved in public life?

3. “There are those who want to be involved and don't know”
4. “There are those who don't know and don't want to”
5. Establish neighborhood and demographic liasons
 6. Furnish them with instructions, contacts and material
7. People will get involved if they feel threatened
8. Provide incentives for service – e.g. gift cards
9. Use block parties to spread the word
 10. Music
 11. Children's activities
 12. Free food
13. Use alternative means of communication – not everyone has internet
14. Focused neighborhood meetings on important topics – e.g. annexation
15. Ask people to get involved – one-on-one. Some people will respond to one-on-one while not responding to more general invitations
16. Community volunteer expo
17. Continued emphasis in Decatur 101
18. Activities for family involvement, not just individual – e.g. street cleanup
19. Dedicated column in Decatur Focus about volunteer opportunities
20. Target younger population keeping in mind that they may not have as much free time
21. Keep the schools in the loop about available opportunities

How can the City and its citizens communicate with each other effectively?

Facebook and Twitter

Blogs

Teleconferencing

Telephone information line

Kiosks

- Library and street

- Visitor and resident

- Interactive

- City information

- Directions

- Volunteer and service opportunities

- Q&A that would be forwarded to a staff person if necessary

Physical bulletin boards

City radio station

- Limited range broadcast

- Internet

Who is missing out in this conversation? How can we get them involved?

- Use social events to spread the word and ask for involvement
- Try to target information – many people say they already get too much information
- Share your own experiences and tell others about your satisfaction
- Make it easy to respond
- Decatur Focus articles and columns
 - Coming events
 - Volunteer opportunities
 - Feedback from previous participants
 - Event photos highlighting individual effort
- “Welcome wagon”
 - Coordinate with agents and management companies to identify newcomers
 - Newcomer's kit of information
 - One-on-one community knowledge mentor
- ASK ! One-on-one

What can individuals, organizations and institutions contribute to effect change?

- Individual
 - Contribute time and money
 - Resource conservation and preservation
 - Be a Decatur ambassador and marketeer
 - Provide constructive feedback
 - Listen to the community – report and inform

- Organization
 - Be a sponsor/supporter
 - Organize volunteers within the organization
 - Disseminate information to member/customers
 - ASK
 - Provide skills and expertise that may be unique to the organization and/or individuals
 - Provide appropriate political and lobbying support

- Institutional
 - Provide education on complex issues
 - Form partnership with organizations and constituencies
 - Apply for and use grants when available
 - Promote intergovernmental cooperation
 - Allow the use of facilities

What gifts or talents can you offer to the community? What commitments are you willing to make to the remainder of this process? How can you make the story come true?

- The volunteer database needs to be fleshed out.
 - Particular skills and knowledge available
 - Use "Welcome Wagon" to collect data
- Establish a Leadership Decatur
- Include Citizens-at-large in strategic planning meetings and presentations
- Citizen involvement in selection of strategic planning consultant
- Publish a list of action/noaction items derived from this process (nobody knows what the 1998 list was)
- Provide regular status updates in Decatur Focus and other means
- Publish a FAQ for each phase of the process

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session III: Connecting to the Community and Sharing Our Gifts

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

Meeting Date: June 3, 2010

Time: 7 – 9 pm

1. Communication and Common Ground. How well are we connected?

A. How are we communicating well?

Decatur Focus provides good information to residents

City government reaches out to neighborhoods when there are development issues that may affect them

Red Alert system provides timely warnings to residents

City Twitter feed provides good information updates

Sanitation service handouts given to residents

Crime report e-mail service

Decatur 101 course provides valuable information about City government

ING marathon traffic management information was communicated well

Festival banners along Scott Blvd. are good advertising for Decatur events

B. How could we communicate better?

City needs to do better in reaching out to businesses and churches regarding development and historic district issues

Mayor needs to update blog more frequently

City should do more blogging along lines of Decatur Metro Blog

City needs to do better job of providing follow up on results of various meetings (e.g., cultural arts task force), good at announcing them but not at providing information on results

City needs to redesign website to make it more user friendly (hard to search for information) and make sure is updated regularly

Website should include easily found online directory with contact

information for City departments and other services residents may need, directory should include description of what each City department and volunteer board does

Better signage for public parking is needed

More visible directory of businesses on Square and in other areas of City

Better control of flyers and other plastic wrapped papers thrown on resident's property

Remove or change "Come Back Soon" sign at East Ponce de Leon and Commerce

C. Who is not being reached or heard?

"Little old ladies" and other elderly residents

Lower income residents

Students at Agnes Scott, Columbia Seminary

Convention goers and other large group visitors

D. How can they be reached?

Work with churches and schools to reach elderly and students, work with senior living centers as well

Make sure Focus is delivered to renters as well as homeowners

Put Focus out for public distribution like Creative Loafing, etc., use libraries, churches, Holiday Inn

Put emphasis on getting information about Decatur and its businesses to convention goers and other large group visitors like DeKalb Convention & Visitors Bureau does, use new Tourism Board for this

Add "know your neighbor" segment to Focus and website to highlight individual residents

2. What can individuals do to promote needed change?

Obey city quality of life ordinances (e.g., don't park cars, boats, or RVs in front of House

Report violations of such ordinances to code enforcement

Start petition asking for needed change

Take advantage of opportunities for public comment at various community meetings

Be informed and involved

Communicate with city commissioners and other city employees about questions and concerns

Create or join neighborhood associations and other civic organizations

Believe your voice is important (City can help with this by reaching out to ask for input from all residents)

Use Facebook, Twitter, etc. to publicize to residents and non-residents Decatur events and news

VOLUNTEER!

