

Decatur Roundtables  
Session 3  
June 1, Tuesday, 2-4PM  
Facilitator: James Brewer-Calvert

**What in our past conversations moved you?**

Closing downtown streets for pedestrian traffic is an exciting idea  
Overall similarities with other Roundtables  
Trams  
Lowering taxes after 65  
700 citizens participating in Roundtables

**How do you feel connected? Who is not connected?**

**Individually:**

Information is available on city website  
Decatur website “page at a glance” of opportunities  
“Decatur 101” – good; time commitment required  
Decatur Focus – aura of connectivity  
City bars/pubs have loyal clientele  
City’s nature is to be welcoming, hospitable  
Why don’t 75% of us vote? Interest lacking/apathy  
Folks not connected are those who don’t want to be

**Organizationally:**

Parkwood Garden Club  
Decatur Gun Club  
Blogs, Emails, Bulletin Bd networks  
Quick network of concerns, like wild coyotes  
How about a Decatur APP?  
How about a Decatur Knights of the Roundtables? A council of elders?  
Elders sharing wisdom, open air conversations and insights  
Not connected includes those who are too busy, older gen., young families with too much to do  
Folks w/out access to info  
How about “elder hostel” classes – bring info to the people  
Library and churches can help to bring info to people

**Institutionally:**

People want to be asked to participate, but never bamboozled  
Citizenship = awareness and accountability and activity  
DeVry and Holiday Inn are super values  
Utilize DHS new venue as arts center, local theater  
Communicate Emory and Agnes Scott opportunities for citizens  
Promote Center for the Book  
Invite churches to join Decatur Business Association  
DHS Senior Projects connect students, mentors, evaluators  
Is Decatur school system too top heavy?  
Utilize outside business not connected, like the cable company

Strategic Planning Session 3  
Tuesday 2-4 PM  
Wendy Watkins

Ideas that resonated from last session:  
Common calendar for all Decatur events  
Atlanta streets alive type event

Question 1 a-

Town hall meetings/small group gatherings  
Neighborhood groups  
-leaders from each group gather together a few times a year.  
Conflict Resolution System

Continue to have open communication from city to citizens  
Blogging

1b

Flexible opportunities for volunteers with tight schedules  
Better calendar for meeting schedules for citizens to learn about opportunities  
Welcome packets with opportunities to participate in the city  
Website

Social Media

Clear definition of board/commission positions, city government

Civic Education

Share success stories from being part of the city commission

Guidelines for volunteer organizations

-team org.

-time involved

1c-

Better use of website

On time delivery of Focus

Phone Tree

Email tree

Neighborhood Liason

Decatur GA.com banner posted @ Avondale

Sign post banners with website info

1d-

People without email

Neighborhood liason

Get kids involved

Decatur 101 for kids and model government (schools and city)

Public officials attend block parties

Booth at city festivals with info about cities

Sell t-shirt and city paraphanelia

2a-

Do not litter

Take marta

Say hello to your neighbors

Welcome new neighbors  
Support the kids-interact with them  
Involvement of youth groups (relationship with police department)  
Communicate more success stories of what people accomplish  
2b-  
Citizens partner with non-profits to provide service to community  
Book club-literary groups  
Garden club-community weeding  
Runners-paws and humane society  
Partner with Rec Center, groups, and knowledgeable people for kids i.e. car repair, baking, sewing. Seniors share skills with kids.  
2c-  
City wide-all churches preach the same theme and then launch a community program around that theme.  
Recycling contests  
Influence change with Dekalb County within Decatur  
Every business is a member of DBA  
3-  
Social media / web-calendar, advertise, promote  
Organizing, planting  
Make sure what you desire is in strategic plan  
Make sure city asks for volunteers to implement plan at August meeting  
Involve youth  
Share information  
Problem Solver

Ted Katz and Allison Trendell  
06/01/2010

How do we communicate and involve others and find common ground?

- Decatur Focus
  - Decatur neighborhood alliance
    - outreach and expand the alliance
  - Publish options
    - point/counterpoint on divided issues
  - City employees should come into neighborhoods and present opportunities for community involvement
- \*\*\*Government approaches community\*\*\*\*
- Expand Decatur 101 program - run more frequently
  - Alternative communication
    - webcast for those who cannot attend commission meetings
    - online meetings where people can submit questions
    - post signs in each neighborhood announcing meetings
    - host meetings in various locations like institutions (schools, churches) or outdoors

Who is missing out?

- People who don't want to participate
- Need to motivate people with
  - issues (single issue meetings)
  - food
  - childcare provided
  - social events
- Government should approach citizens
  - going into neighborhoods
  - city hall meetings can be intimidating
  - neighborhood gripe sessions
- Volunteering is a great way to get involved
  - "Advertorial" of what volunteer opportunities exist
  - Volunteer fair w/ good bands and good food
  - volunteer tents and events
  - incentives -- reduce city taxes for volunteer hours
  - special version of Decatur license plate for volunteers
  - merchants donate gift cards for volunteers
  - public recognition on website -- hometown heroes

Greatest opportunity for agreement / disagreement?

Disagreement:

- not in my backyard issues
- commercial / residential clash
- There should be communication in advance
- Enforcement of ordinances

Agreement:

- proud of Decatur
- comfortable / liveable
- traffic needs help

How can individuals / organizations / institutions get involved?

