



Decatur Round Tables

Final Report

From April 27 to June 5, the City of Decatur held its Decatur Round Table discussions, an important step in its 2010 Strategic Plan Update. There were three Round Table sessions. Each session was comprised of 11 separate meetings held at different times and places around the city. The first session involved 741 citizens, the vast majority of whom (78 percent) returned for the second and third sessions. All together, participants offered 7,894 ideas and images about Decatur's current situation and possible future and about issues facing the city.

The three sessions were alike in structure but different in content. They were structured around small groups discussing a list of questions and offering their ideas and images. But they were different in the nature of the questions and, not surprisingly, the ideas and images offered.

Session One asked citizens to think broadly about the community they would like Decatur to be. Session Two asked about specific big issues facing the city, including transportation, the environment, housing and healthy living. Session Three again focused on big themes, including how the city could strengthen connections between the city government and citizens and among the citizens themselves; and what roles the citizens, organizations and institutions should play in improving Decatur.

Session One Themes

Session One asked citizens to think broadly about the future of Decatur, their desires for and concerns about the city’s future. Among the thousands of ideas and images, five major themes and three additional themes were apparent. These themes are descriptions of what attracted citizens to Decatur, what they want in the future, and what they worry about losing, depending on the context. Here are the five most prominent themes:

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

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

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

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

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

There were three themes that, while voiced over and over again, were not as prominent in the citizens' thinking in Session One as those listed above. They were:

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

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

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

Session Two Themes

In Session Two, citizens were asked to think about specific big issues facing Decatur. Here are summaries of the big themes from these discussions.

Sustaining and preserving Decatur

What most worried citizens most was a **potential loss of diversity**, which refers to the mix of ethnic, income and age groups that distinguishes Decatur. Underlying this concern were two fears: that housing prices would escalate, pushing less affluent people from the city; and that taxes would become onerous, particularly for the elderly, forcing seniors to move elsewhere. (In a later discussion about housing, another concern emerged: that the elderly would not find appropriate housing as they moved from large single-family houses to smaller, more physically accessible housing.)

In their discussions about sustaining and preserving Decatur, citizens tended to focus on two possible solutions. One was to **keep citizen involvement levels high**. The thought appears to be that by keeping residents involved in decision making, the city will find good answers to these long-term issues. The other solution was more specific: to **build Decatur's commercial tax base**, thereby holding down tax increases for homeowners and other residents.

Tending to the natural environment

Four themes emerged from the discussion on the environment:

- The city should do its best to **protect and extend Decatur’s tree canopy**, which some saw as in decline.
- Perhaps the answer lies in arming citizens with **information on being better environmental stewards**, as several groups thought. One group suggested the city “provide education to residents. (The) city can offer classes (like “This Old House” seminar) or post information on how to be environmentally conscious on the city website.”
- A suggested area of improvement was in **storm water infrastructure**. Ideas ranged from providing rain barrels and employing porous paving technologies for sidewalks to encouraging rain gardens and green roofs (roofs that are covered with soil and plants, absorbing rainwater and keeping buildings cooler).
- The city should **use zoning and building codes to require more green developments**.

Present and future mobility

In Session One, citizens made it clear that they wanted alternative ways of transportation. And in Session Two, they spelled out some of those ways – new forms of transit and easier ways of walking and biking through the city.

There was almost uniform **support for new forms of transit**, including the idea of starting a Decatur trolley system. Group after group suggested trolleys, connecting downtown and Oakhurst, Emory University and Agnes Scott College, or the DeKalb Farmers Market. Not everyone thought in terms of a trolley, though. Other groups suggested electric buses, an expansion of Emory’s Cliff bus system, or a “small, alternative-fuel circulator system” similar to those in Chattanooga, Tenn.

The groups applauded the city’s efforts to **make Decatur more walkable** but had many suggestions for doing even better, from building sidewalks on every street to turning downtown streets into pedestrian plazas. And that was just the start: There were ideas about educating drivers about stopping for pedestrians, traffic calming measures, expanding construction of brick crosswalks, extending pedestrian crossing times and so on.

Similarly, there were numerous ideas about how Decatur could **become more bike-friendly**, from bike lanes and paths to more bike racks downtown.

Finally, there were ideas about **making transportation work better through information**. Some of the information should be directed at drivers, the groups said. Others wanted clearer signage pointing to parking decks and city attractions and facilities. Finally, some groups wanted more information about alternative transportation, aimed at convincing residents and workers to try walking, biking and transit.

Life in Decatur

The discussions about community gatherings and cultural life focused on three topics:

- Pride in **Decatur’s abundance of festivals and community events**, which were seen as critical to the city’s identity and sense of community
- The suggestion that the city try **smaller, neighborhood-focused events** in the future. “Create more localized, neighborhood-specific gatherings,” one group offered. “It seems like there is either a big event or nothing,” another group said. “We need smaller, simpler, regular public activities.”
- Support for making Decatur **a center for the arts**. “We would like to see more public art,” one group said. “Make our city a mecca for the arts,” another said. “Maybe a film festival,” suggested a third group.

Future of housing

More than any other topic in Session Two, the discussions on housing touched on the concern that, as Decatur becomes more affluent, it will lose its ethnic, income and age group diversity. Not surprisingly, groups called for greater provision of **affordable housing** and **housing that is appropriate for an aging population**.

But when the discussions turned from the general to the particular, there was a recognition that the most likely ways of ensuring a diversity of housing options – through **greater density** and **more mixed-income and rental housing** – would be politically challenging. One recommendation offered by several groups: Allowing single-family houses to add **garage apartments and accessory dwellings** so Decatur could be known “as a place where we let you bring your family to live with you.” The same group added, though, “people are worried about too many cars.”

Healthy living

In thinking about what Decatur could do to promote healthy living, citizens lined up behind three things:

- The city could do a better job of **promoting exercise and other forms of active living**.
- It could **help citizens find healthier food**.
- It could **offer information that connects citizens with healthy living resources**.

Some of the exercise ideas had been touched on in earlier discussions about alternative transportation – that is, the city could be made easier for walking and bike-riding. But there were also ideas offered for making parks, the Decatur Recreation Center and other public facilities more enjoyable as exercise centers.

There were a number of suggestions for encouraging or facilitating community gardens, so people could get healthier food (and the exercise of gardening). Others said they would like “more open-air markets for fresh food and other goods.”

Finally, there were suggestions that the city could do more to offer information to citizens about healthy living. One group suggested that the city “partner with medical centers (i.e., DeKalb Wellness Center, Emory, Kaiser) for health seminars, screenings, etc.” and promote this information. “There are a lot of healthy activities already,” one group pointed out. “Perhaps,” it added, the city should devote “more attention to marketing what is available.”

Session Three Themes

Desire for more information, delivered in different ways

This desire was made clear throughout Session Three discussions. It was also a major theme in Session Two, when citizens were asked about how to have a more environmentally sustainable community, how to improve mobility and how to have a healthier community. The information citizens wanted wasn’t so much about the inner workings of government (the need for government transparency is taken as a given in Decatur), but rather information that could help residents be more engaged and effective citizens.

Some of the citizens’ ideas dealt with how to involve others in Decatur’s public life. Other suggestions were about the form of communications. Some were in favor of more and different kinds of online information, from data bases and targeted email to web sites and televised web casts. Others cautioned that not everyone has Internet access.

Desire for more citizen engagement, volunteerism and connection

Decatur already has an engaged citizenry by most places' standards – but not by Decatur citizens' standards. There were three areas in which participants believed citizen participation could improve:

- Engagement with the city government, by attending public meetings and joining city boards and commissions.
- Volunteering for non-profits or, in some cases, to assist the city government.
- Meeting one another, through neighborhood associations or other means.

What these three desires had in common was the belief that the city could play a role through information, events and infrastructure in accommodating these aims.

Desire for more and different groups to be involved and effective

Citizens brought up these theme in two ways. The first was in pointing out there were many organizations or groups in or near Decatur that were uninvolved in its public life, from institutions like churches and colleges to refugee organizations and neighborhood associations. The second was in saying that working through groups was more effective than acting as individuals and had the additional benefit of building connections and a sense of community. For these reasons, many thought the city should concentrate on partnering with groups that exist, helping groups work more effectively with other groups, and encouraging new groups to form.

Meeting Process

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

The Round Tables are face-to-face meetings involving citizens who agree to attend three sessions. The sessions deal with different topics. Session One, from April 27 to May 1, dealt broadly with what citizens appreciate about Decatur, what they see as problems, and what they'd like Decatur to be in the future. Session Two, from May 11 to May 15, dealt with six issue areas, from transportation and the environment to housing and healthy living. Session Three, from June 1 to June 5, dealt with connections and community roles.

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

Session One Ideas

In Session One, citizens were asked to answer five questions:

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

How is Decatur successful today?

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

- Festivals, Bandstands/Concerts
- Lots of support for causes
- Oakhurst Garden & DHS garden
- Library
- Cliff bus & MARTA
- School system
- Educational level of City residents
- Pedi cabs
- Greenspaces, cemetery, Scott Gardens, dog parks
- Girls & Boys Club
- REC Center-appeals to all ages
- South Decatur Community Center
- Zoning-limits on height, smart growth, good design
- Great schools – great teachers, active parents, walk-able neighborhood schools with lots of resources
- Community Involvement – evidence of a plan
- Community Government is accessible
- Public Safety
- Responsive City Service Providers (police)
- Vibrant Downtown
- Walk-able Community
- Great Restaurants

- Great Festivals – in particular the Decatur Book Festival
- Concerts on the Square
- Farmer's Market (Decatur)
- Proximity to the Dekalb Farmers Market
- DHS Sports Stadium Complex
- Diversity – in age, sexuality, race
- People seem to watch out for each other
- Decatur Rec
- GA Center for the Book – via the library
- Agnes Scott
- Having 3 MARTA Stops
- Our effort to be bike-friendly
- Community leaders do a great job securing grants
- Our leaders have proven to be great advocates for Decatur but we're proud to see them also involved as leaders regionally and state-wide
- Cliff Bus – through emory should be replicated throughout the city
- great activities
- People are well connected
- Walkable
- You know your neighbors
- Sidewalks
- Small school system
- Active living / Decatur Rec Center
- City can provide al daily needs
- Privately owned eateries
- Cafe Style restaurants / outside dining
- Strong Police presence
- Safe
- Festivals/Cultural activities - book festival, beer festival, beach party
- Something for everyone
- Always options for activity
- City Government - very helpful, goes beyond
- Pay-as-you-Throw - far ahead of other communities, special to Decatur
- Recycling
- Volunteer coordinator
- Community Discussion Groups; i.e. Elizabeth Wilson's monthly discussion group; neighborhood groups. These promote civic engagement

- Opportunities for involvement
- Small Town Feel
- Schools - quality, neighborhood, parent involvement; tax structure allows everyone (people without children, seniors, and businesses) to share the burden of the costs
- Perception that everyone works together for the good of the community. Government, businesses and citizens all realize they have a vested interest to keep the city what they want it to be
- Festivals and Concerts-on-the-Square - festivals benefit the non profits and can not benefit a for profit business.
- Walkable
- Little Town/Big Services
- Safe
- Marta
- Police and Fire - community oriented service
- Business district support of schools and other aspects of city
- Diversity
- school system
- walkability
- having a voice
- easy access to public transportation
- personal attention from police and fire
- community activities: arts, entertainment, festivals, restaurants
- organic market
- farm-to-school
- community gardens
- diversity of student population, intentionally integrating schools
- homogenizing high school classes: differentiated learning
- neighborhoods are diverse across many differences: age, lifestyle, economic, racial, with and without children, etc.
- located conveniently: 25 minutes to everywhere
- nurturing: i.e. invitation to Global Village School
- people from all over the world: attracted by CDC, higher ed, Brickstore, Twains
- Varied Festivals that are community builders
- Walkable Downtown with vitality
- Maintained local identity
- Child Friendly community
- Schools are good
- Commitment to being a green community

- Commitment to encouraging a healthy lifestyle for residents
- Good neighborhood parks
- Creation of dog parks
- Housing types are diversified
- City has open and accessible government
- Commitment to encouraging economic and racial diversity
- Encouraging and supporting locally owned businesses
- Preservation of historic structures
- Encouraging farmers market and destination restaurants
- Creation of sense of public safety
- Creation of complete community
- Churches, schools, businesses, and government have good synergy
- Encouragement and support of sense of community among residents
- Walkability
- We like that we have a transparent, honest government
- We appreciate the visibility of the government in that the officials are accessible and attend community functions
- We have the feel of a small town within a big city
- We like the progressive philosophy of much of the community
- We appreciate our vibrant downtown with different business, restaurants, shops
- We like that Decatur is kid-friendly
- Decatur has a sense of nature - green spaces, parks natural areas
- Historic preservation is important in Decatur
- Activities are available for a multitude of generations
- We celebrate diversity in Decatur - we don't just accept it! Racial, Age, Lifestyle, Health, Income
- Planned growth has made Decatur great
- We are learning from our past
- We feel safe in Decatur
- We have confidence in our Public Safety and Public Works employees
- We appreciate that the city is a good employer and retains employees and the employees seem happy in their jobs and are pleasant for the public to deal with; they seem happy in their jobs
- Education is important in Decatur. We have high goals for our educational system, diversity is important in our education system, we have a commitment to succeed in our goals and the school system is a representational microcosm of the city values
- There is good cooperation between the city government, the business association and the community.
- School system

- MARTA
- City, businesses and institutions share space
- Public and private partnerships
- Strong sense of community
- Open-minded, diverse, inclusive
- Recycling
- Accessible and responsible government
- Child friendly activities and festivals
- Rec center activities for children and adults
- Walk-ability
- Community involvement - Participation
- Community involvement - Neighborhood associations
- Community involvement - Schools
- Community involvement - Commissions
- Community involvement - Strategic Plan
- Community involvement - Volunteer opportunities (coordinated well)
- Community involvement - Decatur 101
- Community involvement - Festivals
- Attraction - Festivals
- Attraction - Food/Restaurants
- Attraction - Bars
- Attraction - Farmer's Market
- Good Size – best of both worlds; suburban mentality in the city; urban vibe with a small town attitude
- Identity – sense of place, community, positive association, branding, unique (not suburban sameness)
- Arty – diversity, different, not homogenous
- Relatively well-governed – transparent, non-political, accessibility, open City Hall, responsive, accountable
- Schools
- Dog Park
- Safe – can walk around most places
- Public transportation – accessible, MARTA
- Pedestrian-friendly – basic needs met in the city limits and can get there by walking
- Satisfactory green space (could be better)
- Attractive to families
- County seat – courthouse

