

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

Facilitator Name: Steve Provost

Meeting Date: June 2, 2010

Time: 7 – 9 PM

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- Comments from thoughts about the previous meeting:

Using the schools as Education outreach centers

Boot camp style groups for wider range of ages

“Protecting Decatur from it’s own success”

Greenspace

Businesses

Housing

2 Communication and Common Ground: How well are we connected?

People converse only when upset about a topic

Nurture the neighborhood feeling – Feeling of being a part of the larger group

Make sure people feel that their voice matters

Some are concerned about being “dumped on” so they don’t speak up

Create a Positive Drop Box – like a suggestion box. Ideas read aloud about what is positive in the City. OR For negative thoughts require to provide a suggestion to solve it

Provide stone tables for public chess/checker domino tournaments. Have a monthly “Game Day” or Trivia

On-Line polling – like for local ordinances

Neighborhood list serves

Utilize a List Board – a physical info kiosk

Develop ways to broadcast how to get on and use local list serves

Coordinate local list serves/blogs with each other, fire dept., police

List serves are depleting neighborhood association meetings

Create a Decatur TV station to list info, or broadcast local info. Or radio, would be less expensive

Decatur Focus works well. – make them available at events as handouts

Promote access to City Commissioners - email addresses, etc.

Decatur 101 is great. –part of the benefit is interaction with city leaders. –difficult to expand and keep it that personal

Lower socioeconomic strata is being left out of the conversation

Project suggestion: hand cameras to people who otherwise aren't "heard" to photograph 'what in Decatur supports you' and 'what in Decatur disappoints you', --present them to city leaders/commission

Contributions

Individual Change:

Identify what you like/want, then find like-minded people to share it

Pick up trash while taking walks

“Own it” take your block, city personally. –know your neighbors, --smile at people

Aske your neighbors what they need

Compost and recycle

Plant flowers

Walk instead of drive

Organizational Change:

Get local organizat5ions out in the city events. –local art school displays --make org talent visible

Promote more organizations! --knitting --kayaking --running

Promote outlets for organizations' wares --products for sale, charity

Facilitate a place to post info about organizations. --existing ones --to begin one --events

Organizations provide connectivity to others which may lead to public involvement

Promote opportunities for organizations to help others using their interest. -- teach their skills to others such as young people

Create opportunities to promote ourselves

Facilitate communication between organizations. --way for them to come together

Institutional Change:

Institutions hide behind their buildings - not enough connection to the community outside. -- bring church choirs outside --caroling --school bands out in public

Health fairs. --active groups --promote health

Facilitate meetings between main institutions to coordinate

Identify the main institutions

Use flyers to promote meetings of institutions

Put notices on paper some times rather than all digital communication

Look for ways to use all of the city resources to compensate for lack of space. --create other kinds of comprehensive plans

Promote opportunities to express and live our faith(s). --honoring to you as well as other faiths -
--"Promote Your Joy"

What I can do as an individual person:

Eat dinner with my neighbors

Keep it personal -- Own It

Promote bootcamp for mature adults

Tony Powers 6/2/2010

1

More advertising

Focus

Website

Decatur Metro Blog

Decatur Living Mag

Senior citizens

Younger people

Put info in Lobby/Common areas

Post info at Marta stations

Info at schools

Post at pavilion on square

Flyers in restaurant windows

More

What can a person do?

Parent groups

More small group discussion

Community involvement

Get involved in public life i.e. serve food, passionate about hot topic

Plan other activities around event i.e. trivia, movie night

Make more family oriented

Build and maintain list of neighborhood association presidents

Post billboards for bigger meetings at prominent/in your face location

Work with neighborhood association groups more activity

Add info to welcome to the neighborhood package

Organizational Change

Elected official

Volunteer commissions

Neighborhood associations

Homeowner associations

DBA

Retired teacher associations

Senior retirement

Encourage reps to go to planning/public/commission meetings

Host a meet your city commissioners meeting

How do we connect to DBA to have more hosting for informal groups

Add link to website for meeting hosting

Individual Change

More involvement in different meetings

Write letters to reps of City of Decatur

Have residents take half a day to volunteer in local schools in their own neighborhood