Individuals:

- Volunteer
- Attend the meetings
- Contact city representatives
- Read city literature
- be a liaison to your community
- bring friends to meetings
- introduce a neighbor to Lee Anne for volunteering
- arrange neighborhoods get together
- post on blogs
- be an expert / be passionate
- involve organizations outside Decatur to learn best practices
- patronize local businesses

- solicit businesses
- network for the greater good
- plant something
- conserve water
- recycle / don't litter
- walk, don't drive

#### Organizations:

- Exist, support and expand
- find common interest
- volunteer together
- spread information -- keep the group in the know
- tap into existing "active" culture
- encourage others outside your demographic to participate
- volunteer group forum
- partner with institutions (i.e. in marketing)
- leverage existing organizations and institutional infrastructure (i.e. newsletter and word of mouth)

#### Institutions:

- Cooperate with organizations and individuals
- advertise and network within existing organizations and their networks
- Brand Decatur --- public relations and commercial development --- attract new businesses
- business partnership with school classes
- sponsorships (like Dekalb Medical sponsors the book festival)
- coordinate volunteer groups
- better communication about community needs

deSilva      06/01/10      2pm      Group 7

#### **From Prior Sessions:**

Allow churches to participate in recycling program even though they do not pay the taxes (or fees) required to be part of the recycling program

- Allow for churches to pay a sanitation tax / recycling fee
- Allow for waivers during large events (as is being done at Oakhurst Presbyterian on a small scale).

#### **Communication:**

- DecaturNext blog
- Decatur Focus – useful, but not timely
  - Timeliness is real issue since some of the information in the Focus takes place before the paper is delivered to all residents.
  - Submission deadlines are too early (two months or so in advance of each issue) making it difficult for some groups to submit notices

- Use a telephone system (automated – similar to pre-recorded campaign info during elections) to alert residents about emergencies.
- Question: How do we educate citizens about ways to be involved?
  - Cannot rely exclusively on the internet (or email)
  - Portions of the population are not tech savvy (elderly, low income)
  - True at the city level and at the neighborhood level
- We need alternative methods of communication
  - Fine tune the Decatur Focus
  - Check for other ways to ensure a timely delivery of the Focus
  - Create a localized conference call – done on a neighborhood level (based upon address information)
- Barriers within our community
  - Online vs. offline residents
  - Long term residents vs. new arrivals
  - Income
  - Age
  - Race
  - School system – residents with children in the school system and those without
  - Those who do not want to participate period
  - Those who do not want to participate but still want to be informed (and have a voice)
- Decatur Focus should separate out the items that have deadlines or are city news from the other content (stories, ads, etc.)
- Cost effective roundtables
- Getting a voice from those in housing authority
- Communication and coordination problem between city and the housing authority
  - Need more staff level work – interaction
  - Need more communication with housing authority residents
- Increase and improve our volunteer efforts
- Use volunteers to improve our communication issues
- Difficult for some people on limited income to take the time to participate or especially work to help organize an event
- People need to see that their participation has a “tangible result” – believe they matter.

**Individuals:**

- One person with an idea – building a core group of active individuals (Decatur Preservation Alliance started with the idea of saving the train depot).
- Show how it can benefit the larger community (dog parks, Oakhurst Community Gardens)
- A request for adult only pools (Boys & Girls clubs, East Lake)
- A focus group of those who do not get involved

**Small Groups / Institutions:**

- Small groups or businesses can sponsor “tea & coffee” conferences – roundtable discussions that benefit the city (but not paid for by the city)
- Small groups can organize to help change culture (ie group to help with traffic management where drivers are designated as local pace cars – drive at speed limit, with signage, decals)
- Neighborhoods and organizations getting together to help with traffic control – requesting traffic calming devices, etc.
- Oakhurst Garden has programs with schools – create change through the schools / rec programs
- Church gardens
- Partner with scouting groups – especially Eagle Scouts (Woodlands, Solarium)
- Tapping into private sector – partnership with local businesses
- Decatur Farmers Market – city should help support DFM and help it grow (keep its expenses low)
- Getting more participation from Agnes Scott College
  - Joint composting program
  - A community day on campus – open house with activities geared towards residents
  - Joint sporting events (having Decatur teams – school & city – play briefly during half time of college event)
  - City swim program at ASC
- DeVry
  - Open house events to introduce students to city and vice versa
  - Volunteer potential in student base
  - Help the school explore the benefits of moving to (downtown) Decatur
- City should be looking for corporate citizens: partner with local corporations or locally minded corporations (ie Kaiser P.)
- Non-profit Involvement
  - Senior connection for Meals on Wheels
  - Notice in Decatur Focus
- Resources for aging population. Create city ombudsman solely for this issue (volunteer vs. paid staff?)
- Housing and Services for aging population
  - Jitney service
  - Not clumped together (isolated) – but rather integrated within entire community
  - Partnership between after school programs and elderly programs
  - Matching program between seniors in large homes and young families in small homes (housing swaps)

### **Final Thoughts:**

- Convert parking circle in front of Brick Store to brick courtyard tied to Marta plaza.
- Pedestrian only plaza on Ponce from Commerce to Commerce

## Session 3

### 1. How well are we connected?

**Decatur Focus** available online and through mail

Website but needs an RSS feed

Volunteer Decatur emails are great; people who have volunteered in the past get them

Decatur 101 eblast are great for those who took Decatur101

Members of neighborhood associates get info, it would be great if all associations had eblast for info from City Schools of Decatur

Well connected through social/school events, always bump into the same people

The city should silicate volunteers for boards, committees, and task forces, this way people who may be interested but don't know about the opportunities could get involved. This would provide a cross section of people ... use non-profit/neighborhood list serves, and schools newsletters to seek volunteers for this type of civil engagement

Provide a booth at special events with a person to engage people in participating in local government outside of Volunteer Decatur

Have a multi purpose list and a housing authority eblasts, include them in more neighborhood association stuff

**Blogs** Decatur Metro and indecatur do a good job with the moderator and staying up to date with what is going on. Most everyone goes to these sites for up to date info

**RSS** for hot topics- land use, when hot ticket issues are happening people want to know about it before it affects them.