Pick up trash off streets and sidewalks, trim branches that interfere with sidewalks

and other public right of ways

Know your neighbors, walk around neighborhood and make effort to meet people

Use public and other alternative transportation modes whenever possible

3. What can non-governmental organizations do to promote needed change?

Partner with each other, use members for power in numbers

Partner with schools and other government organizations

Communicate with residents about what they are doing

Invite City representatives to speak at their meetings about topics of interest

Raise money for improvement projects that City may not be able to do or afford

Get involved in elections to promote candidates that agree with

Partner with desirable City events as sponsors

4. What can institutions do to promote needed change?

Joint strategic planning for needed improvements so don't duplicate services (e.g.,
Agnes Scott and City for cultural arts center)

School system needs to do better job of communicating with citizens about what
is going on with schools and provide more opportunity for public input

School system needs to do better job of communicating with parents of new
students on deadlines, etc.

School system needs to do better job of promoting itself to community (e.g., test
scores, ranking), more easily accessible information on schools on website, some
members of group had heard schools were good but had not
seen any proof of that

Agnes Scott and Columbia Seminary need to be more involved with community
in working for needed change and providing information about their activities (e.g.,
Agnes Scott alarm test done with no prior notice to surrounding residents)

5. Comments about process

Need to give sufficient time to address questions, gives participants time to think
more deeply

Ambient noise level too high

One group member has been inspired to be more involved in the future, found
process empowering

Roundtable Session

May 13, 2010

Group 39
Kevin Spears, Facilitator

I. Communication and common ground

Ways to build and maintain common ground even on difficult issues:

- On contentious issues – insure that all stakeholders, neighbors etc are involved in conversation.
- Provide many opportunities for stakeholders to express their ideas and opinions prior to decisions.
- The conversation process should be initiated and managed by the city, not by a particular group of stakeholders.
- Meetings for conversation and discussion should precede meetings or hearings for decision-making.
- Conversations on difficult issues should start with a presentation of facts by the city.
- The city could provide neutral facilitators (perhaps even citizen volunteers) for these kinds of conversations.
- If citizens know in advance what is the process for engaging difficult issues, then they are more like to participate.

Ways to encourage all kinds of people to be involved in public life:

- For city-run boards and committees, there are already waiting lists, so it would be necessary to create more opportunities for involvement.
- Work intentionally to educate citizens about what boards and committees exist and what they do.
- Publicize the new 10-year plan heavily and highlight specific ways that citizens can assist or contribute.
- Publicize more aggressively the opportunities to serve.
- Use the Decatur Focus to communicate opportunities to serve on boards and committees, etc
- Actively recruit participants from neighborhood groups and associations.
- The medium for publicizing opportunities is an important consideration, too. Online information is good but there should be other media to reach diverse groups. Print information is still important. Person-to-person contact is important, too.
- Use neighborhood groups and associations to develop volunteer leaders.
- It would be great to have a local Decatur radio station as a medium for communicating to citizens about events and opportunities.

Ways that the city and citizens can communicate effectively:

- A weekly digest of city news and announcements – both in print and online
- Publicize other city news as well as the city publicizes festivals.
- Expand on the Decatur Focus. The Parks & Rec section is always huge. Why not do the same with other city information?
- The city could provide tools and support for establishing, growing and sustaining neighborhood groups and associations.
- The city could be more proactive in communicating or visiting with neighborhood groups and associations. Right now, it seems that they are responsive – but not proactive.
- The improved city website might include a section specifically for neighborhood groups and associations.
- Feature citizens with particular expertise (e.g., a teacher or a landscape architect) and tie their insights to broader city issues.

Ways that citizens can communicate with each other:

- The group recognized that the city already does a lot to foster communication among citizens.
- The grapevine is a key medium for citizen-to-citizen communication but what is often missing is the facts.
- Citizen-to-citizen communication might be improved if the city produced more information about particular issues. Access to facts helps reduce rumors.
- Keep churches in the information loop. They are key places where neighbors gather and talk.
- How about a network of community bulletin boards?
- How about a mini-version of Decatur 1010 – like a lunch-n-learn format?
- Convene periodic roundtables focused on particular issues. It's a great format so why limit its use to once a decade?
- A city-wide network of phone trees?

Who is missing out on this conversation:

- Teenagers
- Senior citizens – especially those who are homebound.
- Those who do not have ready access to the Internet, email etc
- People who live in low-income housing
- Non-property owners
- Local business owners
- Young professionals without kids

II. Contributions

Individuals can:

- Take the initiative to find out the facts on particular issues.
- Align their skills and interests with what is needed for the city's strategic plan.
- Take part in Decatur 1010 and the other citizen academies.
- Be proactive in sharing what they know about what is happening in the city.
- Be willing to put in time and commitment on an issue.
- Encourage and organize the groups and organizations where they belong to make contributions to the city's strategic plan.
- Teach their children how to engage with their neighbors and as citizens.