Having parents involved with kids at school

Attend meetings and be vocal

Host smaller group meetings to build conversation and be more socially motivated

Institutional Change

Somebody that talks with institutions

Manages/list

Activist seeks out relationships with

List all activities with hospitals and churches in one central portal

Get all information centralized through common media outlet

Cost saving measures for partnerships with city

Bike days with local church or institution

Make announcements at church meetings

Church announcements about what's going on

Insights and attend more meetings

Get more involved in the process

Be a

Establish new organizational structure to implement the plan

Volunteer

Market the product/process so they get the message

Integrate culture and fabric from our sister cities

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

Facilitator Name: Thrivikraman, Tushar (Group 37)

Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 2 2010

Time: 7-9 pm

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

Q: What are some other Decatur ways to build and maintain common ground, even on difficult issues where we can't reach agreement?

Highlight differences of opinions in newspaper, online, etc. Have different points of view represented and chance to get all sides of issues in a public, centralize place

Align feedback from group sessions, citizen surveys (development, top concerns)

find common ground / differences

decisions are made looking at all of the info

Open forum/ inventory of way people giving feedback – identify themes

For conflict resolution, have data available on both sides
simple, broken down in parts, user friendly
data that is accessible, needs to be analyzed, collated, organized
online but also hardcopy

get facts on both sides before city makes decisions, more objective

Use neighborhood listservs, city can disseminate info to lists. City can have listserv info on website. Have a master calendar

Determine % of population that is online, access to internet, get surveys out –advocate for more computers in library and rec center

Q: How can we get people involved in public life?—What can we do to encourage all kinds of people to volunteer in the community and serve on community boards and commissions?

Decatur 101 – already full. Do something online – Decatur 101 “lite”, Sessions ~ 30 min, webcast of content, reach more people

Citizen police force

Leverage based approach

have 1 person bring 5 other people to volunteer, city commission, etc, formalize this process

Ask more people to get involved, city leaders, to get new blood in organizations

School system, city has opportunity for that, work with the community

Systematic posting in public places of events and meetings, high traffic areas, bulletin board (Oakhurst, city hall, etc)

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

Decatur does this really well already, Decatur minute, focus, blogs, Assoc newsletters

Phone numbers, posting contact info for services and city personnel and who to call for various services / issues. Have insert in Decatur focus

Code red phone for non-emergencies, signup for secondary phone service for various meetings, etc

Decatur 101 more than once/year, Decatur 101 in a day, have volunteers so all doesn't have to be run by the city

Community involvement position to determine creative ways of spreading info

Missing voices in housing developments, survey/focus groups in neighborhoods, go to those communities to maximize inputs

Religious organizations, effective ways of reaching out, feedback and volunteer. Eg Decatur Minority Coop

Concerned about getting seniors involved

Getting new residents involved early

welcome packet- come to city hall to get welcome packet, instructions on how to get involved

get realtors involved

Info about recycling program in Decatur focus & community service

Faith based alliance, feedback to commissions and city leaders, meeting twice a year

Internet surveys should also be put in the Decatur focus & bulletin board

Individual Changes

Get involved and promote involvement in community

Take responsibility of what you want to get involved, offer solution

Show up to community meetings

Checklist / rotation of programs sampler, how to get involved

order of events to get involved

exposure to different events try a little bit of different events

Have options available for various civic involvement, volunteer

A list of available mentors / contact info

Organizational / Institutional change

Walking/running/biking clubs, provide info on transportation infrastructure, engage these groups, invite to active living meeting, more formally

Faith based alliance to reach other groups, informally

Send somebody from Decatur Neighborhood assoc to city commission meeting

Seniors and youth program / collaborations programs where kids and youth interact with seniors. Can support each other, season of giving

Adept a grandparent / schools / other organizations

Partnerships between different organizations / institutions schools & city, volunteer daycare and seniors

Schools, events calendar. Spread info to whole community, not just those in schools, kids can help to distribute information

City should try and coordinate dissemination of city events, rec center

Partnerships with Dekalb co: traffic, public utilities, etc. staff should meet regularly, joint meetings. Meet with staff/ workers instead of big whigs. Also look at school collaborations as model for co cooperation

How to get kids involved in city issues, how can Decatur get kids involved with issues relevant to Decatur

Have introduced to summer volunteering

How do we keep kids engaged in city

Walking brochures for Decatur kids, follow-up to get involved

Singles – how to get involved

Incentive meetings, volunteer events, happy hour events, geared for singles

Social/outdoor clubs, rec center activities

Activities that are self sustaining

Finch 06-02-2010 7 p.m.