How can the city and its citizens communicate effectively?

**More Face to face...monthly town hall coffee chats or other opportunities to know each other outside each person's typical social network or debating issues via blogs. The coffee chats should not be focused on specific issues**

Citywide block party, and advertise that city provides funds for these types of neighborhood activities

Sister city idea but have sister streets that cross neighborhood boundaries (Example Oakview and Lamont become sister streets)

More neighborhood-to-neighborhood activities/opportunities like softball tournament, volleyball, bowling, or badminton tournaments

Who is missing in these conversations?

Singles- put playbook out at restaurants and shops so people can pick it up and read it...when your out eating by yourself people like to pick up free newspapers and read it---sort of like people used to do with creative loafing

Have new arrival socials at town hall for those new to COD monthly a variety of sponsors could provide little snacks, coffee, etc

More keener activities with variety

Have a city volunteer appreciation day with an expo or fair

Do speed dating, but for volunteers

Community book clubs by the city. Before the book festival with books from authors who will be participating...city wide book circles and get volunteers to run them.

2.

Individual change:



Be fact sheet researcher for city on issues that people are interested in and sometimes misinformed  
Volunteer to be objective  
Be present show up  
Try more activities that are interesting  
Knock on neighbors door and meet each other  
Help city by volunteering to survey open street map, or survey about trees  
People will step up and lead organizations with framework from city (like round tables gave framework for facilitator)  
Talent survey...what are your talents what can you do

#### Organizational change:

Book clubs for all that promote all-inclusive adults...like the popular ones for kids at little shop  
Be more **face-to-face**  
Bike groups provide tours of city and education  
Theater group..we need one  
Have trivia nights- brings people together not just in bars but other places...Dec Rec?  
Dancing night, not a class but a dance night ...salsa night, square dancing night  
Encourage being green- have go green community action groups  
Green connection champion  
Connect more neighborhoods to one communication umbrella

#### Institution change:

Schools should report to the city and city should report to schools on a regular basis (more than once a year), need to see partnering. A representative should come to each monthly meeting to give updates on what's new  
Institutionalize communication between school, city, and community.  
Provide a monthly column in the Focus that is required not sent in on a random basis. The annual insert is nice, but it would be better to have a column from central office as a regular part of the Focus  
Agnes Scot should have more regular spot in focus as well. Outreach both ways. The city can give info to new students and A.S can give city info about their community...Columbia Seminary as well  
Agnes Scott could sponsor book clubs in community  
College activities- not like Athens, but get the young to spend money here and not always on drinking  
Churches could provide more activities to youth and seniors  
Institutions should encourage green by being green- example solar panel at holy trinity and schools construction not green,  
Churches expand network to non-church activities ex- book festival, but they could lead the going green campaign  
County and city relationship that is understood and known by citizens. Do more projects together. Start small to promote co-existence among county and city....Example city folks volunteer for city events but county? Maybe green initiatives?  
Start a youth service volunteer program with LeahAnne. Youth participates at MLK projects but provide more opportunities for them to volunteer

### **Group #13**

Facilitator: Amy Hoying

Meeting Date: June 1, 2010

Meeting Time: 7-9 pm

Location: Navo Church, Oakhurst

#### **Communication and Common Ground: What the city/community does well:**

- Decatur Focus
- Playbook for the Decatur Rec Center (summer camps, park hours, Keenagers classes)
- Neighborhood Association websites, email distribution lists keep communities informed
- Police dept crime analysis reports via email
- Decatur Metro blog for community news
- Event advertising signs posted on W. Ponce
- Red Alert weather calls and tornado sirens
- Restaurants post upcoming city events
- Leeann Harvey's volunteer newsletter
- Decatur Business Association involvement in city fundraising and event sponsorship
- DeKalb County library special events with authors
- Season of Giving Children's Xmas program involves churches throughout the community to sponsor children and seniors in need
- Decatur 101 provides citizens with an opportunity to learn how the government works
- Schools 101 does the same
- Decatur Historic Preservation Society and Cemetery tours provide history for the community

#### **Communication and Common Ground: What the city/community needs to improve:**

- Post Decatur Focus online prior to the start of the month it is for (often magazine arrives after events have already happened)
- Lack of responsiveness from city officials can be frustrating and discourage citizens from becoming involved in community improvements
- School handouts are a good way to inform the community and get involvement (both public and private schools)
- Church bulletins are another possible way to reach community members who are not currently active (elderly)
- Link to school websites and neighborhood association websites from the City of Decatur homepage to inform citizens without children about upcoming school sporting events, concerts, community events, etc.
- Electronic billboard on city hall and posters in local businesses about upcoming meetings and events
- Ticker on city website listing upcoming city hall meetings and events
- Decatur Minute link from city website (more visible)
- Year round updates from city commissioners to their constituents (regular emails and/or frequently updated websites)
- City meeting agendas posted in advance, minutes online (both easy to locate)
- Better communication of street cleaning schedules so that cars can be moved