- Good job of bringing commercial in downtown
- 2 downtowns (Decatur square and Oakhurst)
- Rainy day fund – fiscally responsible
- Decatur blogs – social media
- Developing and preserving our green spaces.
- There is a strong sense of community, Small town atmosphere with big city amenities, We are people orientated
- Easy access to city government
- Good city services, Garbage and recycling services, Police department
- Open door policy with police department
- Not having to pre-sort our recycling
- Fire department helps with car seats and missing persons
- School System
- Scale and size of the community and the buildings downtown
- Churches are active within the community and will participate in other projects - not just their own events
- Festivals and events
- Marta being a part of the city (3 stations)
- Very walkable city
- Cooperation between Agnes Scott, City of Decatur Schools, and City of Decatur. (i.e. art displays in city library done by school children)
- Agnes Scott is more active with City of Decatur
- Strong non-profit involvement with city
- Having Hagar's House (homeless shelter) in city limits - so close to Marta, etc.
- Strong culture of volunteerism, Fundraising, Community involvement
- Embracing lower income groups (i.e. Adopt a elderly or low income [child] person at Christmas and provide gifts. Also the local churches collect, sort, and store the gifts.)
- Diversity - we have a strong starting point, Age, Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation
- Traffic is not as bad as other metro areas
- School system has good performance and reputation, support from the city.
- Schools are small and located in neighborhoods, making walking to school possible for many students
- Growth and development in Decatur have been accomplished with minimal negative impact on the quality of life
- Decatur has city center that people can walk to from nearly every neighborhood
- Decatur has a small town feel; it is a progressive and welcoming community
- Decatur has locally-owned, independent business that embody community spirit

- City officials and city service staff are approachable, involved and engaged, which facilitates quick response and changes
- An involved and engaged community results in active volunteerism, committed and vigilant neighborhood associations to keep City accountable, well-kept neighborhoods
- The community shops locally
- Level of community involvement gives the city broad appeal to people of different ages and lifestyles and creates a sense of stability and safety
- Government has made some good green decisions and considers sustainability in decision making process
- Decatur has nice green spaces, such as well-kept parks, and excellent festivals
- Decatur is fortunate to have large employers in or nearby the city and MARTA access to Atlanta
- Decatur is often ahead of the curve, for example affordable housing and streetscapes, and seeks out grant money to implement new ideas
- Churches, non-profits, and businesses cooperate with each other and often share resources, such as parking spaces, meeting spaces
- Decatur offers good value (ROI) for taxes
- Downtown renaissance amazing, nice place to hang out
- City staff responsive, user-friendly
- Active living; recreation center, parks
- Walkable; downtown, crosswalks
- Diversity
- Sense of community; interaction, openness, friendliness, involvement, pride of ownership
- Transformation of downtown streetscapes
- City school system
- Low crime rate; responsive police and fire
- Less restrictive rules for homes - no covenants
- Traffic flow; balance with needs of pedestrians
- Bikeability, walkability
- Public education on rules for cars, bikes, and pedestrians
- Encourage a diverse business climate
- Refine/define what R60 zoning means (as well as other zonings); current ordinances seem arbitrary and subjective; need to define residential zoning more exactly
- Control of city spending; fiscal responsibility
- Light pollution (example: nighttime lighting from Columbia Seminary)
- Noise and quality of life issues
- Good social involvement: Lots of community activity: Book fair, beer/wine, arts events
- Family oriented, see families everywhere, family centered activities

- Walk able city
- City Services i.e. School system
- City supports business community
- Efficient and responsible city government
- Citizen participation in community
- Walkability is the product of design and infrastructure
- Political leadership and staff
- Good public transportation
- Decatur is safe
- Advantages of a small town in a major metropolitan area
- We participate and volunteer to make things happen.
- We celebrate books and a variety of events and festivals.
- We care and want to be engaged.
- Parents care and participate as a community in the schools.
- We have a high quality of schools and good results from schools.
- Maintaining longevity of connections and relationships throughout our lives.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Service Project and tutoring program at the schools.
- People are willing to help when they see a need in their community.
- Recycling program and waste diversion are a good model.
- Walkability makes for a livable community.
- Independent businesses thrive and Decatur is conducive to entrepreneurs.
- Parks are well maintained and the recreation program through Decatur Recreation department is great.
- Cemetery acts as a great addition to the greenspace in Decatur.
- Local government is transparent, open door, and these policies lead to an engaged citizenry.
- While there is some crime, it is much less than surrounding area, such as Atlanta.
- Police respond very quickly to problems.
- variety of things to do: festivals, activities, Oakhurst Garden, volunteer events
- togetherness, sense of community
- diversity: age, race, ethnicity
- free cultural programs: lectures at the library, music
- feel safe walking about (safer than previous home in NJ)
- very walkable community, sidewalks most places
- good school system
- neighborhood association brings people together, fosters community pride
- animal-friendly; dog parks; get acquainted with people much faster when walking a dog
- City management is very responsive to problems, questions

- great recycling program; love not having to sort recyclables; sanitation service will pick up most things; electronics recycling days at the High School
- spring is great here, so much green!
- Decatur manages to maintain unbuilt space, preserves green space; Cemetery
- Decatur 101, Citizens Public Safety Academy (participants weren't sure of official name of the public safety program, at least two had participated)
- community includes universities, hospitals
- attractive place to retire
- lots of small businesses; independent restaurants and retailers (as opposed to chains)
- chickens allowed in City; goat co-op recently organized or about to be
- town square is good; fun, energetic space
- Decatur must offer a lot for kids, see them all over the place
- active Rec Center
- variety of religious institutions, lots of different denominations and faiths
- outdoor-eating areas, sidewalk tables
- festivals: Arts, Beer, Book , Wine, Beach Party, Easter Egg Hunt, 4th of July, Christmas Tree, Jazz Nights, House Walk [sic], Garden Walk [sic], Old House Fair, Used Book Sale
- Decatur Focus, although sometimes news is outdated by the time it is delivered
- Community of people and families.
- Your voice is heard, respected, and responded to by city officials. (Example: emails from residents expressing concerns are forwarded around within the city departments).
- Close proximity to friends and neighbors (i.e. small geographic area).
- Lots of opportunities for people to get to know each other.
- People look out for each other.
- Preserving and valuing what we have; for example by supporting a local business instead of purchasing outside of the area.
- Diversity of shops in small area.
- Developing a culture where driving is optional.
- Safe community ("can walk around at night").
- Teens not as anxious to begin driving because much of what they need is accessible in walking/biking distance. If they do drive, Decatur is ideal area because speed limit is no more than 45mph in the city.
- Transportation/accessible (MARTA).
- Safe, healthy, free/inexpensive activities.
- Great schools with passionate staff and teachers as well as high parental involvement.
- People in Decatur/community gets involved and takes ownership for creating this place/environment.

- Focus on sustainable living (i.e. idling campaign etc).
- Decatur is progressive; one step ahead of others.
- Strategic planning process with citizen involvement and 80% success on last plan.
- Responsive police and fire.
- Festivals.
- Marta is easily assessable, good public transportation
- Decatur is a city that facilitates walking
- Decatur has a small town feel in a big city
- Quality school system that services a diverse community
- City government does a great job of servicing it's citizens ie: sanitation dept
- Decatur has a robust parks and rec focus
- Decatur residents are passionate about their city
- Residential stability, people are happy to stay here for their lifetime
- Affordable housing considering the 'intown' lifestyle
- Decatur citizens care about environmental issues
- Decatur is a safe city
- Decatur government is responsive to its citizens
- Live and work
- Community
- Education (caring teachers)
- Safety (responsive police)
- Scale of city - not too big not too small
- Tree canopy
- Shops/retail
- Restaurants
- Approachable government
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Sustainable development
- recycling program
- energy efficient choices
- green citizenry
- Active living program
- bike paths
- recreation
- Mixed use development
- Agnes Scott is an asset to Decatur
- Parks are great

- Cultural opportunities for kids
- visiting symphony
- arts
- Decatur Focus newsletter and city website are great sources of information
- Transition was pre/post Olympics
- More social interaction
- Small town feel is maintained
- Balance between growth and expansion
- Adopted 'Smart Growth'
- Influenced by academics and scientific professionals example Emory, Agnes Scott and CDC
- Opportunities to know the civic leaders/accessibility of city government
- Open straight forward dialogue about competing interests
- Strong sense of community
- People live outside their homes
- Good options for social activity
- Generates desire to stay within the community
- Good transportation options within and to get to out
- Small town feel with close access to Atlanta
- Opportunity for residents to become involved and volunteer
- MLK service project
- Activities that foster relationships
- Good school system
- Environmentally conscious
- Professional government that is well administered
- Feel safe; PD has presence and quick response
- Feel safe; FD has presence and quick response
- Proximity to top medical facilities
- Closeness to medical facilities promotes sense of safety for elderly and families with young children
- DeKalb Farmers Market
- Green space; community gardens that serve as model to others (i.e. Oakhurst)
- Feeling of stewardship
- Dog friendly
- Good night life
- Unique businesses and restaurants
- Small town feel
- Diverse business community

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

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

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

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

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

- Quick access to MARTA and transportation alternatives
- Safety-low crime, walk home from dinner at 11 and not worry, access to police and their responsiveness
- Ownership of living here- people take pride, invest interest in city, good people live here
- Walkability to places is high. Square and neighborhood walks
- Good schools
- Teamwork - individual working together
- Where neighbors are friends
- There are 66 houses in my neighborhood, I know 55 of those families
- Great school system
- Neighborhood parks are a success
- Walkable city with a neighborhood feel
- Vibrant downtown with festivals, events, concerts and community events
- Effective Downtown Development Authority - resourceful in finding funding for community projects
- RECYCLE
- Environmentally aware community
- Having pathways (bikes)
- Approachable and helpful city government (blogging)
- 3 MARTA stations within city limits
- Small town feel
- Generations of families staying in Decatur
- Walkable / Bikeable
- Community is interactive with its government
- A diversity of events bring people together
- Needs are met locally
- A vibrant commercial district
- A family / everybody friendly community
- Citizens are allowed to speak their mind
- Good community and government communication
- Parks and gardens
- A community the "pushes the envelope" - a trendsetter in Environment
- A community the "pushes the envelope" - a trendsetter in Active living
- A community the "pushes the envelope" - a trendsetter in Mixed use development
- A community responsive to citizens and neighbors
- MLK service day
- Active neighborhood watches

- A safe community
- Good schools
- City involves citizens
- Reputation of schools
- Wonderful restaurants
- Events and festivals
- Proud of reputation
- Walkability of Decatur
- Children can walk safely to schools
- Has its own services: fire, police
- Provides hometown feel
- Proximity to Atlanta
- Green space
- Safe, little crime
- Response time of police
- Progressive: wi-fi, zip cars
- Mature trees
- Historic character
- Urban character, pedestrian atmosphere, sidewalks
- Diverse population race, age, socio-economic
- Great neighborhoods
- ASC, CTS and Emory anchors our community
- Cultural events the colleges open to the community
- Can live without a car. Can walk everywhere
- Access to MARTA, Cliff Bus allows ability to get to employment and entertainment outside of Decatur
- Walk-ability
- Safe atmosphere for children
- Emotionally invested residents
- Good school system- community buy-in, active parents
- Events, festivals
- Can walk to so much- pubs, restaurants
- Racial and economic diversity
- Quirky people embraced
- People are "characters" and that's OK
- There are downtown destinations (downtown Decatur and Oakhurst), sense of place, quality core, local businesses

- Art, music- activities show support
- Public art- book and art festival, music and beer festival
- Creativity is valued
- All activities- tons and tons, vibrant
- Small scale- accessible
- Wi-fi
- Personal, accessible government makes problems manageable
- Fire and police department- friendly, warm, good response
- Decatur Focus, blogs/website- feels like community
- Government builds community
- Taxes- at least get what pay for
- MARTA access- 3 stops, can bike and walk
- Bike paths, sidewalks
- Recycling- no sorting, quick pickup, wide variety of items
- Pay as you go garbage bags
- Extra courtesy for elderly (garbage pickup, lower taxes)
- Service day (MLK day)
- Volunteer opportunities-n church, seminary, Hagars House, DCM (30 churches)
- Berkley meets Mayberry
- Social and Political Diversity
- Voice in Government
- Responsive Government
- Viable, Interesting, Locally-Owned and Diversity of Businesses
- Sustainable
- Find it all here, convenience, compact
- Active streets
- Nice aesthetics
- Sense of community, one big neighborhood
- Walkable, can leave car in driveway
- Accessibility to MARTA
- Civic engagement and events form community
- Pubs, Churches, Schools within 1 mile
- Accessible neighborhood greenspace, parks and dog parks
- Diversity of families
- Respect
- Cradle to Grave
- Recycling program

- Volunteer coordinator employed by City
- Schools, special education outreach and programs
- Tight-knit community
- Walkable
- Safe
- Accessible
- A good variety of independent restaurants and stores
- Restaurants are affordable
- The square
- Everything is there
- Open minded attitudes
- Love it - a walking city; banks, bars, businesses, food, churches
- That Decatur has become a walk-able community, especially around the Decatur Square
- There are opportunity to participate and volunteer include volunteering with city government, the school strategic planning process and the many city festivals
- Decatur is environmentally conscious
- Participants specifically cited the pay-as-you-throw recycling program, community gardens, and the farmers market as good examples of this (environmentally conscious)
- Dog parks were cited as another community success
- The schools are "real community schools" and have a diverse student population
- The baccalaureate program and strong parental involvement were also cited as specific examples of positives within the school
- Decatur is "21st Century minded", meaning that the city uses a variety of modern technology to enhance itself such as blogs, the city wi-fi and by providing access to information in a variety of ways
- There are lots of things to do and places to go, and not just on the Decatur Square
- Specifically, participants cited the book festival, beer festival, wine festival and 4th of July bike parade as good things to do
- The city has an abundance of independent merchants and non-chain restaurants
- Decatur is a safe community
- Specific examples of this (safety) are the pedestrian crossings and kid-friendly parks, events where you meet your neighbors (such as this planning process), an "accessible" policy force with a "good presence" on bikes and in schools whether they are on or off duty
- Decatur has density downtown, resulting in more housing being placed downtown and more people "out"
- Small city "in-town"
- Neighborhood schools