Decatur Strategic Plans Session 3

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

- Create trust. People are more likely to go along with positive attentions. Openness from leaders.
- Respect others opinions and Listen
- Be empathetic and understand others portions and points of view

- Create a common vision, “Village Concept”. Defer on how. Help people be pulled by the “what.”
- Focus on long term impact

How can we get more people involved in public life?

- Continue opportunities and continue to publicize them
- Make it fun and a “positive experience”
- Get people involved for the first time and they will continue
- We have the advantage of extremely educated and skilled citizens
- Create Community Emergency Response teams
- Encourage people to talk about their experiences

How can the city and citizens communicate more effectively?

- Keep using Web site and Decatur Focus- good vehicles
- Use internet and not (use other channels of communication?)
- Recognize difference between communication and information
- More interactive conversation with city
- City employees are responsive to email
- Offer more informal discussions with city officials
- Do frequent pulse checks
- Provide ongoing project status updates

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?

- Ongoing status updates on major initiatives
- Clickable Google map
- “Non emergency” opt in?

Part II

Individual Change: What can one person do?

- Stay involved. “It’s easy to get to know people, including city officials
- Be persistent and tenacious. Don’t give up.
- (Find) Change Champions
- (Find) the common ground-the greater good
- Continue learning processes-Decatur 101
- Decatur could facilitate volunteer efforts better
- Continue to advertise volunteer opportunities
- Take advantage of educated population
- Use people’s skills
- More voters and more candidates
- Market the value of public service

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

- Neighborhood associations
- Decatur Condo Association
- Decatur Business Association
- School Leadership Teams
- Oakhurst Community Garden
- Community Center S. Decatur
- Decatur Educational Foundation
- Decatur Preservation Alliance
- Book clubs
- High School/College Organizations
- DeVry/Art Institute

How can organizations make a difference?

- Encourage people individually to get involved
- City can facilitate by providing information
- Encourage developers to work with citizens more consistently and help city neighborhood associations become a forum

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

- Schools could provide community resource centers
- City government needs to work more closely with other local governments to be more effective and efficient
- Reduce adversarial and become collaborative
- Find common interests

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

- Continue beer festival involvement-Yes!!
- Nudge my neighbors
- Use my expertise-give it away!
- Move out of my comfort zone
- Commit to stay involved, be open to options
- Add value and learn
- Maximize volunteer opportunities like MLK
- Use opportunities to gain expertise
- Appreciate and thank people for involvement

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

COMMUNICATION: Blogs like Decatur Metro, In-Decatur and The Decatur Minute are good; The Decatur Focus we like but question cost and environmental repercussions; the Focus needs to reach out to rest of community – include school fundraisers and events, add saavy-shopper style coupons; Decatur Wifi is not very useful – great idea but infrastructure is woefully inadequate; Neighborhood List-serves; School-based parent’s groups;

COMMON GROUND: are we really insensitive to segments of our population – if so should we find ways to include them? How? Maybe the census or a survey can help us find ways to reach ALL of our citizens; churches might be a good place to start. Things that work in terms of including everyone (primarily racially): Beach Party; MLK Work Day: Art-Walk; Green-Space would help foster this as a community anchor but it should be centralized so access to local businesses is simple – the park could become a destination unto itself. For example, just south of the Dekalb Courthouse (between the high-school and the courthouse) would be a great space to convert into a park – it would tie the community with the school. Other places that aren’t necessarily central but interesting to consider: DeVry, Relax Inn, Methodist Home; Schools are a big part of our community – can’t we engage non-parents via the schools somehow? Via sports, theater and fundraises. The Decatur Focus or community list-serves should “market” school functions to everyone – not just students and parents. PTAs should conduct out-reach. Get students involved with community mentors – ultimately the city should encourage forum for schools and city to work together.

2. Individual Change

Show up and speak your mind; build consensus; raise awareness; raise \$; be involved and know your neighbors; identify gems in community worth saving; make city-boards more accessible for working citizens; volunteering

Organization Change

Promote themselves (we need to know what’s there in terms of non-profits, religious organizations, etc.); leverage resources via grants/networks. What about neighborhoods? Do they need a voice? Can we involve them formally in parades or other city festivals; Find ways to engage faith-based groups as part of this process.