- City booths at community block parties with hand-outs informing citizens of how they can get involved in community improvement, solicit feedback about how well they are doing in reaching out/informing community members
- Welcome packet sent to new residents with pertinent city information
- Bulletin boards at parks or fire departments listing upcoming community events/meetings
- Communication with colleges and technical schools about volunteer opportunities and city events
- Volunteer credits given to students who do volunteer
- Meet and greet sessions with city commissioners
- Leverage non-profits that serve those in the community that are least involved (refugee groups) to communicate community events/opportunities for involvement
- More visible and up to date online list of businesses in Decatur to encourage more local shopping
- Use volunteers to deliver newsletters in their community, solicit feedback from residents about city communication effectiveness
- Carpe Diem, the DHS newsletter should be available to all residents of the city (encourages support of the schools, informs residents about school events)

### **Individual Change**

- Be an ambassador of what you do know and share it with your neighbors
- Challenge nay-sayers to participate
- Walk more, use alternative transportation
- Contact city officials about potential problems, opportunities for improvement
- A blog with daily/weekly topics related to the strategic plan that invites citizens to participate and voice frustrations with responses given by city officials about progress made in that area or plans in place to improve the situation
- Motivation to encourage more participation (follow Leeann's method for requiring individuals to volunteer at smaller events before they can volunteer at the larger events)

### **Types of Groups and Institutions in the city:**

- Church groups
- HOAs and neighborhood associations
- Running groups, bike groups
- Play groups, sports teams
- Schools (public and private), PTAs
- Decatur Business Association, Oakhurst Business Association
- Police department, fire department
- Hospital and medical centers
- Colleges and technical schools
- Nonprofits
- Gardening (Oakhurst Community Garden) and book clubs

### **Opportunities for Organizations/Institutions to be involved in change:**

- Sponsorship opportunities for groups (planting, fundraising, beautification)
- Bike and running groups could map paths, provide a website with distances and elevation to encourage alternative transportation
- Businesses could sponsor metered spaces in garages

- Visible fundraising barometers to indicate progress towards project goals, sponsored by individual businesses
- Link a group's involvement to their interests/mission to get more community involvement, lighten the load on the city workers
- Walking/running groups deliver the Decatur Focus
- Bike groups sponsor bike racks
- Bike racks created by local artists (sculpture art with functionality)
- Dog park upkeep sponsored by pet groups
- Streetscape cleanup could be done by gardening clubs, neighborhood associations
- Hold idea/brainstorming sessions with local groups to gauge interests/needs of that area of the city
- Liaisons for community groups to make sure they have a say in city plans (representatives for local groups), breaks the planning down into more manageable chunks related to certain areas
- Encourage local groups to participate in DHS Senior Project Judging
- Art groups can design event communications
- Landlord involvement and accountability (commercial and residential)
- Partner with Avondale to clean up the strip between the cities
- MARTA can be used to communicate upcoming events, special event ticket pricing for parking at Avondale and East Lake and riding into the city
- CSX partnership to make better use of the green space
- YMCA partnership, communication of events (discounted membership for city residents)
- Communication with other Atlanta neighborhoods (Kirkwood, Candler Park, Lake Claire, Avondale) to co-sponsor events/projects, advertise local businesses
- Neighborhood fundraising challenges to sponsor projects in the area (Avondale vs. Decatur)
- Partnership with TREES Atlanta to maintain and replace trees
- Advertise in the DeKalb County courthouse about Decatur events, places to eat for jurors, make the Decatur Focus available in the magazine racks
- Get more small business owners involved by reaching out to them through contact info provided when applying for business license
- Ads for events on the Decatur WiFi landing page
- Partner with other large corporations with a presence in the city (AT&T, Kaiser)
- Put the city website address on the water tower

**Cohen**

**Tuesday**

### **Communication and Common Ground**

Focus (Decatur newsletter) – the fact that it is mailed to everyone is a good thing

- Perhaps ask citizens if they want to receive by snail mail or email (so everyone is captured, and some money can be saved)
- Not everyone checks the web, or on a regular basis (might need notices that new info is posted and remind people to check)
- Or continue to send Focus and then email people if there are updates in between

Code Red – good example of communication

Open City Hall

Open Forums – publicize so everyone can participate

**How to build community:**

- People need to know they are heard
- Someone should be responsible for a reply (eg. Community garden – unanswered questions may have been delegated but not followed up by delegator)
- We build common ground in Decatur well – likely because we are small town and everyone is accountable to each other (not anonymous); have to be nice to your fellow neighbors, but OK to disagree, as long as you are heard (a strength to disagree)

**How do we get more people involved:**

- Same people volunteer over and over again
- Decatur 101 – expand syllabus to include the issues we face
- Piggyback on popular volunteer opportunities (as an incentive – for example, you can't volunteer for Decatur Beer Fest unless you've volunteered for something else in the year; replicate that policy)
- Expand mailing list for volunteers (several in our group did not know there was a mailing list for volunteers) – send opportunities to everyone
- Other incentives to volunteer – bring grant money to Decatur or volunteer and get a break on your taxes
- Zoning – keep a variety of citizens (apartments, townhouses, condos, single family houses) brings in different walks of life who are interested in volunteering for different things
- Let groups volunteer to build something so there is a permanent testament/reminder of their work (structure, sidewalk, plantings – something they can come back to and say “I did that.”)
- Decatur Day (like MLK Day)

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

Re-design the website – too difficult to use (RSS feeds – so you can get an update when the content changes)

One website for everything (Social events, festivals, Oakhurst, clinics at restaurants)

Welcoming Committee – introduce new residents to website(s), other resources. Use Realtors and Leasing offices of apartment complexes. New Resident Orientation – local businesses can help (coupons?), include in Decatur 101. Put info in Focus

Banners announcing events – build on idea and have an interactive kiosk downtown (where can I find an Italian restaurant in Decatur? Who is playing at Eddie's Attic? – good for visitors too).