- Downtown - "Charming" not cookie cutter, has uniqueness too it
- Funky Restaurants with lots of variety
- Walk-ability - "car-free", always people walking around, can recognize people/make new friends, MARTA (Decatur, Avondale, and East Lake stations)
- Close to Atlanta
- Safety - Quick police response, look out for residents, part of and integral to the community
- Diversity - socio-economic, ethic, racial, residency, age, acceptance of differences
- Diversity of entertainment - festivals, music, beach party, organized well, both official and unofficial community gatherings (people camping out for fireworks display on July 4th)
- Neighborhood Association - Winnona Park listserv, events scheduled, helps connect community
- Well-kept secret - no interstate
- Rec center (Active living) - forms partnerships with schools / community
- Library
- Variety of shopping choices - Terrific Thursdays in the fall
- Living in Mayberry
- Central area - Decatur Square, compact area, only 4 sq miles with lots of things to do
- No high rises
- Lots of Trees
- Passionate conversation around bicycles. Everyone likes bikes they are fun and 100% efficient.
- Accessible for people with disabilities
- Easy to walk around city
- Responsive government
- Good school system
- Strategic Planning process
- Forward thinking community
- Good basic services like sanitation
- People help each other
- People get to know each other
- Diversity- everyone can live or work or play in city
- Motivated by integrity
- Lots of diversity in nature
- Feels like a unique place with concentration of energy
- Strong tax digest
- Fiscally responsible government
- Diversity of age groups
- Accessible government
- Places to gather downtown

- Dynamic environment where you can sleep, work, plan and shop
- Fun for kids
- Great services
- Town is like an oasis
- Focus on independent businesses
- Strong independent restaurants
- Large tree canopy
- Multiple types of birds
- Top notch Recreation programs for youth and adults
- Decatur 101 unique and shows that the government welcomes involvement
- You know your neighbors in Decatur, people pitch in and it gives Decatur a small town feel
- One of the few intown neighborhoods that is affordable and has a great public school system
- Kids can play free and roam (i.e. concerts at the square) there is a safe, community feel and a “village” watching out for each others’ kids
- So many people walk to neighborhood schools, very pedestrian friendly and great walkability
- Diversity of age, culture, socio-econ, sexual orientation, political and city residents seem to embrace diversity
- Police service that watches your home when you are out of town and in general the police are friendly, helpful and involved in the community
- The restaurants are many and they are accessible and TASTY!
- There is a real, authentic interest in the environment by city and residents, and commitment to environmentalism by city, not just because it is trendy (Pay as you throw, recycling, gardens, OCGP, Farm2School)
- Decatur is progressive (feels like cities in the west)
- Historic preservation matters, green spaces have been preserved, Decatur Preservation Alliance, city ordinances, etc that support preservation
- There is a mentality of all for one and one for all – people volunteer and there is a paid volunteer coordinator – sometimes people volunteer at festivals and other times they attend while others volunteer.
- There is a real partnership b/w the city and the residents. City is open to input, does proactive planning, seeks input. City Commission meetings are accessible (as our City Commissioners) and city departments are both accessible AND professional, focus on customer service and low on bureaucracy.
- Touch a truck – Decatur has the cleanest garbage trucks of any city
- The Decatur Focus keeps us informed

- The festivals provide something for everyone, variety that suits different interests, those with kids and without, various ages, all can find something in the many offerings throughout the year (mention of DBF)
- Great communication between city and residents
- (with city officials, police etc.; through website, Focus newsletter, etc.)
- Taxes are high, but results are tangible
- School system
- Decatur is a destination (examples: Beer Festival, Arts Festival, Book Festival; community involvement all over)
- Development is controlled and balanced, preserving the best, open to new ways; good guidelines
- Parks and greenspaces (Dog parks, McKoy, Glenlake; needs of all residents are addressed - something for everyone)
- Goin' for the grants! -- Taxpayers like!
- schools
- density means car-free is possible
- walkability
- community
- development plan

What are our current problems?

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

- Some minority students & parents to not feel any ownership of the Decatur schools
- No "voice" for disadvantaged kids in the school system
- Traffic congestion and signalization
- Mixed use zoning with incompatible uses
- Antiquated building codes
- Don't want Downtown Decatur to become another Buckhead-noise, congestion
- Pedestrian "unfriendly" intersections and dangerous intersections
- Property taxes-reduce age limit on school exemption to 65.
- Garbage pickup (would like 2x week) and no "pay as you throw"
- Overly strong influence of the City Manager
- Lack of bike lanes and safe routes/bike safety for kids
- Too many restaurants and not enough grocery stores
- No Senior Center or Drugstore (Oakhurst)
- No shuttle for seniors
- Lack of an affluent Black/Hispanic/Asian middle class

- CSX is irresponsible
- CSX divides the city and limits walk-ability
- Taxes – if too high will price people out of the city
- Lack of clear understanding of where the borders of the city lie complicates services for those residents on the fringes of the city borders
- Lack of greenspace
- Age of Renfroe and DHS and Police Station
- Improve bike-ability on Commerce
- The relationship between the city and the county should be improved
- Traffic on College seems to be worse
- Bus service is being cut on Ponce (#2 Bus)
- Pay-as-you-throw seems elitist – we already pay for garbage collection, why do we have to buy the bags?
- Lack of recycling for commercial sector
- General inconsistency surrounding recycling
- Chick-Fil-A dumpster is disgusting
- concerns about the City Schools of Decatur being sustainable
- Need a vibrant newspaper – could be virtual
- Internet service should be improved
- City employees can't afford to live here
- 1010 Clairemont – needs to be solved
- Potential for being too exclusive (in a pejorative sense).
- Lack of greenspace, especially in downtown
- need more bathrooms at parks
- need to maximize park space that we do have
- Downtown too vertical, buildings too tall
- Design Challenges / Density challenges on square
- Connecting neighborhoods to activity centers
- Affordable housing
- Workforce housing
- More Single story housing for seniors
- Performance gaps between schools
- Need to improve social services
- Many kids fall through the "cracks" / graduating w/o being literate
- need tutoring
- need literacy programs for students
- Divide/lack of communication between school board, city government & elected officials

- Need better access to information about educational programs
- Strengthen parent/child relationships among lower performing students
- Need to fully use strengths
- better use of rec center
- more after school programs at schools
- More youth jobs
- Programs for 14-17 age group
- Programs for women
- Better localized bus service, linking neighborhoods
- Overflow parking at library/rec center
- Parking on the Square - more signage directing drivers to parking decks
- Parking on the Square - free or pay parking?
- Parking on the Square - More private lots should be made available
- Parking on the Square - Lack of parking restricts access to businesses
- Aging City employees, will plans get done if these people retire
- Empty Retail space
- Taxes - high. Decatur is soon becoming unaffordable to middle class
- Lack of annexation - fewer people have to pay higher services
- Gentrification - causes lack of diversity; high taxes; unaffordable to live here; people having to leave homes
- Traffic/Parking
- Growth - growth is not always good; even if it is “smart” growth
- Festivals - becoming too many, too large
- Attitudes of racism, classism, snobbish
- skateboarders in public/common places : downtown, schools – harming marble, paint, etc.
- development and code issues
- business opportunities (increase tax base) vs. quality of life
- lack of clarity/info about parking options (booted in CVS parking lot)
- inefficient energy use: i.e. no solar for new school construction projects
- cycling and walking transportation: need for bike paths/lanes, current bike parking doesn't work, need for sidewalks
- sharing city – school facilities: Decatur Ballet's difficult relationship with DHS performing arts facility
- poor customer service at city hall: an experience of rude – incompetent treatment by city hall staff
- not enough ethnic diversity
- rat problem: eating gardens
- animal control understaffed: loose wild dogs

- private schools often left out of the conversation, they're part of the city too
- Lack of safe pedestrian connection between north and south Decatur
- Lack of public parking and information on where such parking can be found
- Lack of affordable housing
- Decreasing racial diversity
- Lack of adequate storm water runoff controls
- Lack of enforcement of pedestrian rules on crossing streets
- Lack of enforcement of rules for motor vehicles respecting crosswalks
- Lack of harmonious design scheme for MARTA plaza and square area
- Lack of consistency in directional signage language and abbreviations
- Conflict between city government and school system over annexation
- We face financial challenges in the city - we have high taxes and they are getting higher
- Our small size is sometimes a liability in that we can't always realize economies of scale/size
- Physical development in the city places stress on the infrastructure and on nature/trees
- The state of our roads is not good. Perhaps we need to build stronger relationships with the county and the Department of Transportation to address this.
- We are a small voice in a large county. It's hard for us to get the county to do things for us.
- We're different from the more conservative areas surrounding us
- Airplane noise
- Air, water and noise pollution is too high
- Water conservation is not as important as it should be
- Parking requirements/code results in an impact on development
- We are concerned about our physical safety in the parking decks (perhaps have patrols?)
- We have residential parking issues especially on residential streets close to shops
- There is a lack of support for walking/biking/running. We need to be more exercise friendly.
- We need to work on adapting to being a truly urban area.
- Taxes
- We need bike lanes
- Not a variety of stores (many are expensive) (need stores that sell every day things)
- Volume and control of traffic limits walking, biking, etc.
- Overflow parking is not enforced—resident only signs not enforced (commercial/residential conflict)
- On-street parking issue—blocked driveways
- Not enough affordable housing
- Limited housing options (number of unrelated people living together?; garage apartments = restrictive laws)
- Too many laws?

- Too few laws?
- Taxes are high, services are great. Need to expand tax base. Told different things would need to happen to lower taxes (e.g., new condos would help), but they haven't gone down. Now told need more businesses to share tax burden and lower for residents.
- Paramedics are limited – DeKalb County might have to step in for certain things that the City of Decatur paramedics cannot do.
- Develop Commercial opportunities and property. 1 or 2 landlords in particular are problems (e.g., Vision Properties). Expand East. Develop Big H.
- Need to focus on non-downtown property. Vacant lots. City is not proactive enough, needs to take initiative (will act when issues are brought to their attention, but citizens would like to see proactive action).
- City needs to follow their own guidelines for development – some things happened too quickly, no resident input.
- Antiquated zoning laws – e.g., autos were more important 40 years ago when zoning laws were drafted, now restaurants need a waiver to get parking. Too many variances are needed. Just change zoning laws to avoid numerous, repetitive variances.
- Oakhurst sidewalks – need more, and the current ones are in disrepair
- Some basics are missing from downtown (especially Oakhurst)
- Missing - All-hours grocery store
- Missing - Chain clothing store (e.g., Gap, Chicos)
- Missing - Bakery
- Missing - Liquor store
- Green space/Environmental - Community garden
- Green space/Environmental - Utilizing space that is available (e.g., flood zone that cannot be built on anyway), walking trail
- Green space/Environmental - Water in creeks polluted – Alkaline and sewer leaking
- Green space/Environmental - Drainage/flood issues
- Green space/Environmental - When presented the idea for community garden, got run around, sent to endless officials
- More fully-utilized city property (e.g., schools – let community use) – better coordination needed between schools and city
- Traffic - Hard to cross train tracks – lights at tracks are impossible, not coordinated, only a few places to cross
- Traffic - Scott Blvd. – too high speed, not pedestrian-friendly, dangerous to cross; too slow with heavy traffic
- Traffic - Jefferson and Ansley – people roll through stop sign

- Traffic - Too many crossing guards at Renfroe and Decatur – difficult to drive, have waited 30 minutes
- Traffic - Close Ponce to vehicle traffic between Church and Commerce (European model) – turn parking in front of BrickStore to green space, expand restaurant patios
- More seating in downtown (e.g., MARTA plaza – possible model: Colony Square entrance to Ansley Park)
- Be fiscally responsible, don't need to do everything, use restraint (e.g., Oakhurst firehouse over budget)
- Trying to maintain our diversity, Economic diversity, Elderly population - higher costs, higher taxes more of an issue
- Changing Demographics - increase in number of white / affluent population
- Less neighborly in same neighborhood
- Influx of new residents from outside is leading to a change in the small-town feel / culture
- Achievement gap in school system, Need more parental involvement
- City needs a bowling alley (within city limits) that has family friendly amenities (i.e. arcade, toddler play area, etc.)
- City needs a central playhouse / theater with special events venues available for public rental
- Growing traffic challenges, Speeds are increasing, Volume of traffic increasing, Neighborhoods are being used as cut-throughs for other areas
- Higher taxes are a concern for those on a fixed income
- Balancing our scale (size) and our city services
- Growing our tax base
- Concern for all about our rising taxes (not just those on fixed income)
- Development and annexation
- Balancing growth and higher densities vs. (protecting) existing neighborhoods
- Need more housing for disabled residents (Park Trace is not enough)
- Need more senior housing, Large rooms, Affordable
- Within easy walking distance to downtown for someone in her 90s
- Addressing traffic along the Clairemont corridor, Connecting Decatur to Emory, Getting people out of their cars, Safety, Pollution, Preventing accidents (children being hit by vehicles)
- (City is not) pedestrian friendly enough (i.e. the cross-walk in-front of Parkers on Ponce), Need to change our culture - we disobey our own laws (Decatur residents are a big part of the problem in not following the laws to protect pedestrians)
- Build better understanding of our parking decks
- Shared use for parking - office building and apartment complex
- Issue of Fidelity Banking sharing parking with church and people crossing 5 lanes of traffic
- Poor community awareness of available parking

- Need more streetlights (particularly near county office buildings)
- Need another post office
- How do we increase locally grown / healthy foods, Community gardens, Building awareness
- Creating community gardens
- Healthy eating is a building block for healthy lifestyle, Create partnerships between restaurants, schools, and farmers, Example: encourage others to follow in the footsteps of Cakes & Ale (who grow their own produce)
- Build a safe environment for kids to walk to school, Infrastructure (sidewalks), Safety: traffic and crime, We used to have this in Decatur, Safe havens along walking routes (Block Parents), Can also improve health, Need crossing guards during evening rush hour for those kids who have after school activities
- Encourage more parental participation / more community involvement
- Balance the good and the bad with technology
- Increase broadband coverage (and access)
- Include broadband for residents of the housing authority (this is an economic barrier that should be eliminated)
- Attract more tech savvy / creative businesses
- Banning leaf blower (noise / pollution)
- Banning cell phones
- Very few bike lanes and bike paths
- Little support for starting independently owned businesses
- High taxes put Decatur in danger of pricing people/populations with fewer resources
- Concern about long-term financial viability of the City
- Decatur's preservation codes aren't strict enough; there are too many code variances and inconsistent enforcement of codes; review of codes needed
- Decatur lacks some important amenities (i.e. grocery stores on the South Side, movie theater)
- Few nightlife options downtown aside from eating and drinking
- Financial profits and bigger is better mentality seems to guide new development; New development often doesn't match the aesthetic or ethos of Decatur
- Decatur doesn't provide enough housing and access for people with disabilities
- Risk of becoming a homogenous community (i.e. only (white) people with wealth live in Decatur)
- Decatur hasn't properly considered the negative impact of annexation on the community
- School board and the City don't seem to be on the same page; there needs to be agreement over long-term planning and better communication
- Where do we want to go?
- High taxes; people struggling to pay, some are leaving the city due to high taxes