Types of organizations that can contribute in the public square:

- Nonprofits
- Performance groups
- Book clubs
- Garden clubs
- Other affinity groups (e.g., running groups, neighborhood moms)
- Neighborhood associations
- Business associations
- Friends and neighbors who socialize regularly as a group
- Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts
- Boys & Girls Club
- School clubs and groups
- Civic clubs
- Sports clubs for kids/teens
- Networking groups
- Blog communities
- PTAs
- After-school programs
- Gyms
- YMCA

Organizations can:

- Formally ally with the city plan in areas that overlap with their mission.
- Encourage members to be involved in public issues and initiatives.
- Take their work and activities into the public square (e.g., a performance group can practice or perform in public areas).
- Offer "open to the public" events and opportunities.
- Think about ways to contribute to regular annual events in the festival.
- Adopt an aspect or facet of the ten-year strategic plan for the group or organization to work together on over time.

Institutions can:

City Schools of Decatur

- Do many of the same things that organizations can do.
- It seems that the schools could work on improving communications. They can also communicate to school families about city issues beyond what is immediately relevant to the schools.
- Be proactive about offering space for use by the broader community (e.g., the new auditorium at DHS).

Colleges/Universities

- Agnes Scott already does a lot to participate in public life in Decatur.
- Could the Art Institute be more engaged with children and families in the city.
- Could DeVry host a career academy for children and youth?
- It would be great to have closer ties with Emory's cultural arts programs.
- Could Emory bring cultural programming to sites in Decatur? Programs in the performing arts, public health, business, education.
- How could Decatur be a regular partner in Emory's broad range of research? The city could be a site for projects and studies. Perhaps a site for business incubation projects by Goizueta.

Religious Organizations

- The group recognizes that churches in Decatur already make great contributions to public life.
- Offer their spaces to outside groups.
- Publicize opportunities to be involved in civic issues to their members.
- Have a staff person or member serve as a liaison to the city.
- Choose one thing that they can do to make a difference in their neighborhood or the city as a whole.
- Play an active part in conversations about downtown parking (downtown churches, specifically).
- Create a community garden.
- Provide services that support civic events and initiatives – e.g., parking, childcare.
- Churches can do many of the things named under “Organizations.”
- Host “open to the public” events – e.g., First Baptist hosts the electronics recycling days and offers parents’ night out periodically.

DECATUR ROUNDTABLES 2010 SESSION 3: CONNECTING TO THE COMMUNITY AND SHARING OUR GIFTS

Facilitator Name: Fred L. Cavalli
Meeting Date: June 3, 2010
Time: 7:00 pm-9:00 pm

PRELIMINARY * Upon review from the last session, it was agreed that an idea should be added under the topic of “How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water, and green space?”. The idea is for the city to develop a biodiesel production facility and convert all city vehicles to use biodiesel fuel.

1) Communication and Common Ground: How well are we connected?

- Decatur Focus is good but only monthly
- Neighborhood listserves
- www.decaturga.com
- Indecatur.com and other local websites?
- Oakhurst Neighborhood Association Newsletter
- Winona Park Newsletter
- AJC Metro section
- School and Church newsletters
- Civil Defense warning, robocalls, weather sirens
- Decatur 101 Class
- Volunteer Decatur – Leigh Ann Harvey is fantastic!
- Social networks—Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
- Can a city-wide listserv be developed and moderated by the city with areas of specific interest?

2) Contributions: What can I do as an individual, with groups, and organizations, and with institutions in the city?

- Further education
- Register and vote
- Pick up trash
- Report problems to appropriate authorities (tree down, pothole, broken parking meter, etc.)
- Walk more
- Bike more
- Shop locally
- Eat locally
- Welcome new neighbors into Decatur activities, processes, Boards, etc.
- Stay informed
- Volunteer

3) Organization

- Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs
- Neighborhood associations, garden clubs, example—adoption and improvement of common spaces like gardens in traffic islands
- Decatur Business Association and related activities on The Square—concerts, Beach Party, Beer and Wine Festivals, Holiday Tour of Homes and Garden Tours
- Friends of the Library
- Friends of the Cemetery

4) Institutions

- Clairmont Oaks, Inc.—participation in Tour of Homes and integrate senior living community and through activities on The Square such as concerts, etc.
- Clairmont Elementary Holiday Marketplace
- High School Recycling Day

- Walk and Roll to School
- Agnes Scott—facilities shared with high school and venue for various Decatur activities
- Emory Cliff Bus—free
- DEAM (Decatur Emergency Action Ministry)
- DCM (Decatur Cooperative Ministry)
- 25+ Churches
- Our House
- Hagar House
- Mary Gay House
- DeKalb History Center
- Solarium
- MARTA
- Local and national banks serve as good corporate citizens providing financial sponsorship and staffing for various activities and festivals around town