Code Red

**How do we create ways for citizens to better communicate with each other?**

Festivals, Oakhurst Jazz nights

Neighborhood blogs to move citizens to action

Referrals on blogs (for local contractors, etc.)

Yahoo Message Groups

**Who is missing out on this conversation?**

Older citizens – may not be internet savvy. Send folks door to door?

Senior Activity Groups (Rec Center)

Youth – go to schools – get kids’ ideas

Kids *may* plug folks into issues more (until you have kids, might not be as involved in your community) – if this is true for some individuals, how do we get other folks invested?

Attract non-kid demographic too; Schools such an impact in Decatur, need to draw *everyone* in

### **What could one person do to make progress on a particular issue?**

Badger City Hall

Rally others, grassroots, neighborhood, clubs

We already do it in Decatur – look at the individual (non-chain) businesses (e.g. Brick Store, Little Shop of Stories, Oakhurst Community Garden, Twain’s Microbrewery), history of individuals making a difference (Book Festival). We are entrepreneurial, start-up.

Wachovia Project – shows that individuals have as much power as an organization or institution.

Can mobilize individuals when have “common enemy.”

### **Organizational change**

Neighborhood organizations

MLK Day

Decatur Preservation Society

Rotary Club – scholarships, DO stuff, renew interest in these organizations

Business Association

Have Focus do a spread on these groups – what do each of them do?

Scouts

### **Institutional change**

Churches – Causes (e.g., refugee), Pre-K, Charities

Agnes Scott

Seminary – outreach

MARTA –

- beautify – made plaza pretty
- needs our cooperation – need to work with other groups to keep alive. Make private?
- We have stake in MARTA with so many stations

May have difficult communication between City of Decatur, State, County, etc. when services overlap. Fight over resources, who pays, may make different decisions (e.g., libraries).

Technology cooperative between City and other institutions

### **Other issues we might not have talked about or want to re-iterate**

Non-synced traffic lights

Bring in a non-beer bar

Some folks avoid downtown to avoid strollers; do we need to make Decatur more “adult-friendly?”; Beerfest, wine crawl, need to appeal to adults not just at special festivals

What does Decatur do to attract businesses (so heavy on restaurants) – what is the economic development? What are we doing to diversify business? Whole Foods, Belks, Jewelers, Hardware store, something like Candler Park Market, liquor bar, Men’s clothing, Gay bar. Need right marketing to keep these alive (in case they have failed in the past).

Nathan Soldat

## Communications:

- We should use existing groups or institutions that already have commonalities to communicate with intentional conversations.
- The city should act as a conduit for these groups to come together. The police department has a list of neighborhood groups that could be used. We need a directory of neighborhood groups or at least an update of what we currently have. Linda may have a list of neighborhood groups.
- We need a Decatur 102.
- We need a School Board 101.
- Decatur 101 graduates should be leaders or at least be able to delegate.
- The police Citizens Academy does not send out any email updates like Decatur 101 does.
- How do Church's connect?
- We need a digital "informational" sign
- The Decatur Focus: The focus is great and provides lot of access. The focus could also be used to make the community aware of hot topics. The focus could also list blog highlights. The focus should not just focus on the good. We need to re-focus the focus. Why add new things, lets evolve what we have.
- We need a publication for "hot topics". Mediums could include: TV like City Commission or a Decatur Education show, a library of recorded meetings, computer education that would help people use blogs, WIFI that functioned, an open house to ask anything people want to ask about, a citizen board that films events and posts them on you tube, a physical meeting the acts as a clearing house of hot topics, a physical blog where the public posts physically on kiosks instead of online, handouts at big events, a last page/backside list of hot topics in the Decatur Focus
- The sustainability board should address sustainable communications
- Any physical calendar should not do more than it can do well. The calendar could help us visualize event conflicts and resolve them. The calendar should state the source of information being given.
- Blogs should be connected via a newsletter.
- Elected Officials and City Department Heads are very accessible which is good.
- Citizens should treat their neighbor the way they want to be treated. We need to practice civility. We need to forgive ourselves and each other after a conflict.
- It is the Cities job to make sure the community is connected.
- We need multiple methods and mediums to communicate.
- We need bulletin boards/kiosks that list a community calendar. They should be kept up to date and old information should be taken down. Locations could include: Marta/Swanton Way, East Lake Drive, Downtown Oakhurst, @ parks/pools, wherever people congregate, on the square, @ senior centers/spaces, in private spaces/hotels
- We need handouts listing community issues at community events
- A community calendar, like what DeKalb County has, should be posted in multiple locations
- Not everyone has or wants email. E-government should not be exclusive

- When long time City Officials like Lyn, Linda and Peggy retire, what information will be lost. In other words, what do they know that is not written down? We need a plan to pass along important knowledge. How do we adjust and transition?
- We need to employ private business techniques and treat citizens as shareholders. “We are the government.” We need to use a “Balance Score Card” which is a way of taking measurements over multiple categories (voting, meeting attendance, volunteer numbers) to see how we are accomplishing our strategic plan. This will help us visualize our progress. The Balance Score Card could be printed in the focus.
- We need running revenue/budget updates. How much do projects like Glen Lake Park cost us?
- Brochures in private places like hotels can be overwhelming. Please do not flood us with information.
- Who really provides Decatur “news coverage?”
- We need to balance too much vs. not enough information
- How do we communicate in Emergency situations? Code Red is a good tool.
- Important meetings are occurring at the same time which is frustrating, for example the Budget Hearing, Planning Commission, and School Board meeting.
- We need to track and measure citizen involvement
- We need more people at meetings and too many people are apathetic when it comes to voting.
- To keep people involved people have to know they have been heard. The City should continue to let us know we have been heard.
- City Commission agenda item add-ons are good.
- The school board time limits are humiliating. The school board doesn’t value dissent. 3 minutes a mouth is not enough. We need more opportunities to voice our thoughts.
- Who has read the City Charter? We all should.
- How does the city work with the school or not? The money comes out of the same pocket. The schools should learn from the Cities Communications