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

- Difficult to ride bikes, especially with children.
- Missing the Christmas tree lighting on top of Fidelity Building (it was a true community event)
- Traffic is too fast for walking and biking.
- Tough to choose a beer parlor!
- taxes are too high
- community not as diverse as previously, seems to be flattening out, becoming whiter
- challenge: how to keep economic diversity while maintaining level of services that we have
- miss having a local newspaper
- challenging to be a pedestrian in Decatur; better than it used to be but safety could be improved; need both visual and audible signals at crosswalks
- need better traffic control, better signage; traffic has increased in recent years
- seems that many small businesses have failed, is the City supporting them as well as it could?
- some areas don't feel safe, e.g., around the MARTA station entrance; should ban loitering
- parking is difficult at times; need better information about where parking is available at different times of day; feel parking spaces are there, but don't know where they are
- don't need any more upscale/high-end residential development downtown; contributing to decline in economic diversity in the community; HOWEVER, only affluent can afford to move in?
DON'T WANT DECATUR TO BECOME BUCKHEAD
- Need to keep and enforce ordinances limiting building height
- Need more small grocers within walking distance, stocking locally produced foods; City should incentivize that type of small business
- protect green space and tree canopy in neighborhoods and downtown; need more trees downtown; City should seek to acquire undeveloped tracts and protect from development
- City should oversee vacant commercial properties to improve safety and community image; can they be torn down if vacant too long?
- Decatur is clean and tidy overall, but still lots of sidewalk litter, especially around the MARTA station
- Skateboarders need to be monitored, kept from terrorizing pedestrians and damaging sidewalk areas (specific mention of Church/Ponce intersection and immediate area); need a skate park - most participants unaware of the one in McKoy Park, and speculated Oakhurst is "too far away"
- Need more community involvement by younger people, teens; participants wondered what high school students might have to say at a session like this
- Could establish an Art Park: space young people could use to express their creativity, unstructured, e.g., a wall where they could create graffiti and then photograph it for later exhibition
- Lack of affordable housing (Ex. 2 bedroom 1 bath house in city is \$250,000; can get a 5 bedroom house just outside city boundaries for same price).

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

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

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

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

- Safety: dogs in parks where kids are need to stay out of play areas, owners need to be more responsible with their dogs, the increase in traffic has lead to safety concerns, need more bike and pedestrian safety on Adams Street and College Avenue
- Parking: there is enough parking but people don't know about it, we need to raise awareness about shared parking, we need a comprehensive parking plan, there are safety concerns when it comes to parking in park garages/ramps/decks(GRD's), parking GRD's need "way finding" signs to help locate your vehicle or to get out of the parking GRD on foot, there needs to be physical connections between parking GRD and to major destinations, parking GRD's need more lighting, parking GRD's need to be branded with art or possible a color (ex. If I say I parked in the yellow deck, everyone should know where that is), parking GRD's are too dreary, there are many opportunities for public art on parking GRD's, Ponce de Leon Avenue should be closed during the evening and traffic re-routed on Commerce Drive, we need a tunnel or bridge to get over busy streets
- Theater: missing enough live theater
- City officials started a process for discussing infill houses. Then suddenly they passed a lot of ordinances out of the blue. It seemed to circumvent the process they had proposed. It was disconnected from community input and seemed like it was done in the dark of night.
- In some instances, the zoning laws are too vague. Situations arise for which no clear guidance exists.
- Example: the situation with Peer Support & Wellness in Decatur Heights. Even the Zoning Board expressed discontent with inadequate guidance in the ordinances.
- Sometimes city officials close off communication with citizens on an issue because they say they are not required to solicit community input on that issue.
- There are a few traffic chokepoints caused by the city's traffic calming strategies.
- Specifically - the section of West Ponce near the post office and Church Street near Glenlake Park.
- The intersection at McDonough/Howard/College at the railroad tracks is a mess - a tragedy waiting to happen - especially with a school so close to it. The light is confusing and the signage is inadequate.
- There are not enough bike lanes in the city.
- Decatur is not nearly as bike-able as it is walkable.
- I would rather my child walk than ride a bike in Decatur.
- There are a lot of potholes.
- And some of the potholes seem to get worse as the city tries to fix them.
- The cost of housing is a problem.
- There is no way that our family could live here if we hadn't moved in 16 years ago.
- Teachers cannot afford to live here.

- There is a lack of affordable housing for low and middle income families.
- The property taxes are high.
- (But the group agreed that the benefits of living in Decatur are worth the cost)
- Do the regular events (beer festival, arts festival etc) cost the city more than they generate in increased business and other related revenues?
- Some events create problems and annoyances for residents - parking problems, traffic.
- People coming to events from outside Decatur often don't show respect for the place and the people who live here.
- There aren't enough tennis facilities. You have to drive to Glenlake to get the key for the Oakhurst courts.
- The sign-up process for recreation programs is plagued with problems.
- TRAFFIC. Widespread discussion included signaling problems (especially at South Candler and College), congestion, the balance of vehicle (cars and trucks) traffic flow versus pedestrian crossings and alternative vehicle (like bicycles, etc.) right of ways, and the lack of traffic calming measures on some streets.
- ANNEXATION. A mixed conversation noting the desire for obtaining more commercial tax properties but recognizing possible negative impact on the capacity of the school system. Included was a comment in favor of annexing the residential area on the south side near Midway.
- GREENSPACE, RECREATION LIMITATIONS. Little additional property available for these functions.
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING. This was a big issue for the group. It was summed up with the term "gentrification" and the expressed concern that the City is losing its diversity. Additional thoughts included concerns over losing the character of the residential neighborhoods, and the fact that the City is not attracting young African Americans.
- SCHOOL ISSUES. The specific focus here had to do with capacity.
- WE COULD BE GREENER. Though City administered building efforts are providing an emphasis in this area, greater effort can be made with respect to our school buildings, codes, construction incentives, etc.
- BIKE PATHS. More of them in more places.
- RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY. It was noted that having the CSX line through the heart of the City presented a unique series of problems like safety issues with kids crossing the tracks, while also limiting the City's options because of federal rail regulations.
- OAKHURST EMPTY LOT. There was an expressed desire for suitable development of the Oakhurst former grocery store property now occupied by Navo Church.
- Want a movie theater that plays dollar movies or independent films like LeFont Theaters/Midtown Plaza
- There is nothing to do for teenagers at night

- Want a performing arts theater that is NOT affiliated with the school
- Beacon complex is unattractive to look at. It supports a lot of activities and should be in better condition
- Decatur is only supportive of certain kinds of art. It does not support hip hop, ballroom or sculpture
- Different types of art are supported but not well publicized
- Have not seen a lot of public information about dance in Decatur. Can host dance shows on the Square.
- There are a lot of restaurants but they are not affordable for teenagers. If they are affordable, they are unhealthy. It seems like restaurants are excluding other types of retail
- We are pushing out poor people
- Lack of interesting, cheap restaurants. Like those that immigrants bring to a community
- On the city government website it's difficult to find a city employee's phone number
- Need traffic sensor for Commerce southbound into Howard Ave. Currently the light is over 90 seconds, usually with no one coming.
- Post-fire Trakside Tavern plywood temporary wall blocks half the sidewalk
- Empty Trakside building an eyesore
- Empty space next to NAVO building an eyesore, could contribute much more to the community and tax base if leased out to smaller businesses
- Lack of cooperation and communication between county and city -feeling like the “step child” ,and that DeKalb resents success of Decatur
- Lack of sensible plan for annexation, lack of information regarding annexation, lack of community involvement in the process
- Lack of affordable housing, multidimensional: grown kids can't afford to come back at buy here, elderly has tough time staying no real retirement community,
- “sitting” transportation plan- lack of more progress
- old zoning codes- aggressive commercial vs. resident, transitional zoning, lack of neighborhood input in zoning
- traffic management (timing, new sidewalk distribution)
- airplane noise
- City Schools of Decatur administration not like COD- (responsive, feedback, relationship sour)
- Partnership between city and school
- Everyday commodities not available (printer toner)
- Fear of becoming homogenous
- Builders (developers) find city difficult to work with
- Expensive parking meters
- Taxes may drive people out of the community

- Tax level can affect diversity (ethnic, age, socio-economic level)
- Aging infrastructure (sewers)
- Rush hour traffic
- Balancing vehicular, pedestrian and bike traffic
- Inconsistencies with building permits (sidewalks)
- Instances of de facto segregation in some community events, Religious, Social-economic, Family makeup
- A need for more events structured to attract diverse audiences
- Barriers to walkability, Railroad, Dead end streets
- Vacant houses - code enforcement
- Traffic issues - 2nd Avenue
- Traffic issues - Ponce @ rush hour
- Traffic issues - Railroad crossing
- Traffic issues - Traffic light timing
- Traffic issues - Speeding
- Diversity in housing - Affordable for all
- Diversity in housing - Life cycle
- Affordable taxes
- Storm drainage and flood plains
- Perception of inadequate parking
- Future school capacity and maintaining quality
- Sidewalks that are unusable
- Unkempt lots
- Unhappy with school charter: the internal means for input (SLT) largely ignored by school superintendent
- Disconnect with city commission and school board: 4-5 academy moving to former 5th Ave. school, not walkable or central to community
- Former West Chester School used entirely for school administration--Why?
- More communication from School Administration
- School system always in turmoil
- School board has open discussions then ignores all input
- CSD riding on reputation it no longer deserves
- Needs to be mutual support between city and school district
- Schools impact real estate and business so schools have to continue to be strong
- Success of schools impact success of city
- Negative change in education in schools in the last 20 years: No longer being taught facts, going through the motions over being taught depth of subject matter

- Charter school system perceived as private school. This is not true
- Schools need round table discussions
- Need to avoid urban blight: graffiti and trash
- Infrastructure problems: traffic, poor or no sidewalks, bad intersections--especially Candler and E. College, E. College and Commerce for children walking to school, dangerous railroad crossings for pedestrians
- Improve green space and add to it
- Make lot next to Dairy Queen a green space
- Complete all bike trail connections
- More bike friendly for recreational and commuting bikers
- City government needs to be more open regarding planning and zoning with newer zoning ordinances
- Need more 5 story high buildings to bring in tax revenue
- High taxes (understand but a lot, strain on mid-income & who can move in)
- Limited affordable housing
- Concern that low-income, moderate and older residents being forced out
- Demographics becoming less diverse (racial, economic, age)
- Economic environment may make people want to sell because property is high
- Decatur realty- force residents to sell at low prices or force to sell at high prices, lack of honesty and clarity, cliques
- Atlanta realtors won't come here (maybe has changed now)
- School system - lack of foresight, lots of change/movement, concerns about trailers. Is there a long-term plan? What is the basis of decisions?
- Clairemont trailers, Winnona trailers
- Schools affect walk-ability/bike-ability
- A dad says he may be forced to drive to aftercare (2 kids, 2 locations), wants city to add Pre-K aftercare at Rec center
- Close schools, put up trailers, lose green space
- Back part of Winnona school should be city and open to neighbors during school, School acts like school property only. Winnona school should be friendly.
- Number of store closures and empty spaces in Decatur and along Ponce
- Are high-rise developments going to create parking and traffic problems? Reduced green space?
- Want free parking, not paid
- Motorcycles have different parking restrictions that scooters don't have. Should be equal. Need more bike racks.
- Success breeds unsustainable numbers – events, festivals, restaurants overcrowded with non-Decatur visitors that choke out locals

- Decatur is a “defined space,” managing and balancing the space and the competing interests of preservation and development
- No density within the central city core
- No variety and diversity of housing stock
- Gentrification and squeezing out folks out of Decatur
- Lack of information as to available parking
- City’s website is not user friendly, updated and accurate – difficult to find information, minutes not updated and current, information outdated
- Wireless internet is not effective or useable
- Parking inventory is not clear
- Rec Center (Web Track – on-line pay system) does not work and is the hardest system to use, pay on-line
- Technology lags behind
- City promotes events well, but does not promote/educate on what is going on in government
- Parking
- Not enough public parking
- Private decks are often empty and could be used for other people
- MARTA doesn't go enough places
- If MARTA was expanded it would bring more people to Decatur
- Not enough bike lanes*
- Police
- Bad relationship- students feel like they're(police) just there to get them in trouble
- No free, late-night activities/locations for underage people
- Mallternative idea was badly executed
- signs poorly designed
- Traffic is awful
- Traffic and noise from traffic
- Specifically, people speed on Clairemont and Ponce too much
- There are proposals to over-develop the single-family home neighborhoods
- Specific example cited of a development proposal near the old train depot that dragged out for 2 years. According to this participant, the city did not understand the role of density in this area.
- Concern about a lack of ability to continue being able to afford to live in the city for both the elderly today and people's children in the future
- Taxes are very high and unaffordable for some residents
- A challenge here is to balance out the needs of different groups, those with and without children
- In relation to this, there is a need for workforce housing, and the city needs to understand how it compares in affordability to similar cities