Institutional Change

Continue to foster collaboration with Agnes Scott, City Schools of Decatur and City Government; Focused town-hall meetings (outside of planning) where city council is available.

Rothman 6/2/2010

1-How connected are you?

- Make the Focus available to businesses
- Should have a Seniors 101 class and make Decatur a top destination for retirement
- Feel very connected due to Decatur 101
- Got involved as a volunteer
- Connected through Focus (is it online?)
- Part of neighborhood association
- Lack of connection between neighborhoods
- Don't have a sense of neighborhood
- Other connecting points – Haircutting/Brick Store

Who is not connected

- Young not involved 20 somethings
- Are business owners involved

How to connect?

- Keep the paper version of the Focus
- Need to better organize the website, too clumsy
- Encourage more open houses so institutions are more open – continuing education
- Art Institute to offer more classes
- No Bill Boards
- Continue using cutting edge technology
- Collect info about volunteers – who volunteers and at what level (few people giving many hours or many people giving a few)
- Get data on both informal (people helping people) and formal (thru organizations) volunteerism
- Connect w/other people working on/interested in same issues (ie bike lanes)
- Start a food festival

What can Individuals do?

- Youth fund to offer creative ways to sponsor a child, fund camp, etc
- Change personal actions “be the change you want to see in the world”
- Attend city meetings

- Make others aware of issues, be more vocal
- Get info/do research about things you are passionate about
- Start a blog/facebook
- Contribute to city blogs
- Informally reach out to others, those new in Decatur
- Organize networks/coalitions, grassroots
- Create more connections b/w neighborhoods

What can organizations do?

- Use membership to disseminate information
- Use expertise in DBA, find ways to connect issues
- DBA to try to attract other types of businesses
- Use DBA to make announcements
- Selections of books for book clubs related to an issue
- Bring together a coalition based on particular issues (ie needs of children)
- Use bike clubs to organize around publicity for the city and do public information

What can Institutions do?

- Find an institutional home to sustain issues, give infrastructure
- Bring together organizations and institutions (ie Dec Book Festival)
- Create broader regional partnerships, sharing ideas
- Look for ways for city and other institutions to share resources in purchasing, parking, buildings, etc

Specific ideas that were given by a group member

- Encourage higher ed institutions to better connect with the community by hosting open house or offering classes or workshops to the community (not for credit), perhaps taught by students
- Encourage healthy lifestyle by offering infant nutrition classes (hosted by Dekalb Medical or Emory?) for new mothers (model on program in France), or offer nutrition classes for all or focus on lifestyle challenges (for "busy working parents" or "weight loss" or "seniors" or "single householders", etc.)
- Create a food festival, but not just "taste of Decatur" type thing: model on Decatur Book Festival where there are stages, speakers on published topics like cooking for busy working parents, nutrition, why choosing organic matters, wine pairing, beer pairing, meet your local farmers, growing food. Could have exhibits as well. Keynote by Barbara Kingsolver or Martha Stewart (examples)
- Challenge bicycle groups to "ride every street in Decatur" over the summer
- think of funding programs like the Youth Fund in creative ways that personalize the contribution, such as, instead of "give us \$100," do "sponsor 10 kids to attend summer camp."

- Partner with Art Institute, Agnes Scott to attract graduates to stay in Decatur. Educate businesses re graduate skills, place interns, etc. Have a local business/local school meet & greet via DBA?
- Attract creative businesses to Decatur: art supply store?
- Community "policing:" educate citizens and encourage them to speak up when they see a violation, like skateboarders or cyclists on the square or side walks
- Share Decatur's public works successes with Decatur businesses, for example, how the city is creating a zero waste work environment--how businesses can do the same; share leadership and techniques

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 3

Facilitator Name: Stephanie DiLorio

Meeting Date: 6-2-2010

Time: 9 am

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Communication & common ground. How well are we connected “Our community successes.”