#### Individual:

- Should get training on conflict resolution
- The City should help individuals to develop an idea
- Don’t say “Nobody has ever thought of that before.” The City should listen to the Individual
- Individuals should communicate and follow-up to gain grass roots support.
- Citizens should let Elected Officials know what is going on.
- You need to speak up and understand you will not always get your way.
- Get 75% support in your neighborhood and things will happen
- Legalities sometimes make individual change difficult

#### Organizational:



- Organizations include: Neighborhoods, Garden Clubs, Garden Organizations, City Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Environmental Sustainability Board, Historic Preservation Board, Hobby related groups, business association, PTA, School Leadership Teams, Partnerships-Agnes Scott-Preservation Alliance, DeVry

Institutional:

- Continue Partnerships and look for new ones
- Utilize high school auditorium but it is very expensive

Loudermilk 06-01-2010 7 pm

**We began with a discussion of good and/or exciting ideas from the last session:**

- A Decatur transportation network, incorporating:
  - Perimeter parking
  - Shuttle and/or jitney (small annual fee to ride)
- Zipcar
- Social networks between neighborhoods:
  - listserv
  - progressive dinners
- Alternative sources of income (not just homeowner taxes)
- Sponsor these kinds of conversations more often

**Doubts/Reservations from last session:**

- Why not merge Decatur Public Schools with Dekalb County schools?
  - Could discourage the people who move here because of the schools
  - Try to encourage connections between the city and the schools—especially in use of facilities

**How well are we connected?—Building common ground**

- Create spaces that encourage people to meet—public gathering spaces
- Provide a virtual suggestion box. Provide feedback to each suggestion.
- Encourage round table participants to host city social events.
- Nothing replaces face-to-face interaction.
- Develop a reliable monthly (or quarterly) event to meet with city officials—no agenda, just questions.
- Provide a casual “help desk”—could be a booth at the weekly farmer’s market
- Ask city officials to provide open office hours so that citizens can drop by and ask questions. Provide each visitor with a time limit (5-10 minutes).
- Post an anonymous question box and post answers in public place.

## **Getting people involved**

- Stop providing all services—expect citizens to volunteer.
- Need better communications about citizen boards.
  - Ask people to volunteer as support staff for boards, not just as members.
  - Provide information about the agendas of boards and about qualifications for membership
- We need to hear from a more diverse group
  - Provide more mobile outreach
  - Take issues/events to neighborhoods; don't expect citizens to come to the city venues.
  - Define what we mean by diversity
  - Acknowledge the diversity that's in the room—lots of different backgrounds
  - Child care should be available at public meetings at least some of the time
  - Create a “Decatur Parents' Night Out”

## **Communicating with citizens**

- Need multiple avenues
  - Mobile text—opt in, topic based, used selectively
  - Blogs
  - Combination of active and passive technologies
  - All important communications should get to an RSS/feed reader
- People tend not to use the website for casual information
  - The organization of information is key
  - Add a section for neighborhood interactions/community section
- Street banners announcing events are helpful
  - An electronic banner would be great, but it would have to be attractive
- Decatur Focus is well done and useful
- Face-to-face communication is best
  - Need public spaces for this
    - Walk-able streets create public space
      - Traffic calming important
      - Closing part of Ponce to traffic might help
    - Eliminate the U-shaped parking areas near the square (perhaps just in evenings and on weekends) to create public space. Provide only bike racks and handicapped parking in this area.
  - Face-to-face interaction is facilitated by activities

### **Individual Contributions**

- Pledge to leave your car behind for a certain number of days per week when going to areas within the city limits. Decrease driving. Carpool.
- Provide individual outreach—encourage and help others to participate.
- Give out and wear “I walked” stickers (similar to “I voted” stickers).
- Don’t be afraid to be the first, to be different, to be a leader.
- Get involved
- Help people in need. Ask each neighborhood to have a coordinator to facilitate such activities.
- Live sustainably. Do what you can in each household.
  - Collect rainwater and use it for landscape watering
  - Plant trees and nurture them.
    - Have a Decatur tree planting day
  - Don’t use plastic bags
- Have an outlet in the schools so that citizens can share their knowledge
  - Create a data base of citizens who are willing to share their particular knowledge that teachers can access
  - Create a high school course that uses community knowledge—about careers, interests, etc.

### **Organizational Contributions**

- Neighborhood or city people-in-need coordinators
- Create mentor data base
- Empower formal neighborhood organizations
  - Allow better connections to city resources
- Create a tool share group—within neighborhoods, for example. (In Berkeley, CA, this is run through the public library. Inman Park has such a group.)
- Create neighborhood shop—to share tools, expertise, space
  - Retirement facilities often have these kinds of spaces
- Decatur 101 and Public Safety courses are good ways to find out how to be involved.
  - Make these courses more available
  - Consider peer-to-peer teaching for these courses (graduates help teach others).