- Empty commercial space needs to be filled in
- There needs to be easier access to city statues for residents who want to look them up
- Risk of becoming a "mini-Buckhead" and Virginia Highland
- Trying to be too many things - chain restaurants
- Spilt Identity - want to cultivate artisans / locally owned shops however, rent too high for shops to stay in business, affordability
- Affordable real-estate: teachers, service workers, etc can't afford to live in the city (talking about housing < 200-300K, not "low income housing")
- High taxes, burdensome even though gov't spends it responsibly: drive people away, single w/o kids, seniors
- Some houses have no buffer between large commercial buildings, poor planning, reduces land value, etc
- Commercial buildings are expensive; require chain restaurants due to high rent
- Lack of green space, more parks
- No bike paths, routes
- Size, expanding too fast, capacity of city. No sense of where it's going to stop
- Lack of inexpensive non-chain general store (clothes, office supplies, stuff you would get at Target)
- Crosswalks are difficult to see, need to be repainted
- No Performing arts Theater / Movie Theater
- Traffic- over the past 10 years, increased number of "tourists" / people outside of city. Better planning for condos (friends visiting etc). Parking (free for residents, charge others) Better road signs, areas not marked clearly, not accessible
- Water/Sewer system / general infrastructures (roads/sidewalks) with potholes
- Need to sort out priorities, pick what we do well and focus, don't want us to "lose our way,"
- If Decatur is pushing out creative people, where are they going? This is something to make sure we think about and prevent but might not be happening now
- Concerned about eliminating buses b/c of the people who need to use them. Before downsizing buses need to look and see who is actually using them first
- Need greenspace on buses
- More structured, but passive greenspace like Hidden Cove Park
- Lessen the use of cement and steel in parks. Use natural materials like stone for stairs.
- Want massive tree house, like Swiss Family Robinson, in parks
- Difficult to mix bicycles and cars
- Don't like how the PATH ends at Carpe Diem

- Buses are loud, ugly, and too big, impede traffic and go over the sidewalk. Although people do use them and we are concerned about impact on transit dependent, Trains and trolleys are preferred
- Decatur website is not well formatted and it's hard to find stuff
- Need a local activities channel and posters for events in local businesses
- City website homepage is not useful and difficult to find things. Need current events in the center of the page, like Facebook
- Housing is expensive; my parents tell me that, we used to afford a bigger house before we lived here
- Hard for young people and poor people to find housing
- I want to live in a house with a yard. Affordable means \$500 a month
- Need housing for retail salaries
- Worried that we will lose all the liberal, creative residents if the community becomes too expensive. Conservative people live in expensive places.
- Bothered by large houses next to small houses
- Pollution causes sickness and it is hard to control it living next to Atlanta
- Decatur seems healthier than most places but there is a still a lot of air pollution
- School lunches could be healthier
- The healthy food at school doesn't taste good choices are pizza, chick Fil A and McDonalds
- Need more shopping for daily needs
- Need reasonably priced stores
- Tax base is too dependent on residential property
- No access to sales tax
- DeKalb County employees cause traffic congestion
- No housing for people making \$50k or less
- Lack of apartments
- Hard to maintain diverse housing stock
- Seniors lack housing choices
- Seniors have to move due to high taxes
- Residents have lost houses because of reverse mortgages
- Difficult to get from one side of town to another
- Aging infrastructure: sidewalks, storm sewers
- Weak tree ordinance
- Growing school population with constrained school sites
- Lack of communication between city and school system on annexation
- Westchester school building is underutilized
- Determining the appropriate tax rate

- Churches take up a lot of property but do not pay taxes
- DeKalb County buildings take up a lot of property downtown and don't pay taxes
- There are some developments from that past that were mistakes or are eyesores.
- There is insufficient housing for lower income and middle income (workforce housing) and those who are young and starting out in their adult life. City needs to insure there is housing for all income levels
- Decatur is becoming hard for seniors to afford as the taxes rise so rapidly and there is not a sufficient amount of tax relief.
- Worry about the future mix of businesses – retail and restaurant but also service businesses for residents. Balance b/w tourist draw and core services for residents.
- Tax burden on residents is high – is there a sufficient mix of nonresident taxpaying businesses (offices, professional businesses, etc)
- Decatur is a victim of its success and is losing diversity in housing prices, pushing out the diversity that is one main reason people choose to live in Decatur.
- There is not a decent, clean hotel. Need for choice and higher quality accommodations.
- Decatur is not safe for cyclers, there are many bad intersections, not enough bike lanes and shoulders and an overall lack of infrastructure for cycling creates a disincentive for cyclists.
- A lot of fine dining restaurants but concern that there are not enough family/kid friendly dining options (not chains but independent eateries that can accommodate kids)
- Concern about infill housing, McMansions – want to insure appropriate oversight
- Several stalled development projects due to the economy – become abandoned eyesores
- Transit problems due to limited MARTA lines – not enough lines that go where we need them (ie Decatur to Emory) AND need thoughtful rail planning to respect neighborhoods
- Traffic cutting through residential streets, need to continue traffic calming measures that exist (city response has been good but concern for future)
- Speed problems on Church Street and Scott Blvd specifically
- Traffic
- Church St. construction
- Oakhurst School has busy streets, inadequate sidewalks
- Commerce / Clairemont light is timed poorly for pedestrians
- Flooding
- Olympic / College / Atlanta Ave. -- bad sidewalks
- Pedestrians have a tough time in city; systems need to be reworked to favor walkers and strollers
- Diversity -- keeping a mix; as taxes rise, property values rise and affordable housing becomes scarce
- Revenue model is flawed, unsustainable; too high percentage of residential to business properties
- Festivals too popular? Locals feel squeezed out

- The "active minority" is too small -- the same Decatur core does everything

What could Decatur be?

What kind of community would inspire you?

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

- YMCA in Downtown and subsidies for "Y" membership
- No High-Rises (keep it at 80ft.)
- More smart development inside the commerce loop and the Devry Campus
- less cars
- street-scape – continue with plantings, lighting, etc.
- Alternative Transportation, i.e. street-car on Ponce?
- Signage zoning restrictions
- safeguard greenspace
- pursue historic preservation
- retain architectural integrity
- do a better job defining borders of the city
- a place for public art.
- We are already lucky
- More entrepreneurs / locally owned businesses
- Small Town
- Green City
- Racially harmonious
- Arts Community
- Establish a boutique hotel
- Become a cultural/arts destination
- Church St developed from Ponce to commerce and beyond
- Greenspace/park downtown
- More parking for business employees
- Residents are a family
- Affordable housing
- Keeping diversity - balance the gentrification/diversity
- Schools - keeping the stability and quality with proper planning
- Community tool bank - folks could borrow tools free to work on their homes
- Better partnership between schools and city government -- too much division and lack of cooperation. Each has their own agenda.
- Sharing of resources - i.e. using school buildings after hours for community events; sharing parking lots
- mutual respect of all walks of life
- not have to own a car
- public temporary art
- own center for the arts facility
- leader in sustainable food

- less surface parking
- top 10 for storm water management
- top 10 for reducing carbon footprint
- prepared for all types of disasters
- physically fit citizens and city employees
- safety – kids can travel safely
- energy neutral transportation system
- More clearly defined in public mind (differentiated from Decatur mailing address area)
- A city known for tolerance of people with a diversity of lifestyles and values
- The best all around city but not necessarily "Number 1"
- A place that feels like home
- A place where everyone wants to live
- Part of the world but its own little place
- Pedestrians, cyclists and cars can all share roads and obey all rules/laws
- A city where different parts (Oakhurst, Glendale, etc) are connected by a path of walkways without impacting greenspace
- Our parks are prioritized and wild greenspace is increased
- We invest in active living
- We are able to maintain our economic diversity
- We have passive and active greenspaces (some as parks, some as wild areas) and we sustain what we already have
- We invest in shared parking - including encouraging alternate transportation options like public shuttles along the lines of expansion of the Cliff bus (adopting similar for Decatur)
- We have wider sidewalks and narrower streets to encourage walking/running/cycling and slower car speeds
- Ban motor vehicles on Ponce between Commerce and Church – create pedestrian mall
- Bike lanes and bike parking everywhere
- More independent senior living
- More socio-economic diversity in neighborhoods
- More gender and age diversity also
- Senior living near elementary schools
- Pedestrian cut-throughs
- Create a staff position in city government to act as a liaison between residential and commercial interests. This office should support the residents' point of view rather than relying upon ad hoc neighborhood organizations
- Harmonious and collaborative development between commercial and residential
- City in the forest

- Arts center
- Clean up sanitary sewers—smells
- Great schools
- Good dog parks
- Good infill – smart development, resolve eyesores, find good tenants
- Art scene - Theater
- Art scene - Performance art
- Art scene - Provide space for arts
- Art scene - Amphitheatre space to be used for movies and concerts (why go to Piedmont Park for Screen on the Green, gazebo not ideal stage for concerts)
- Art scene - Movie theater
- Continuum of care for older citizens – housing, healthcare
- Safety – especially at night, Oakhurst
- Diversity of housing so working class, older citizens, etc. can be here (don't want to turn into Highlands)
- Expanding houses well to blend in with rest of neighborhood
- Partner with Emory and Agnes Scott – branding (similar to Stanford/Palo Alto)
- Continue being a movie locale
- Technology – Google project
- Better communication/cooperation with DeKalb County – shouldn't resolve differences in court (e.g., HOST litigation, zoning issues).
- Better communication with City of Atlanta and other neighboring towns
- Environmental leader - Programs
- Environmental leader - Building codes
- Environmental leader - Energy usage
- Environmental leader - Clean water
- Maintain/increase diversity
- Manageable size of city – not too big, controlled growth
- More refugee services – education, basic services
- Decatur has an outstanding professional theater company
- Decatur has a pedestrian area (i.e. remove parking between E. Court Sq. and N. McDonough
- Decatur has a big green space—Central Park
- Decatur is a friendly place to move through without driving; There are fewer cars and more transportation alternatives such as a trolley, safe bike routes, shady places for people to walk
- Decatur has very close ties with Agnes Scott and Emory and medical centers; Decatur leverages the talent in the universities and medical centers to make the city a better, healthier place (i.e. cooperative projects allowing Decatur to be a testing ground for ideas and research; opportunities

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

- No ugly, empty places/lots. Instead, vibrant parks or active businesses in these areas
- Easy to use a bike as a primary form of transportation; alternative transportation Mecca
- Decatur transit system
- Walkable community, wider sidewalks
- Encourage ground floor retail in developments
- Railroad crossings that don't require trains to blow horns
- Maintain city hall downtown; keep it accessible
- Maintain items on our success list
- Maintain accessibility of city officials and services
- Friendly, open, neighborly; encourage neighbor interaction
- Diversity
- Maintain small town feel; no tall buildings
- Stay family friendly
- Smart growth and development; attractive architecture; street-level businesses with residential above
- Promote free parking in decks and lots
- Pedestrian only zones; parking on periphery and walkable, attractive areas in interior
- Coolest place in Georgia
- More bicycle friendly
- Use Public Art bike racks
- Lots more trees-it's hot here
- Enforce pedestrian rules (countdown lights)
- Room for more parks
- Smart commercial growth
- Aesthetically appealing
- Look at Chattanooga
- Make the city look "more take care of"
- Improve trash can appearance
- Green would be really good
- Maintain diversity-age, race and economics
- Affordable housing
- More rental and/or single family options
- Apartments above retail space
- Incentivize development
- Put a pocket park across from DQ

- Plan and prepare for increased growth and density to ensure quality of life
- More pedestrian friendly streets i.e. block cars on weekends
- The city has shut down traffic for one day a week for biking and walking.
- City has turned some parts of downtown into sitting/greenspace pedestrian malls, central town model.
- No children have fallen through the cracks; the community has a high priority for every child succeeding – ‘it takes a village’
- City has combined the elementary schools into 2 schools and built 2 larger elementary schools.
- Decatur has become a model for Green Community.
- Decatur has more celebrations like the Beach Party.
- The city needs a balanced amount of walkable, green, model city while at the same time maintaining its grit, diversity (income, race, socioeconomic, education, etc).
- Decatur is a place where everyone knows your name.
- Decatur is a city where you can leave your doors unlocked like we did years ago.
- Decatur is financially stable in every aspect- schools, city administration, etc.
- We can work in Decatur (as well as live and play)
- Note the sign on the city limits: “Decatur is a place for homes, schools and churches” and this should include businesses and commerce as well.
- We have diversified taxes through commercial employment.
- Providing incentives for business or for greening homes: tax reductions at intervals of living in Decatur.
- We continue to get great service for taxes we pay.
- Make Ponce downtown a pedestrians-only zone, from Commerce to Commerce, similar to downtown areas in Boulder (CO), Asheville (NC), Burlington (VT); not necessarily permanent, but at certain times or all the time except during emergencies or special situations; could create outdoor seating areas encouraging people to mingle and linger, great for small businesses located there
- modernize the Rec Center
- modernize the firehouse and the police department
- increase salaries for police officers
- produce and/or attract great minds that will go on to have significant positive impacts beyond Decatur; an intellectually active community where not only book clubs thrive but intellectual salons
- more diverse citizenry than currently, especially economic and racial; less white than it has become lately; more African-American, Hispanic, Asian residents

- a model for sustainability - cultural, economic, environmental; capture rainwater, convert waste to methane, etc.; achieve through partnerships among educational institutions, government, business community, and local residents
- trolley to provide transportation around Decatur including to/from Oakhurst; could be public but also could be small private business; use energy-efficient transport, e.g., electric vehicles
- protect historic buildings, e.g., Courthouse, Depot, Leon's, Methodist Chapel; residents need more information about and access to historic properties
- preserve character of neighborhoods by restricting "hideous construction" of homes that don't fit their settings
- be sensitive to aging community, a challenge because economic base will change as population retires; protect quality of life by helping/encouraging people to stay healthy; attract younger people to preserve age and life-stage diversity; barter system--overseen or managed by City?--to help people provide for each other; City will need to establish a department to manage these challenges
- increase activities/amenities for seniors, and publicize them!, e.g., group outings
- set up system for matching families and elderly citizens, i.e., "Adopt a Grandparent"
- Maintaining and increasing diversity.
- Promoting and educating on healthy lifestyles especially with kids - walkable/bikeable.
- Tournament tennis and salt water pools.
- Not having to leave the city to buy or experience things.
- Better lodging options (Ex. boutique hotel plus renovate Holiday Inn).
- Maintaining sense of community and family (ex. neighbors bringing food every night for 2 months when family member ill).
- Continue to be one step ahead of "trends" (comment also made that they weren't trends when Decatur started doing them).
- Continue to involve citizens.
- "Inspiring visions of the city."
- More essential amenities within walking distance of neighborhoods and downtown Decatur.
- Would like to see more diverse small businesses, we have plenty of restaurants.
- Would like to see Decatur be the model of sustainability in the Southeast
- Would like Decatur to be "Cambridge" or Santa Monica on a smaller scale: Live, work, play, environmentally friendly. Be the base for some corporate headquarters.
- Decatur should be more closely connected to the Emory community, perhaps a public/private partnership
- Encourage locally grown food in Decatur schools
- Create more urban farms within the city