1. What works now?

City website

Focus

Talking and emailing with city officials (e.g. Patti Garrett each month sends list of her appearances to her constituents)

Public input segment at city commission meeting

Neighborhood associations alliance meetings; contact info for neighbors listed on website

Public safety communications (Juanchella Francis)

Code Red alerts

Citizen academies

Neighborhood associations

Street Yahoo groups

Flyers

Chatting at local watering holes

Blogs (e.g. Decatur Metro)

2. How can we do better?

Improve city directory on website, providing more detail on who does what and who to call

Make Focus more timely; give people option to receive hard or electronic copies; send out reminders for those receiving e-copies

Send weekly digest from city with updates on meetings, initiatives, etc.

Publicize city boards and initiatives and facilitate connections among the city, groups/organizations, and citizens with common focus or interest (e.g. connect Green Restaurant Group with Restaurant and Retail group)

Create Decatur Chamber of Commerce

Publicize parking lot locations, hours of operation, and fees; provide information on alternative transportation such as Cliff and Marta stops and times

Host citizen group directory, bulletin board and calendar on city website

Prioritize and publicize ten-year plan priorities to facilitate buy-in.

Share project roadmap, project plan, and timeline

Strategically align outreach to organizations and institutions with city's ten-year goals

Implementing Change

1. What can individuals do?

Connect with others around their personal interests (e.g. join boards, groups)

Become fan of city of Decatur on facebook

Inform city of organizational interests, progress, and events

Stay committed and engaged in city life even after the conflict/hot issues has passed

2. What can organizations do?

Actively recruit people

Communicate, leverage and partner with city and other community organizations

Publicize programs and ideas to larger community

Take leadership on “organization to organization” communication and partnership

Fund or provide resources for city and community projects

3. What can institutions do?

Share/make available expertise, resources, knowledge

Help fund community and city projects through grants

Collaborate with city on top priorities as defined by ten-year plan, such as leveraging community or city government for research; seeking ways to partner/collaborate on education; promote public transportation (i.e. Cliff)

28 provost 6/2/2010 2pm-4pm

Communication and Common Ground

Missing 18& under – apathy on their part, engaged in other tasks

Level of volunteerism in this group, other organizations, can they be created

School system & City gov't better connected

Make volunteerism more interesting for this group

More City sponsored teams, sports.

School system involvement, reunions, team spirit

Seniors – apathy, “decision has already been made”, City involved in senior groups

Existing senior group involvement

Communication beyond electronic

Decatur Focus – include calendar of meetings & events

Website hard to navigate; have Decatur push information to citizens, font is too small

Positives of Communication:

Open City Hall – more open

Meetings at City Commission feel open but felt follow up, final decision was not tracked

Communicating with people who work in City but don't live here

Mapping, bulletin board, more & more visible

Decatur Minute – blog form communication, more Twitter style question & response format or on-line interaction

Updates on completed projects

Posting on employers websites

Discounts for worker IDs on Terrific Thursdays

Reach across racial lines in businesses and in schools, aware of profiling

Welcoming committee for new businesses, City employees more welcoming, hiring practices, one stop shop, liaison, fewer surprises

Ask employers how many Decatur Focus' they want for their employees

More police interaction at neighborhood assoc, more consistent with all neighborhoods

City wide conversations about race

Decatur 101/police academy to improve community relations

Career Day at schools to involved all groups

City involvement in neighborhood association

Breakdown divide & political (politics)

How to become a community

More City organized events in parks and other community spaces, ice cream social in parks, more touch a truck

More engagement with schools to facilitate community, more parallel with resources with schools

Missing young families in communications

Block parties, encouraged, what is the guideline, communicate.

Hub & spoke communication

Annual block party month

Feeling safe in the parks, volunteers in parks, staff people in parks, use parks more

Ball park usage

Designated block captains, hub & spoke communication with City

Putting young families together, forming mothers' groups, other groups with needs

Neighborhood association could be involved in similar fashion as block captains.

Ques 2

Individual...

Visual vehicle, pedicab

Get out of car & communicate with neighbors

Community gardening

Speak up to neighbors, City, other org.

Gather together, generate ideas, capitalize on strengths, follow through

Share your talents with the community, senior, youth, etc.

Plant swap

Volunteer, knowing resources

Beyond volunteer coordinator, putting talents in power

Ques 2 Individual

Talent inventory for individuals & business in Communities, database

MLK projects – how do you expand, use same model for other projects, other needs, legal, fundraising, etc.