- Put these courses on web video
- Have a graduate host courses at their home
- Publish a list of volunteer opportunities in Decatur Focus.
- Make what's already available more visible
- Share information about the city and its events with others
  - Try to create a culture change to encourage people to care more about the city they live in
  - Sponsor a “hey day”—to get people to say hello to one another

### **Institutional Contributions**

- City has already done a lot to partner with other institutions. Christmas Decatur is a good model.
- Put the power of smaller groups together to increase effectiveness.
  - Find the synergies and help groups connect
- Place an information booth for the city on a major street, and staff it with volunteers.
  - Could be on current U-shaped parking lot.
- Create a volunteer “bridging” board to help groups connect and to make connections with formal institutions. (Model: San Francisco’s SPUR—a private, non-profit that works to connect stakeholders around particular issues.)

### **Individual commitments from group members**

- “Ask one.” Get a friend to participate.
- Create a map of walking and biking areas.
  - Idea: Have a “Pete the Cat” scavenger hunt, where Pete could be found only through walking or biking
- Find out how to volunteer for a board
  - Get involved in the neighborhood
  - Read Decatur Focus

### **Going forward**

- Have another large meeting (like kick-off) to tell us what's come out of the round table discussions.

- Put all ideas on-line as discussion topics
- Devote a Decatur Focus issue to report on the round tables.
- Have city officials and other experts comment on the ideas. Take advantage of the knowledge of Decatur citizens.
- Let us know why things are not implemented.
- City did a good job of getting information out about the round tables. Use same multi-pronged approach to disseminating information about the results.
- On an opt-in basis, share contact information of round table participants so that people can stay connected.

Thompson 06-01-10 9am

### **Communication and Common Ground**

Utilize open forums around issues or in general like City Commission meetings

Communicate via email with community on specific issues on a regular basis

Like to use Open City Hall

City needs an integrated communications strategy

The DBA is a good example for regular communication

Utilize email listservs

Host listening sessions

Keep the Focus

The Focus is late to arrive and publicizes events too late

Focus could be less touchy-feely

Would like having updates from city department heads

Structure negotiation between two opposing viewpoints

City commission has final approval, but city should solicit wide input before making a decision.

Used a funnel metaphor for input

Provide for face to face conversations

Current website has lots of out of date information

It's not good enough for the city to say "information available" the city should chase us with information

City can give information, but a citizen has to show up

City should hire a communications person to communicate to the public what is going on in community

Citizens can help save the city money if they know what is going on (Example of stamped crosswalk project)

The school system has a Community Relations Director and city should too

Provide a blog for projects, City Commission agenda

Don't leave out people who do not use online tools

**The city can expand communication by:**

Hosting informal meetings at restaurants and other locations  
Targeting specific groups  
Changing the format of the meeting depending on the group or topic  
Having meetings at churches or the housing authority properties

### **Why Would You Get Involved?**

I know individuals can make a contribution  
The city government is responsive  
Targeted communication to a specific issue  
Want a website that follows the progress of the strategic plan

### **Contribution**

#### **What can Individuals do?**

Sign up to participate in Strategic Plan  
Will always be the 80/20 rule  
Develop Ad Hoc committees around specific topics and projects.  
Ultimately, city staff is responsible for getting things done  
Writing grants  
Produce Quarterly reports to let people know what is going on and how they can contribute  
Need some way to get all the empowered citizens on the same page  
Volunteer for city services  
Need way to share ideas, capture them, and then connect them to the right resources

### **Organizations/Institutions**

Organizations in city are active and do a good job. Example Sugar Creek Garden partnership with city and Oakhurst Community Garden  
City and school work well on greenspace issues.  
City and school should cooperate more on transportation and food issues.  
Churches should be more engaged in the community.  
Churches can provide space for classrooms, festivals and greenspace.  
Churches can push out information to the community and encourage participation in the community.  
Churches should “earn their tax exemption” and “Sending us to heaven isn’t enough”  
Churches used to be the center of the community but now the schools, the Square, Ponce de Leon and the people in the community are the “center of the community.”  
Want to start a community wide book club that advances conversation around these topics. The first book is The Original Green

Jon Abercrombie for Dana Calleja

Being Connected:

We are connected through technology  
Many are challenged by the time to stay connected.  
Decatur Focus is an effective tool.  
The Oakhurst paper is a good source of information.  
There is a lack of political organizing in Decatur.  
There is intense political organizing around the schools board races.  
There is intense organizing about zoning laws and the transitions from zone to zone  
Intense organizing about the historic districts.  
City get so much in put that sometimes you can’t be heard.  
Small size of Decatur makes it possible to know the participants and politicians  
There is a lack of resources to do everything people would like

The more you know the people making decisions, the more the trust can develop.  
Sometime we are too neighborhood centric.  
It is good to have conflict if it brings you to the table with an open mind.  
It is important to communicate before hard positions are taken.  
Be clear of the need for resolution when you meet.  
Hold a forum to find common ground and get beyond them and us.  
State clearly what the conflict is that you are trying to resolve  
Intervene before things are too explosive

### **Who does not have a voice?**

Older people start to feel left out  
The issue is how much energy people have to get involved and knowing how to mobilize the energy.  
Communicate what the long-term impact is likely to be of decisions being made.  
People are intimidated by the process and do not feel sufficiently well-informed.  
People will speak out when they know how they are going to be affected.  
Some African Americans are discouraged from living in Decatur because of cost and because of taxes.  
Recruit more voices by have a City of Decatur Booth or Tent at Festivals.  
Open up channels to those living in the condos and apartments  
In every condo move-in packet include Decatur information, e.g., Decatur 101  
Make volunteer work widely know.  
What kinds of change... Individual, Organizational, and Institutional

### **INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS**

Join a board or go to Decatur 101 and there learn about the ways to get involved.  
Lead by personal example, e.g., make your own property and example of green technology and sensitivity. Make it storm water neutral.  
Do small things that make a difference... walk recycle  
Go to meetings, e.g., the Sustainability Committee or its sub-committees.  
Spread the work about what is available by talking to people.  
Hold a meeting for people who have never been involved in public decision-making and make it interesting.