- Commit to improving and creating more parks and green space to improve Decatur's reputation as a destination as well as encourage healthy living and community togetherness.
- Create pocket parks with mixed use development surrounding them
- City planners should create a proactive department pursue funding for green spaces, city improvements
- Improve and beautify Harmony park and the Oakhurst biz district
- Make the Decatur Square more inviting, certain areas need a redesign, more lighting, specifically the back part near the bus depot
- Extend the character of the square over towards the corner of E Commerce and Church street and the Kroger, this is a desolate area with vacant buildings and the probation office. Not friendly for walking.
- Create a dedicated active farmer's market in Decatur
- Enact Progressive property tax laws that encourage and afford lifelong residency, don't price people out of their homes
- Encourage and maintain a diverse resident population through low profile governmental programs as we want to have diversity in race, income, religion, age, lifestyle.
- to be a science/math hub for Atlanta
- Diversity
- Diversity - income level
- Diversity - age
- Diversity - ethnicity
- Diversity - ideas
- Tolerance and respect
- Safety
- Lots of community activities
- Environmentally Bold
- Carbon neutrality
- old trees and new trees
- Better standards for retailers and restaurants
- better health regulations
- Better police presence downtown will lead to more foot traffic
- **pedestrian only Ponce on Friday and Saturday nights**
- Better retail mix
- bookstores
- movie theater (cinema tavern)
- Development for area around parole office
- Need more rental units downtown to increase foot traffic

- Make Decatur a better draw for businesses
- More affordable housing
- More post office drop boxes
- Emergency phones on the street
- Education – Set an example for the country
- Education – 100% literacy
- Education – Start early - Every child is successful in elementary school and going into middle school
- Education – More options for the ‘mid achievers’
- Education – Support network for everyone that need assistance
- Education – Pairing families to support the need and as volunteering - more volunteering in community
- Education – Vocational partnership program
- Education – Adult educational program
- Education – Decatur Recreation to partnership with others
- Commercial – Better supply of basic needs –more regular shops
- Commercial – Shops for daily needs – not boutiques – affordable shops – storefront faces streets – scale of buildings
- Commercial – Ability for shops to survive – support start-ups – jump start – review tax incentives to encourage small businesses to survive
- Commercial – Allow live / work
- Commercial – Look into big boxes – but with right type – allow small businesses to coexist
- Transportation - Complete streets
- Transportation - Maintain buses - easy - accessible – transportation within Decatur
- Transportation - Consider public private partnerships
- Transportation - Contingency to backfill MARTA’s shortcomings
- Transportation - Don’t leave people stranded
- Transportation - Bike friendly – bike safety
- Transportation - Overall safety on the streets
- Transportation - Non car zones examples Denver, Madison Wis.
- Transportation - Traffic light synchronization / coordination
- Transportation - Pedestrian friendly - enforcement
- Housing - More Affordable housing
- Housing - Make property taxes affordable
- Housing - Proactively check for exemptions
- Housing - Advocate for the elderly – make sure they are getting the exemptions
- Housing - Low-income exemptions for property taxes

- Housing - Incentives to landlord for affordable housing
- City will continue and will stay conscious of being fiscally responsible
- Better/higher standard of visual arts with sustained commitments from institutions (i.e. develop an Arts Center)
- Continue to support diversity
- Continue to have a strong school system
- Continue growing the school curriculum to expand the PE and Arts depts.
- Continue to creatively think of alternative transportation modes (i.e. Zip Car)
- City should provide incentives for water reuse and reclamation for residential and businesses
- Continue to enhance sustainable and storm water efforts
- Further support urban agriculture
- Continue to grow active living and add less formal events; more micro-community oriented activities
- Educate people on recycling
- Good effort on trash collection, but plastic bag program is counterproductive environmentally. Consider bins or biodegradable bags without discouraging recycling
- Art house theatre, live theatre, movies on the square
- Broaden community arts programs – community theatre
- Encouraging bicycle commuting, other forms of commuting
- Address those commuting to Decatur
- Get people to work and stay in Decatur
- Transportation arteries are unclogged
- Expand tree planting programs
- Landscaping that make commercial district attractive
- Streetscaping like Church Street
- On street sidewalk dining – European style, slows down traffic
- A place to age and stay
- A diverse city --affordable housing –students –retired persons –working people
- A beautiful downtown
- Close off traffic in downtown one day per week
- A populated downtown
- Open spaces –more walking spaces, --more bikeable space
- The businesses of today to still be here 10 – 20 years from now
- Efficient spending by city to improve tax structure for businesses
- Organic markets, gardens, and animals
- Open to the arts –incentives to help those (artistic, creative) endeavors --the city as a center for creativity

- Be able to walk --to Little Five Points, to Avondale
- Trolley
- Golf carts
- Alternative transportation
- Outdoor places to interact
- A GREEN city
- More front porches --people outside talking to neighbors --relationships
- Encourage neighborhood associations --neighborhood events
- Open spaces to have neighborhood events/gatherings
- Friendly, open city --say hi to your neighbors
- Organized Neighborhood Planning Units
- Show the region that it is possible to tackle social justice issues (grow diversity) while being green, etc. (and the other progressive things we like about Decatur)
- Breadth of [a more complete and pervasive] city [meaning citizen] understanding and support for housing authority priorities
- Less friction between school administration and parents; more trust, more cooperation, more transparency
- City Schools of Decatur 101 program
- A community with more walkers, more bike riders, farmers' market on the square, parks connected with trails
- Completion of sidewalks on every street (process has intimidated residents)
- Safer bike riding: same city commitment as for pedestrians
- Government with a role in designing community to fight chronic disease (due to lifestyle)
- [Community where] people don't drive their kids to school
- Electric busses; "no idling" policies
- Volunteerism in a broader program, one designed to connect people in relationships: mentors, literacy, seniors with children, professional, social
- Not afraid to become more dense downtown; get more creative; supports businesses
- is bicycle and pedestrian friendly
- has affordable homes
- has housing choices
- has a tax structure that keeps long time residents in place
- values and strengthens its diversity
- has homes that meet physical space related needs but are not out of context or scale
- has lots of green space and environment awareness

- has a housing authority (Decatur Housing Authority specifically) that sets a high standard for good design and respect for urban context downtown, employs green building methods, has quality architecture, is not suburban
- has a arts center/facility and continues coordination/partnerships with entities like Eddies Attic and Agnes Scott, the high school auditorium is a great start
- has lot of fine arts
- promotes our cemetery as a destination-not just in death
- a place where you come to live but you find yourself inspired for a life time
- An ideal mix of local businesses and national chains (for affordable basics - shoes, household goods, sports equipment).
- It would be great if I never had to go to Lenox Mall to buy stuff.
- More greenspaces closer to the Square
- Lots of places for people to be outside and interacting
- People are out of their cars for everything they do - shopping, eating, playing
- More outdoor seating at restaurants, cafes, parks
- More informal interaction in public places - book discussions, other gatherings
- The south side of the old courthouse is more inviting, drawing people there on a daily basis.
- On the Square there is more public activity to draw people there on a regular basis - more than just restaurants and bars- e.g., farmers market, vendors, performers.
- You know that when you show up on the Square there will always be something going on.
- More shade on the plaza above the MARTA station
- Want more variety in downtown. Cooking school, variety of restaurants, more arts
- The price of things should be cheaper
- More things for teens to do: movies, dance clubs, staying in parks later at night, more lights around parks
- More music venues
- Decatur people are content to adjust their bubble and stay in it. They don't want to leave the city to do things
- Want a bicycle sharing program (like Paris), need bicycle lanes or paths on major streets, bicycle parking, bicycle Lojack (the anti-theft car device)
- What will Decatur look like in the future?
- Roads become greenspace. Check car at the border of city and only alternative transportation or electric cars inside city. Love trees and want more. Robot servants.
- Pedestrian only, cobblestone streets, solar powered
- Like now but more bike paths and diversity of businesses
- Love big old trees, more noticeable greenspace, less concrete, environmental friendly stuff integrated throughout the environment, increase green infrastructure, more nature everywhere

- More of a central park. The Square is not grass and want a big greenspace downtown
- Free trolley throughout city.
- See people active throughout the city, exercising, my neighbor gives me fresh eggs in exchange for art that I've made
- Small MARTA buses within the city. Ultimately, no buses and everyone uses trains
- Grocery store on the Square
- Greener Decatur
- More pet friendly, allow pot bellied pigs, permanent farmer's market with organic food
- Scott Boulevard and train tracks are not dangerous to cross and stop dividing the city into pieces
- Build a bypass so that cars have a way to get around Decatur
- Access to Agnes Scott for pedestrians
- No need for school crossing guards at all, because all traffic is correctly engineered for safety
- Traffic calming, but efficient intersections
- Traffic roundabouts wherever possible
- Traffic roundabout at Medlock/Scott/N. Decatur
- Traffic roundabout at Church/Commerce
- Traffic roundabout at McDonough/Trinity
- Traffic roundabout at Ponce/Commerce, both intersections
- Traffic roundabout at Commerce/Clairemont
- Traffic roundabout at Scott/Clairemont
- Traffic roundabout at N. Decatur/Clairemont
- Traffic roundabout at N. Decatur/Church
- Traffic roundabout at Ponce/Church
- Traffic roundabout at N. Decatur/DeKalb Industrial
- Traffic roundabout at Lawrenceville Hwy/DeKalb Industrial
- Traffic roundabout at E. College/Commerce
- Traffic roundabout at Ponce/Sam's Crossing
- Traffic roundabout at Church/Trinity
- Bike lanes on S. Candler
- Save bike lanes everywhere
- Bike lanes on College
- Fix the City Map to show all blocked streets, unused rights of way, so that on the map they don't look like streets that go through
- Traffic that moves calmly, but never actually has to stop except for cross traffic, e.g., with roundabouts
- Reduce E. College to one lane each direction but with protected turnouts and roundabouts to keep traffic moving

- Reduce Clairemont to one lane each direction but with protected turnouts and roundabouts to keep traffic moving
- Reduce Church to one lane each direction but with protected turnouts and roundabouts to keep traffic moving
- City-owned right of ways, alleys, and unimproved parcels should be turned into trails suitable for pedestrians and bicycles
- All right of ways are accessible by wheelchairs - see Berkeley, CA
- Sensible plan for annexation-do it, and include people in communication and process
- Build cooperation and communication with Dekalb, and citizens know about the communication
- More multidimensional housing, and affordable housing
- Utilities built underground, require new developers to put utilities underground
- Continue what's good: sustainable choices, long term buy in from businesses
- Gold level biking community
- Walking trails that connect neighborhoods
- Pleasant walk from North to south, vice versa
- Connecting physical space, emotional, and spiritually
- Easy access to better support local businesses : example picking up takeout not so easy on square so likely to leave city for food and other goods..
- Downtown parking solution- more
- Diverse businesses –local grocery, butcher, and they live in the City not driving in to work
- Solar energy- required green building practices with schools and buildings
- Feel demographic diversity, maintain it don't loose it-age, race, gender, sexual orientation, economic
- Places for seniors and young adults to live.
- “true” partnership of schools and city in terms of land sharing, collaboration, performing arts center, providers for events and activities
- “incubator” for small businesses. Healthcare, small firms. Software companies, creative/arts
- Plant trees
- Multiple parks, fields
- Buy the Devry space and make green space and high school track
- Put sidewalks on streets that don't have them
- Organize more venues for performing arts (movies, music, authors)
- Organize event communication better (incl. county events, etc - challenge, too many blogs to visit to get info on events)
- Integration between city and community groups (i.e. more Eddy and Agnes type events)
- Bike lanes throughout the city
- Kids feel safe walking around town

- Info kiosk in the city: smartboard/electronic
- Decatur Events - "there's an app for that" - (something downloadable for people who visit or live in Decatur)
- Temporary office space (i.e. to rent by the day)
- Sister City programs - help other communities (i.e. Burkina Faso partnership)
- Recognize and value everyone in community
- More volunteer days
- What if the Methodist Children's Home was part of the community
- More children
- Knowing everyone's neighbor
- More streetscapes
- Path to interconnect areas
- More open space and community gardens
- Community gatherings - parties/dinners
- A business mentoring program
- Inspiring Visions of City
- Less paved space: redo parking lots, add trees, improve water drainage, increase permeability
- Keep buildings to 5 stories
- Commercial area of city needs to change so businesses can thrive: tax credits if hire local people, summer jobs for Decatur teenagers, create internships for teenagers
- Get rid of parking lots. Only use MARTA lots and shuttle people into downtown
- Parking lots provide better signage. Decatur residents would not have to pay for parking.
- Move DeKalb courthouse out to jail on Memorial
- DeKalb county should have to pay taxes for services in Decatur
- DeKalb and Decatur address mutual impacted services that exist in city of Decatur
- Need more office space.
- County needs to pay city for services: courthouse
- Bring in more business, more commercial and taxable property
- Provide more jobs for all ages
- More mixed commercial and residential properties
- Keep small town character
- Add quality retirement assisted living communities
- City needs to embrace idea of residents wanting to live here their entire lives
- Address elderly needs: sanitation, recreation, health, housing, pair young and old to assist each other
- Enlarge elderly programs at Decatur Rec

- Create housing opportunities for upcoming Boomers and empty nesters who no longer want to maintain a house
- Maintain restaurants and grocery stores that are affordable for folks on fixed income
- Change Oakhurst zoning so Mom and Pop stores can exist. Create tax incentives for independent shops
- South of Rail Road tracks needs grocery store, pharmacy and hardware store
- Better options for parking--perhaps along commerce perimeter
- Create parking in Maloof building parking lot
- Create a walking green space (an emerald necklace) from Oakhurst garden to Mason Mill Park in DeKalb county
- Sidewalks on all streets including side streets
- Sidewalks should be for bikes also- wider, safer. Multi-use sidewalk/path.
- Bike lanes- want corridor (ex. Church street from N. Decatur to Decatur 2 car lanes and also bike lanes.)
- In general, support for non-car transport
- Keep "Berkeley meets Mayberry" flavor
- Better commercial stores (Suburban Plaza is yucky) Decatur could annex these areas- strategic annexations so more commercial tax base.
- Electric public transportation and pedicabs
- Cliff-type bus for everyone
- Need variety of grocery stores/ more & different types- need to be walking distance
- Independent movie theater (1-2 screens)
- Build underground tunnels for traffic to bypass downtown
- Reroute traffic around downtown
- Neighborhoods linked through website and blogs
- People can live and work in Decatur, don't need to commute. Cooperate people can work here too. Entice big and mid-size companies but not exclude small business.
- Support home businesses
- Place where everyone is welcome
- Light rail (street level) connection between marta, Decatur, Oakhurst, Buckhead, Emory
- Weekly compost service (money-making venture)
- Expanded community gardens, encouragement for home food gardens, front yard food scapes
- Environmentally sustainable city (need comprehensive plan to do this)
- Incentives to encourage green building, innovation, retrofit beyond current ga energy code. Be a leader, an example.
- More unobtrusive green energy options
- City of houses with original character and scale in keeping with neighborhood