Ques 2 Organizations

Centralize & combined efforts

Follow up, resolution, hold City accountable

Concession stand @ parks @ games to put back in schools & community (money raised)

Senior groups to mine talents & services specific needs

Oakhurst Community Garden, grants, larger opportunity.

Ques 2 Groups

Involvement in groups helps us help others, buddy system for neighbors, calling on reg. basis, calling tree

Citizen Aux Patrol could step in to meet buddy system & other needs for neighborhood watch

Ques 2 Institutions

DHS sport scores posted in Focus

Tutoring from Agnes Scott to CSD

Agnes Scott baby sitters

Breakdown walls between institutions, citizens, & City

Agnes Scott movie nights, Eddie's attic sponsorship

Hub for communicating events, etc

Keep communication engineering local but outside of City to avoid red tape

Public service groups hold public events, share, get to know.

Ques 2 CITY

Public gathering to highlight civic involvement & share ideas

Resource share

City wide program of getting to know neighbor, form for information swap

Communicate with institutions, organize communications, add them to the hub.

Website – Decatur Hub.

Session 3

Gail Vogels

6/02/10 9am

Communication and Common Ground: How well are we connected?

- City provide loaner laptops
- Daytime options for city meetings, school board meeting for those who can't meet at night
- Teleconference
- Skype public meetings
- Decatur Focus and web site do a very good job getting info to public
- Use phone tree to get ER info to those without computers
- Televised commission meetings
- Establish neighborhood alerts for those not online
- Robo call for all residents regarding events like street closings
- City website overwhelming. Have separate web site for neighborhoods or links to neighborhood assoc.
- The Focus sometimes has events listed that are out of date
- City needs tech czar
- City needs arbitration board made up of appointed citizens
- City needs system like colleges: ombudsmen for complaints and neutral hearings for recommendations
- On web site there should be a monthly, weekly, daily calendar of city events
- Next ten years all city info will be on cell phones
- Put announcements on neighborhood bulletin boards or kiosks
- Use digital kiosks at school
- Need more diversity of Decatur residents participating with round table
- Some folks are just too busy and have no time to contribute
- City should have monthly round table
- Use churches like Thankful Baptist and Lilly Hill to get in touch with older folks to ask them to get involved
- Decatur is moving towards economic homogeneousness. Redoing projects seems like an intentional push to middle class majority
- Housing authority a good thing for Decatur?
- Use that land, build 500K homes and distribute money to assist with low income housing
- Section 8 doesn't mean more diversity
- Housing for elderly can mean crime
- Ebster field critical for community
- We don't have enough sports fields and games are poorly scheduled b/c lack of space

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

Individuals:

- Join local organizations
- Coach a team
- Mentor
- Paint your roof white
- Go to local meetings
- If individuals have a complaint or problem with the city they need to complain. 1. Go to commissioner or mayor 2. Go to dept. head of area 3. Go to meeting with city commission 4. Solicit neighbors for help
- Plant a tree
- Have a block party
- Pick up trash
- Be more informed
- Send your kids to public schools

Organizational Change:

- City of Decatur tech person available for neighborhood association. A go-to tech person

Institutional:

Volunteer or contribute to . . .

- Local schools and PTA
- DBA
- Garden clubs
- Venetian pool, all Decatur pools
- YMCA
- DHS Auditorium and gym need to be coordinated with city events and managed well
- Decatur education foundation should have June movie fest in DHS auditorium and ASC movies on the green
- DBA works with DHS to help kids stay in school and help with summer jobs
- City and park system needs to rent out fields to soccer or other groups willing to pay
- City needs to approach Decatur legal professionals. They are an untapped resource.
- Playing fields need to be used, cleaned and maintained. Spurs want to use fields more and include help to low income kids
- City needs to partner with churches, colleges

- City and schools good at asking for initial input, but close the doors when the final decision is made
 - Churches, colleges, public schools need to partner with DEM and DCM
 - Needs to be a forum with Institutional leaders and community leaders
-
- City, school, active living, colleges, YMCA, needs a community council
 - United way could sponsor a group that meets regularly
 - Decatur could form commission like ATL central commission
 - City could partner with Dekalb bar association, board of realtors, landlord groups
 - Landlords, seniors and city could be forum to discuss housing issues
 - City could partner with realtors to help with affordable housing for polices, artists, teachers
 - City could model an E lake housing/school project
 - Concern about success of retail in Decatur. Empty storefronts due to how expensive it is to live in Decatur
 - City raise taxes, rents go up, commercial district fails
 - We pay DeKalb and city taxes, the tax structure needs to encourage business
 - Mallternative a great idea