### **ORGANIZATIONS**

Organizations can also lead by example, e.g., take green ideas to your book club.  
Take ideas from one group to other groups to expose more people  
Ask the organization to have a formal agenda to create a particular change. Build on the energy in the group.  
Make you organization's members feel like they have the power to accomplish results.  
Get the Boys and Girls Clubs to reach out to adults and families about obesity. Let the children do the reaching out.

Communicate with and involve small businesses in DBA and the Retailers Association.  
Encourage and help new businesses... See Debc.

## **INSTITUTIONS**

Agnes Scott is open and more involved.

Religious institutions are getting involved with the book festival.

City did a good job through police department with neighborhood watch, computer recycling, and the touch-a-truck day.

We need a more intentional relationship with DeKalb County, which has such an effect on the City.

New institutions are moving to the city and need to be better integrated...like DeVry in the center of town.

Get some of the large businesses and institutions to promote alternative transportation, e.g., joining forces with the Cliff buses from Emory.

Do more education about transportation choices for employees.

### **What can we do in the next steps of the planning process?**

Ensure that there is strong leadership from the city with the contractor who is chosen for the plan.

Make sure there is a solid end product with objectives.

Encourage direct connection and communication with the citizens during the process.

Have a citizens review board to monitor the planning process.

Communicate, communicate, communicate.

Ravenberg 05-24-2010 7 pm

### **Doubts & Reservations**

- We haven't talked about a "rainy day" fund for counter cyclical costs, etc.
- Diversity: there is less diversity and we think it has to do with affordable housing but there is not evidence that housing costs have increased. Don't see affirmative programs. Driving force for diversity is employment opportunities within the community.
  - > need lower cost housing options, that is, apartments
  - > we have high taxes because we expect a lot, but don't want subsidized housing; rather extend opportunities and capitalize on mutual self interest; Hand-up versus hand-out; e.g., trade mentoring, making computers available (library offers but not enough), etc.
- need employers and work force housing

### **Communication**

- Keep people informed about decision making process, opportunities, decisions and why decisions were made. Issue guidelines for decision making
  - > noted that the following communications vehicles exist: Focus, website, open city hall, blogs, Facebook page, outdoor events (where city has an exhibit) provide opportunities for interaction
- Want to see definition of roles, responsibilities, and action items. Also, want to see accountability coming out of the process



- Missing from the conversation: youth (middle school/high school), seniors, minorities (African American) and residents of the housing authority; suggest forming a youth advisory board; to better involve these groups, bring the conversation to them, reach out and try to overcome any logistical challenges these groups may have in the way of their participation
- Not sure why underrepresented groups are not participating...need to find out why not before we can address the reasons; could be a function of interest (or lack of), priorities, work demands, child care demands, logistical challenges, feeling of exclusion
- Seems as though the thoughts of group 17 are aligned with the city budget proposal
- Business owners do not seem well represented in the round table process
- Suggest polling hotel management (in general, not referencing Holiday Inn) to find out what makes a place attractive to them as a business opportunity (meaning, location for a hotel)
- Missing suggestions on what makes /how to make a business-friendly atmosphere in Decatur
- Decatur is not integrated; look around at most functions (government or social or community or volunteerism) and the participating demographic doesn't reflect the city demographic; this is the same conversation that was being had 10 years ago; there are lots of families where the parents don't speak English...could there be an outreach coordinator to overcome language barrier?
- Look at ways to engage entire community and create attractive volunteering events

Ravenberg 05-11-2010 7 pm (REVISED)

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: natural environment

- monitor water quality, air quality so we can look for appropriate solutions
- look for creative ways to fund new green space: fund raising, private funding, matching funds, etc.
- have a fund available so City can compete with other bidders (like developers) for purchasing green space
- have a few “set asides” in the city budget for green space
- preserve the tree canopy
- close the gap between our aspirations and reality: we think we are so green but we all want more progress

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

## **Contributions**

- Individual
  - > Job mentoring; give people (individuals) a way to contribution besides giving money; could filter through organizations already doing similar things, like the recreation center
  - > Individuals can drive change by riding bikes more, driving less, composting, supporting local businesses, using the parks, going to budget meetings, taking Decatur 101, enrolling in Public Safety Academy, volunteering and saying hi to neighbors
- Organizational
  - > train people on how to assess home energy efficiency; green jobs training through trade association or public/private partnerships
  - > Look for gaps: there is already a lot of collaboration between organizations like neighborhood associations, Decatur Business Association, Bike Decatur, Parent Teacher Association, cross-church organizations, Keenagers, Decatur Education Foundation, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Oakhurst Community Garden, Farm to School Task Force, D.E.A.M, etc.
  - > Café 458 is an example of social entrepreneurship and smart fundraising
  - > Drive more neighborhood disaster preparedness planning
- Institutional
  - > Leverage the strength of larger institutions like Agnes Scott; Eddie & Agnes is a good example; students are a great resource to tap and are a voice for gender equity