- Neighborhood housing has harmony
- High quality value of young children
- Children's opinions are listened to, sought out
- All neighborhoods are connected within and as a whole so residents have a sense of community in neighborhood and city
- A model for racial justice – Decatur remains segregated
- Ability to bicycle safely to Farmers' Market
- Locally grown food
- Pedestrian friendly downtown core
- A leader in recycling and waste management/disposal
- Connectivity of bike and walking paths
- Leader in traffic management (i.e., bikes, parking, movement of traffic through City and rail)
- More folks working in Decatur that live in Decatur
- Awareness and use of changes in business – the evolution of how we work (more work from home)
- Respect, promotion and recognition of historic neighborhoods
- Formal tree replacement program that is proactive, caring, protective and replaces tree
- A working storm water plan that eliminates current flooding issues of streets, Winnona Park Elementary
- Naturalization of existing concrete streams
- Increase of active, passive greenspace, including use of flood plain properties
- Use of economic incentives to encourage green building
- A designated City Employee/Official charged with connecting groups, coordinating issues/programs, a neutral/mediator
- Full use of resources – for example, the High School Auditorium should be used every night by folks outside the school; athletic fields; Agnes Scot; Boys & Girls Club
- Workable group internet
- Open City Hall should be more of a forum
- Residential/Neighborhood representative on the Downtown Development Association
- Greater cooperation/efficiency/communication between City Hall and City Schools
- Access to affordable, safe housing for all stages of life
- More vibrant business district, business outside core Ponce corridor/square, businesses fill “dry” stagnant
- Greater role of City in growing, linking employment and jobs, a City career center
- Fully educate all kids with access to employment opportunities
- Retain, promote ethnic diversity

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

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

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

- Shop locally and get relief on property taxes
- Address why places of worship do or do not pay local taxes?
- In Decatur, 85% homeowners / 15% merchants imbalance of tax payments
- Recruit more business to city that bring jobs
- Address zero sum mentality - Merchants "fight" incoming/new merchants
- Zone properties accordingly - enterprise zones for development
- Mixed use pre-approval enables both faster growth and rapid response to new business opportunities
- Communicate with neighborhoods
- Zone with fluidity based on needs
- We are inspired by Decatur's unique character and architecture
- Decatur has a great personality and great energy downtown
- Decatur has a little bit of everything.
- We want more walking and bike paths in the city
- To see a car free zone in the center of town
- We want more places to walk to throughout the city; meaning we need more destinations besides just downtown and more options for entertainment
- To see the West side of Ponce as a controlled traffic zone similar to the East side of Ponce
- To have mixed income housing, including rental units throughout the city
- Encourage more commercial business space so that more people can work in the city and we're not just a bedroom community
- To see all surface parking lots gone
- To have a Decatur city trolley bus that takes you to the different shops and restaurants
- The city should look into incentive programs to keep people shopping locally
- One participant suggested printing Decatur bucks, which would be subsidies from the city to make up the cost differential between shopping at a chain store and an independent merchant
- Create a municipal compost site
- Something said that Athens, GA has something similar to look at and compare (compost site)
- Encourage more community gardening
- To key principles of this were that gardens should be city promoted but neighborhood supported, and provide affordable and accessible fresh food for all
- Maintain the independent business community in town
- Maintain and grow community events
- Maintaining Diversity- not just typical racial diversity, but diversity of all types, single, seniors, etc
- Bike lanes and racks on every street, crosswalks

- Focus on quality and improvement (unique character of Decatur), not growth. Grow according to plan and vision
- Adequate planning for future of youth. Babies today are teens in 10 years, driving, etc
- More green, 100% buy-in from residents and business
- Efficiently use of space (annexation?) space by Dairy queen, area by feast, commerce and church, shopping center in Oakhurst
- Increased connectivity between neighborhoods, better-connected infrastructure, social events, etc. more unified so that everybody knows what is going on. Better signage to Oakhurst
- Maintain character of neighborhood - zoning to control large houses
- Expanded & renovate rec center, appeals to seniors, teens, kids
- Grow senior citizen resources , more social activities
- Continued communication, Decatur Focus, metro blogs, etc
- Increased transparency between neighborhoods, Decatur master calendar of events, community info on website, etc
- Expanded Recycling program (electronics, Apts/condos) greener business (no Styrofoam)
- Decatur-Oakhurst Shuttle
- Need a perimeter bicycle trail around Decatur
- Make sure bicycle trails go everywhere that streets go
- Make sure alternative transportation meets daily needs and recreational needs
- Don't sacrifice vehicle space for bicycle space
- Eliminate on street parking and have shared parking
- Provide affordable housing to ensure a diversity of opinions
- Face to face meetings for small scale issues and projects, Open Forums, Majority Rules, Conduct Polls, Publicize the issue, Targeted communication to stakeholders, Give more weight to the opinion of the most affected, Hire an unbiased 3rd party
- Have neighborhood committees and representatives
- Encourage involvement in public life?, Give them Candy (incentives)
- Provide publicity everywhere - CVS, TV , radio, website and newsletter with opportunities
- Consensus around need for greenspace, more variety of food and retail. Little Kroger is uninviting and whatever is in that space should connect to the cemetery
- Attend events, advertising activities, (city should) keep up with social media
- Keep parks open later so they are used
- Need more clean up days in parks and they need to be better publicized
- Need more greenspace around Decatur
- Need landscaped medians, but leave room for the trolley
- Love the idea of having a raised monorail system

- Green roofs, solar panel on roofs, incentives for green architecture for commercial and residential properties, need incentives for green features like cash for clunkers programs and tax breaks
- Trinity triangle area should become a park
- Encourage composting. Most trash can be biodegradable
- I get information from NPR, TV, my mom, New York Times, bus ads, teachers, Tyler Perry movie poster, Decatur wi-fi page
- Decatur wi-fi needs improvement, not a strong signal
- Need cheap healthy food
- Use a community grill to cook healthy food. Put grills in parks
- Oakhurst community garden could partner with the school to provide healthy food
- We can stay involved by: signing up for an email list, attending events, posting information on the bulletin boards at school and in community and attending meetings
- Increase amount of protected greenspace
- Never have to drive my car again
- Provide safe place to bicycle
- Provide for all modes of transportation
- Use Suburban Plaza as a trolley/streetcar stop and large parking facility
- Use shared minivans to get around town for \$1 per ride
- Ban autos from downtown
- Use environmental sustainability as driving force for decision making
- Make it convenient to shop at farmer's markets everyday
- More people living and working downtown
- Use density as an incentive to provide affordable housing and greenspace
- Find way to measure environmental impact
- Fix signal timing
- Want dedicated bicycle and scooter lanes on streets
- Where people really do live work and play
- A place where there are professional employment opportunities (not just restaurant and retail)
- A place that has live/work developments and creative spaces where people who freelance or work from home can come together to collaborate and share resources
- A place where there is business incubation – using existing resources to help new businesses get started
- A place where there is more greenspace and streetscape improvements in eyesore pockets (church street b/w commerce and E. Ponce among others)
- A city that attracts creative businesses and professionals
- A still richly diverse citizenry reflected in civic engagement and participation
- A safe place that retains a community feel

- A place where I can walk to buy my groceries, shop daily not weekly
- A place that offers tax credits to those who shop locally
- A place that values disagreement – we agree to disagree but there is mutual respect of different ideas and opinions
- A city that welcomes input through community forums (i.e. continue open city hall)
- A place that caters to residents (i.e. offers discount nights for residents who come out to support local business)
- A place where businesses thrive and serve the needs of residents along with those who come to Decatur from elsewhere)
- A city that has a great infrastructure for alternative transportation.
- A place where you can get around easily
- A place that has retained trees and has a strong tree ordinance
- A place that has maintained and increased greenspace, and planted new trees
- Decatur as a model for efficient, alternative energy that attracts “green” related business
- A city that encourages residents (with tax incentives?0 to use green building materials and models this in city buildings
- Keeps citizens engaged and informed, has more “101”s (i.e. green 101, csd 101, etc)...be on the cutting edge of issues as they arise and educate residents
- A city that is current
- A city where citizens continue to be active and engaged, where the barriers to involvement are low and where the attitude is not “what’s in it for me”
- Where there is better information about what is going on in the city – more PR
- A city where every student does community service and we instill a service ethic in our kids from an early age.
- A place where the school system has better communication with future parents and those w/out kids
- A school system that facilitates the development of young adults who are prepared to be successful and ready to become engaged citizens
- A city that has flowers sold on the street and other street vendors
- Balanced retail
- Preserve "foundation" in place now -- no erosion
- Connected parks and greenspaces and connected destinations; the Decatur necklace -- walkable, better lighting in neighborhoods, with mini shuttle that is energy efficient
- Equity among groups
- Mutual respect in traffic
- Open play spaces
- Improved government efficiency; eliminate gap between city / CSD

- Community recycle / reuse

Postcards from the future

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

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

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

- Cleaner and greener
- Work force housing—if you can work in Decatur, you can afford to live in Decatur
- An incubator for businesses, particularly new technology and creative businesses
- A place of refreshment and rejuvenation
- An attractive destination for tourists and conferences/business meetings/outings
- A city that takes what it has and uses it to the best of its potential
- A city with a central place to gather that is attractive and used by the community on a daily basis
- A green/sustainable town
- A model for active living
- Self-sufficient
- A place that seeks to balance and serve everyone's needs
- A city that knows who it is; a city with an identity
- A place where people want to be/experience
- A place where residents stay
- A place with a strong culture (i.e. welcoming, open, friendly) and strong cultural offerings (i.e. great restaurants, entertainment)
- Known as the “Portland” (Oregon) of the South
- The coolest place in Georgia
- A place where people walk around, everything is accessible
- A place with a broadly diverse population
- An easy place to live
- Everything you need is in walking distance
- A place with more parks and greenspaces; connected greenspaces, a greenway belt
- High citizen involvement
- A place where city government is responsive and listens to residents before approving changes
- A place where bond issues are voted on in general elections; a city that takes on large issues through referenda
- Accessible government
- A place where taxes are spent more effectively; maximum bang for the buck
- With more "boards": more options for citizen involvement
- With more people involved, especially younger people
- With a contemporary, revamped website
- Where there is a relationship between the city and its citizens
- Where it is easier to get involved (i.e. ad hoc meetings, community bulletin boards)
- Where there are more urban gardens
- Where communication is improved and informal "meet up" groups are common
- Where there is a better use of social networking

- Where we have neighborhood block captains
- That is more green-trees and environmentally green
- That is a "LEED" neighborhood community
- Cultural richness that is tangible e.g., all the cities I love- Paris, e.g., the city is walkable, dynamic, pedestrian mall, visually interesting, it never sleeps.
- We want to bring out the richness of culture through increased availability of the visual arts.
- Decatur is a model city in terms of housing, traffic, education, jobs, environment, greenspace.
- Decatur continues to be innovative and first- it is not afraid to try things that might work.
- “Decatur, where it’s greater”.
- We are the tide that lifts all ships- everybody comes, schools, housing, cultural
- We don’t leave anyone behind – we are a city that is ‘Too busy to hate”
- Everyone joins together to get things done e.g. slowing traffic on a particular street called for a community effort that was very connectional and they even had a ‘Speed Bump Party’ when their speed bump was installed.
- Where we leave things out in front of our house and people pick them up for re-use.
- Home.
- Self supporting and sustaining.
- Diverse.
- Successful.
- A leader in the active living/healthy lifestyle/green movements.
- Center of residents lives (don't have to leave).
- Safest city in metro area.
- A place where small businesses thrive.
- Familiar to other states.
- A place with great festivals.
- A place where people want to live.
- A place that continues to have great schools.
- The place where urban policy wonks come to escape the rest of the state of Georgia
- A place where every street has a sidewalk and is a complete street
- A place with a unique character, we need to create that.
- Nice place that doesn’t cost a fortune
- Need to reconnect to all segments of Decatur
- School needs to accommodate a variety of learning styles
- Everyone has a chance to succeed
- Pair up families, not just students
- Play together, not just learn together
- Affordable available after-school programs

- Scholarship subsidy for summer programs
- Sexually and racially diverse
- Age Diverse
- Professionally diverse
- Income diverse
- Culturally diverse
- Light on cars
- A dense City Center with decreasing radial density
- A city that maintains a village vision
- Supportive of micro-village centers that surround the main Downtown (i.e. Oakhurst and promote others...)
- Zoning friendly to small businesses
- Better connected between North and South of the tracks and North and South of Scott Boulevard
- A City without speed bumps
- A City that encourage active living
- Young adult programs included
- Leagues with community partners
- Continue to get citizens involved
- Continue communication with citizens
- Dialog between police & young people is improved
- Continue to be green
- Improved natural green space
- Less engineered green space
- Commercial recycling program – small business
- Preserve green space not “develop” green space
- Communication between community groups & City & between groups
- Increased small business
- Increased activities in arts
- Alternatives to post office down town
- Improved access to courthouse & parking deck
- City of friendly neighbors
- Transportation
- Green
- Citizenship / Stewardship
- The arts
- Business
- Gov’t/Police/Fire

- Walking
- Vitality
- As a place where everyone is welcome
- Anti-Cobb County
- We welcome diversity
- Communication is open and clear-you don't feel lost-basically you know where you can go to get your questions answered
- Creative: artistically, able to raise chickens, forward thinking, kids have options to do things, open-minded, weird
- A leader in smart growth, sustainability, healthy lifestyle - an example that people look to.
- A mecca for culture, literature, arts and music
- A place that attracts innovators and creative types
- Protected as a brand/name
- Negative example: the recent Taste of Decatur situation
- Beautiful - full of colorful trees, flower, natural habitat
- Minimally intrusive to the rights of property owners while maintaining smart growth
- Continue in its embrace of diversity
- Not just high income residents
- Mixed in socio-economic levels and diverse lifestyles
- Still open-minded
- Not exclusive
- A place where residents know each other and interact
- Community-focused and defined by its neighborhoods
- Interconnected for news and information - both lo-tech and hi-tech media
- welcoming
- green
- more diverse and inclusive
- caring
- well planned- example art/theater integration and connected
- genuine, human scale
- vital and healthy- economically vital, healthy vital people.. active living
- encourage local/home businesses “techno peasantry”
- vibrant downtown
- enlightened
- encourage “light” development
- a place to go and watch a movie
- Leadership is (continues to be) thoughtful, diligent and progressive