Roundtable – Wed. June 2, 2010 - 7:00p.m.-9p.m. Group #36, Bolling

Communication and Common Ground

How well are we connected:

desire for one localized place to get information

electronic message board on the square to announce events, info etc. (this was a key idea for the group)

give flyers / info to students at school to send home to parents – or a section in school newsletters / e-blasts for communication from city of Dec.

schools should have electronic message board

seniors who are not computer savvy are out of the loop

there is a need for communication within and amongst neighborhood groups – if there is a consortium meeting for neighborhood leaders, this should then be reported back to neighbors

Decatur Focus is very helpful – increase number of times it comes out and add even more information about what’s going on.

City of Decatur website needs to be more user friendly (cute, but not user friendly) – needs to include more **links**, hard to find what you are looking for – could even link to housing authority, how to buy tickets for city events, neighborhood to neighborhood info, etc.

leverage social media/networks to facilitate community i.e. facebook, twitter...have a Decatur facebook page – reach out to youth + - a way to get younger folks involved and connected, get volunteers on short notice, (link to electronic message board on the square), fund raising, advocacy tool and a way to mobilize community

robo calls for emergency alerts are helpful...should include animal hazards like rabid foxes

not included: seniors, disabled, young folks

incentive for volunteerism (a program in Germany has a model for this)

volunteer – get a chit (simple things like read a story to a class, help a neighbor with their lawn, etc. - so many chits and you get something i.e. a discount at participating restaurant or shop or event

more opportunity for conversations around issues effecting our community:

simple quarterly “round table” type events

periodic conversation topics – meet on the square or a coffee shop

and / or more common hanging out space for people to informally meet for conversations (like the MARTA plaza) – benches, chess / checkers

computer classes for those not computer savvy – model from one in Berkely Ca. – DMUG or DPUG, Decatur Mac User Group or Decatur Pc User Group – informally share and help one another – how to use the website, listserv, etc.

strengthen Decatur wireless capability

City of Decatur radio or tv station – streaming community information (like my morning jacket – build your own radio station)

CSD and Decatur City need to communicate better – share facilities

continue and expand Decatur 101 – there is a waiting list, have more

Individual Change

get accurate information before taking a (strong) position

op-ed in Decatur Focus

Decatur rumor clearing house

civility in community discourse

become involved – understand the issues (go to commission and board meetings)

equip individuals to be leaders, how to be effectively engaged – Decatur 202 (like Leadership Atlanta/Dekalb)

teach high school students how to take leadership in the community

identify needs of your elderly / disabled neighbors and advocate for them

“speakers corner” – community “soap box” on the square

art space: anyone can come and put their stuff there – hang a painting , read a poem

Organizational Change

what groups do exist and how many overlap and just don't know it?

how to(s) on the square – little lessons on: grow a garden, emergency preparedness, green building – quick little helpful things

foment , encourage groups that grapple with social problems: city commission identify a couple of issues, then quarterly, invite people to come together to think/discuss and then mobilize these folks to act on suggestions, those that are really passionate can run with it

extend MLK service day to year round effort to aid elderly and disabled

non-profits do a good job of communicating and not overlapping

do volunteering “as” community – as a group working on a project together rather than solo volunteer opportunities – build community through volunteering together

Institutional Change

local businesses could offer workshops or in schools or fairs to give info

City of Decatur and CSD and other private schools in Decatur could have a closer relationship which would be good for all concerned.

encourage private schools to be involved with city of Decatur

promote city ventures through religious institutions

city reach out to PRI and Habitat, etc (non-profit housing NGOs) and others to provide expertise in affordable housing

Decatur Roundtables 2010 – Session 3-Connecting to the Community and Sharing Our Gifts

Facilitator Name: Mickey Baskett

Meeting Date: 06-2-2010

Time: 9 am

Ways to Be Connected:

1. City Commission

- Having Agenda On-line is good
- Commissioners should schedule a regular time to come to neighborhoods for informal meetings -- perhaps twice a year.
- Rather than citizens coming in person to the regularly scheduled meetings - could they communicate through Skype or some type of online method?
- The regularly scheduled meetings are physically off-putting -- too formal. More casual type meetings are needed where the reps can come into neighborhoods and talk one-on-one with their constituents
- Commissioners need to have a stronger relationship with Neighborhood Associations.

2. City's Online Open Forum - good way to communicate

3. Decatur Focus

- This is a good tool for many who do not use the computer or have adequate internet access.
- Include more information about how to communicate with the government. Perhaps have a regular sidebar listing the websites that are available for getting information about city events.
- Review each month the city issues - report from the commission meetings
- Need more information about what is really going on -- street repairs, building projects, etc.

4. Blogs

These are good to a point. Much of the complaining that goes on is off putting. However, they are current on what is going on. More current than we can get from city officials.

5. Decatur News Online

This is a good source

6. Decatur 101

- This is a good way to understand city
- Could this information be put on a CD or Online for people who can't attend in person?

7. School Board Meetings

- Many people don't attend these meetings as well as city commission because we have voted for representatives who do our connecting for us. As long as we have reliable reps. the people are satisfied and feel connected. However, the reps need to make more of an effort to communicate with their constituents and let them know what is going on.

8. City Website

- Good way to communicate
- Needs to have more updates on street repairs, city issues, building projects, decisions by city commission.
- On Line Requisition process is good

Because there are so many avenues for communicating and getting information -there needs to be a way to consolidate all this so there is one source for information.

Who Is Left Out of Communication Process?

1. Non Technical People

2. Elderly

- Need to have more computer access for all
- Library computers are good and are well used.
- Recreation Center needs to have a computer room
- Computers to be put in all homes - free to those who cannot afford
 - Money for this? Grants
- Connecting Families is a program that the school system partnered with -this source could be used for getting free computers and free classes for those who need it.

How Can We Get Involved and Connected?

1. Need to make information available on how to connect - a central source for finding out.
2. Availability of computers for all
3. Make it easy and clear about how to connect.
4. The city website should have a box telling where to get info or who to contact about issues -- also where to get printed information.
5. The volunteer coordinator is a good thing - helps people get involved
6. Round table-type conversations are good -- need to have them more often. Twice a year?
7. Perhaps the Commission could have some regularly schedule "Open Agenda" meetings so people can come and voice their concerns.
8. Commission meetings need to be physically more casual. More open conversation type meetings so the commissioners have more opportunities to **LISTEN** to citizens.

How Can we Make Changes Happen?

Individuals:

1. Each of us has a responsibility to be involved so that we have a voice in what happens to our city. The onus is on us as individuals.
2. Volunteering to help at events is a good way to support the city and get involved
3. Ways to Volunteer
 - Schools
 - Festivals
 - Show up at events - attendance
 - Support Farmer's Market

Organizations:

1. DBA - Businesses have a vested interest in maintaining a healthy city.
2. Decatur Education Fund
3. PTA
4. Decatur Networking Committee - Revive this
 - It consisted of representatives from:
Churches, Boy's Club, Recreation Center, Medical Centers, Individuals.
 - It provided after school care, emergency assistance

Institutions

1. Decatur Cooperative Ministry
2. DEAM (Decatur Emergency Assistance Ministry @ Holy Trinity)
3. Churches
 - They support DEAM and DCM
4. Our House

Because there are organizations and institutions in place to help out -- there needs to be a way to coordinate the communication efforts. Everything is splintered. Need to have a CENTRAL communication source.

RECAP of the Entire Session

The BIG ISSUE that kept coming up was AFFORDABLE LIVING IN DECATUR. How can we make it affordable for the working classes, lower incomes, and middle income citizens?

1. City needs to put in more effort to make it affordable for elderly, transitional families, handicapped, working class. More effort for really affordable housing.
2. Decatur Housing Authority - make a bigger effort to find ways to house people -- not just build projects, but find ways within neighborhoods.
3. Houses and small apartments within neighborhoods for lower income and/or elderly

Second BIG ISSUE -- Why do we want and/or need diversity???

1. It promotes a healthy society
2. It is part of our value-system
3. It is the kind of community we want to live in
3. It de-segregates the community

4. The types of people that choose to live in Decatur do not want a homogenized community.