- Small town (everybody knows your name)
- Skyscraperless
- Diverse
- Annexed to achieve balance with residential/commercial property
- Accommodates children at all education ranges of ability/disability
- Accommodating to aging population
- Beautiful streetscapes (not like Church St. before Ponce)
- Kids return to community when they are grown
- Broad in business base - corporate jobs not just shops and restaurants
- An inclusive community
- Vibrant
- Sustainable
- A destination
- More easily accessible
- Prosperous
- Solvent
- Stay a City
- Continue forward thinking, especially as regards schools
- More parking in less space
- More connected green space
- More friendly for the elderly
- More friendly to innovative small businesses
- Very pedestrian friendly: trees with sidewalks, small town character, but with dense urban use
- Alternative ways to get around city, i.e. cliff bus
- I tell people to come over and walk to the restaurants with me
- I tell people that I walk home from the bars
- I'm taking my kids to the parks that each have something unique
- I live two blocks from MARTA
- Everywhere I go I can take a great walk
- I talk about the overall diversity in the city, and that Decatur is one of the only cities in Georgia that has a non-discrimination policy that includes transgender people
- Diverse
- Affordable
- Exemplify smart growth
- Friendly & Welcoming
- Vital Downtown
- Charming Neighborhoods

- Safe
- Sustainable: Environment, economic, size/growth
- Familiar and Comfortable with Neighbors
- Accepting
- To have an integrated community, all involved, from different communities
- Everyone is connected, through city resources, social resources, infrastructure
- Close Ponce and remove parking on the Square
- Double pedestrian traffic
- Say “We used to have parking lots”
- Grocery store in Oakhurst
- Carbon Neutral City
- Fiber Internet
- No elderly person had to leave city because of taxes
- Zoning ordinance based on carbon neutrality
- School system meets the needs of every child
- Art facility that serves art needs of community
- Access to arts on a daily basis
- Dance groups able to perform inside the city limits
- Collaboration between city and schools to promote the arts and share space
- Created shared religious spaces/facilities instead of each church having their own site
- See the local food movement increase
- Not just Farm to School, but Farm to Community
- Farmer’s market open every day
- Farms on top of school buildings
- Green roofs of every building
- Establish unique local codes that allow sustainable buildings
- Updated development codes to promote 21st century needs
- Known as a walkable city
- A place of wellness (food, school lunches)
- Sustainable, energy-efficient
- Senior-friendly w/ community support
- Navigable with car alternatives that can accommodate all abilities
- Where all age groups are integrated
- Home to a Decatur "Craig's List" clearing house for goods and services
- A place of greener streetscapes

A city where ...

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

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

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

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

- Where you can walk/cycle everywhere
- Green spaces are plentiful
- Technology and the arts (and the people who use them) prosper
- People come to see where things are done right (we are a model to other communities)
- ALL are welcome
- We grow our own food
- Pedestrians are safe walking everywhere
- It's easy to be healthy and happy
- Volunteers make it happen
- People talk to each other on the street
- You can age in place
- Share parking is embraced and taxes are low
- We love our trees
- We protect our environment
- More people walk than drive
- You are always learning
- People can buy almost all of what they need in the city affordably; businesses are diversified (mix of locally owned independent and bigger retailers); community can walk to most of the businesses
- The image the city promotes of active living is a reality
- People walk to get to where they want to go
- Community enjoys use of public facilities, such as the high school and rec center
- It's the coolest place in Georgia
- You can walk or bike anywhere safely
- There are lots of good restaurants
- There is no crime
- People want to live here; you can be yourself
- A wide variety of people live here
- There are lots of good parks, lots of greenspace
- The government listens and responds
- We have clean air and water
- An environmentally friendly city
- Home values are high
- You can afford to live here
- The city is attractive
- You can live in a postcard-like setting
- People send their kids to school in their own neighborhood

- We use solar rays
- Capitalize on rainwater
- Smart street plantings (are everywhere)
- Professional input on landscaping
- There are more pocket parks with shade where people play checkers
- There are more dedicated bike paths (Howard)
- There are wide sidewalks on Ponce so people can walk, ride and bike
- (Check out Portland Oregon street design)
- Building codes and ordinances match the vision
- The process is updated and cleaned up
- In mixed use projects, there's a plan for incompatibilities (i.e. restaurant/traffic noise in residential areas)
- We use "pedal people" (kids on bikes) to pick up trash
- We recycle all locally-there's no waste
- We practice sustainability
- We have more farm to school initiatives
- We educate not to litter and pick it up if you see it
- Young business is encouraged
- You don't have to leave
- There's a diverse and healthy population
- People can work, live and play
- People visit to see how it's done right
- All is possible
- Public art is encouraged
- There are lots of people friendly, landscaped parks
- Sustainability
- Empty storefronts are full
- Buildings are available for incubating new businesses
- It is a safe place to live.
- I am proud to be a member of the community.
- You can own your own business.
- All people feel welcome.
- The community as a whole is valued.
- A thriving commerce and community, working together where the commercial and residential balance allows both to prosper.
- Where we live play and WORK.
- Where the internet is free and trains within Decatur are free.

- The children love the schools and there are great teachers and sports and other activities.
- We collaborate with neighbors such as Emory and Clarkston with their international community.
- Greater Decatur includes the area outside Decatur- and we should know and appreciate what is going on there.
- We make movies.
- Our stories are told.
- The President wants to come to see how communities happen!
- There is a Trader Joe's* (or equivalent)
- we want to live
- you feel safe
- everybody wants to be
- you can have a family
- diversity is valued
- we care for each other
- everyone is welcome
- you can live, work, and play
- we will try anything once (to be a better community, e.g., recycling, other sustainability programs)
- we can experience cultural opportunities
- the environment is protected and valued
- you know your neighbors
- you are happy
- you don't need a car
- small businesses flourish
- you live longer
- young and old minds can grow together
- education is for all ages
- education is a priority
- cultural opportunities abound
- we have diversity, environmental stability, and economic stability
- we have safety
- Everyone is respected.
- People never want to leave.
- You feel like a member of the community.
- People can live where they work.
- People want to be.
- You don't have to lock your door.

- Children are valued.
- We're known for our people, businesses, and community events.
- Diverse populations are welcomed, involved and interact with each other.
- Everyone is invested and take ownership.
- People want to visit, play, live and work here.
- We maintain what we have while also improving; continuing to plan for the future and executing our plans.
- We have affordable housing and mixed development (i.e. low or high income not concentrated in one particular area).
- THEME: Big focus on the people of Decatur (i.e. culture, relationships, and sense of community).
- People can afford a high quality of life in a vibrant, urban setting
- You can have it all: access to the city of Atlanta with a small town feel
- Everyone wishes that they could live.
- We embrace the old as well as the new, promoting Decatur's history and be proud of it.
- we celebrate holidays together
- the city sponsors environmental and recycling efforts
- we live consciously
- plan
- recycle
- set out to do what will make our lives happier
- people who don't live here want to come spend time
- we educate our kids
- the community is involved in education
- we can model environmental stewardship
- farm to school initiatives
- we have better access to emergency medical services
- we safely walk and ride bikes, even with kids
- we have citywide environmentally sound mosquito control
- A place to work and live
- Home, churches, schools and work
- Have everything I need and easily accessible
- Cars optional
- We are safe
- Police are our friends, with everyone regardless of age, color , etc. community police
- Police are involved, positive interaction
- Police has respect for everyone
- Georgia education standards are a step back, all Decatur students lead the way

- Environmental champions, No trash, zero waste, recycle everything
- Composting and recycling alternatives
- Energy independent
- City buildings energy efficient
- I can grow old – accommodating aging population – senior living center – active retirement
- Stay in Decatur – have fun and grow old
- Have diversity of businesses and nightlife
- Decatur WIFI expanded, accessible to all people
- Can live at every age and stage of life and have a good time
- Drink and eat and not drive
- We know our neighbors
- Are environmentally conscious
- Care about those around us
- Live, work and play
- Proud to live in
- (you) can be you
- Have residential individuality and architectural autonomy and uniqueness
- Where active living is a way of life
- Small town but cosmopolitan
- A city where I am free to be me, expressive, diverse
- There is no dress code.
- You can wander endlessly
- Easy to meet people
- You can run
- The outdoor beckons
- People who want to live here can afford to live here
- Where culture thrives
- People are connected --emotionally –spiritually –businessly
- People feel heard and connected
- Diversity is embraced
- You remember your childhood kindly
- Small businesses have the opportunity to thrive
- The school system is a vital part of the community
- Citizens have a good relationship with city officials
- People can get around --free transportation zone downtown --trolley
- Oakhurst and downtown are connected
- You don't ever need or want to leave

- There is innovation AND preservation
- You live your life
- Sustainability is a way of life
- You want to raise your family
- The next ten years are on the cutting edge and are moving forward
- I feel safe
- Where your neighbors smile at you
- I feel energized to be involved
- I can make a difference
- City officials are responsive
- Everyone is able and welcome to live
- Everyone can move more freely from a transportation standpoint
- I want to live until I die
- You can grow up and grow old
- Business meets the needs of the community-not just high end business
- You can grow old and stay young
- people gather
- people want to hang out
- there is always something to see or do in our public areas
- a place with lots of art in public
- life is fun
- I can catch a trolley (i.e., move around the city without a car but still easily and quickly)
- people are involved in the city, in the schools.
- I can see a movie
- there is more to do than eat and drink
- there is more traditional theater
- I can do all of my shopping
- big-box stores have their place alongside our local businesses
- you never need to leave
- people say, "Hmm, yes, I have vaguely heard of Atlanta."
- people can live through their whole life (i.e., into retirement and old age).
- I can afford to live.
- little has changed in the last ten years.
- families can live, work and play without leaving the City.
- vacant lots are green, not paved.
- that is carbon neutral.
- for all stages of life. (This sentence refers to ages, babies to elderly.)

- of thoughtful expansion.
- of greater diversity in every way (specifically mentioning age, race, economic, and political).
- the senior members of our City and communities share their knowledge, experiences and history with younger and newer citizens.
- accessible
- green
- teens can do stuff
- no cars
- cats can run free
- people care for each other
- I make my home
- People walk
- I want to raise my kids
- I know everyone
- Im proud to live
- We have block parties
- I bike
- I shop and eat
- Spend the weekend without leaving
- Live, eat, work, play
- Realize our goals
- We manage growth and preserve character/history
- Have fun
- Atlanta isn't
- Everyone wants to be
- You can connect the dots - networking digitally and personally
- Decatur is a network
- That is totally wireless with reliable connection
- You are free to walk
- You feel at home
- Lively
- Safe and help is close by
- There are homes, schools and places of worship
- Where people want to and afford to stay, live and retire
- Green and Active
- Know your government by their name
- Great one-of-a-kind shops

- Individuality / Unique / Sense of Community Pride and Responsibility
- Volunteerism
- There is a Trader Joe's
- Live, Work and Play
- Everyone is Welcome and Comfortable
- Everybody knows your name
- Neighbors help each other
- Everyone feels welcome
- Small businesses want to be and are successful
- You can work, live, and play
- You can raise a family
- You are proud to call home
- You want to live forever
- Dreams come true
- The environment is respected
- The government is responsive
- Citizens, government and businesses coexist
- I feel at home
- People matter
- I see people I know because it is a small town
- There is always something exciting going on
- People feel welcome
- Excellence and compassion reign
- I let my kids walk around town and hang out
- Education provides our children with promising future
- Public schools are valued and supported
- all schools are top quality
- we provide vocational education and well as college prep in our schools
- We think BIG about transportation: become an all electric city (no gas), lessen traffic through downtown, divert traffic around to commerce, install better traffic lights with better timing
- Having a car is an inconvenience
- There's lots to do
- There's a strong sense of community and place
- Tapestry of different kinds of people and everyone is honored
- Creativity is fostered and encouraged to bloom
- People who work in the community can afford to live in the community
- Cradle to Grave

- Live, Work, Play
- Come as You Are
- Setting the Standard for Small, Urban Cities
- Change is What Southern Looks Like
- We Do the New South Better
- Residents are Engaged
- We have a cultural center – music, entertainment
- Children/Everyone can thrive
- You can check out but never leave
- I have a voice
- People can walk home at night without being harassed
- Everyone is accepted
- Art is appreciated
- Everyone wants to be
- Everything you need is here
- You can live and work
- Diversity is encouraged and fostered
- The youth are involved
- Everyone knows each other
- There is green living (ex: recycling everywhere)
- Must do something about traffic/pedestrian access
- Concerts, festivals, come walk downtown
- 1998 plan that made this possible - communal things to do
- Small town feel in a huge metroplex
- Homes still sell in this economy
- Not many bank-owned signs - we're not in the red
- Varied ages in population
- Oakhurst resurgence and good schools attracted families
- Decatur focus has been on what we can do to help East Lake and Oakhurst
- Things get done (despite the Commissioners' reluctance)
- Progress can be made
- City management does listen
- People have input - don't quit - persevere
- People keep up their homes
- Buy in people here are invested
- Volunteer opportunities - MLK Day = 1,000 plus!
- Wonderful library - GA Center for the book

- Decatur Book Festival
- Churches share space with community
- Not a typical USA suburb -- "Why I move here and why I stayed here"
- Cultish? "Hey there goes a Decatur sign! License plate! T-shirt!"
- Great city services
- DCM - DEAM - Hagars House
- Community works together to address hunger and homelessness
- Urban camping law discourages
- Educational opportunities - CTS/Agnes Scott/Emory/DeVry
- Access to public transportation - pedicabs!
- Share the road - are bike laws observed?
- Eclectic nature of downtown merchants
- I like to live and work and play
- for re-creation
- the schools are excellent, the children are safe
- 73 year old people can still afford to live
- social engagement is accessible
- positive spontaneous interaction happens, and we have the spaces, places and environment to encourage this phenomena
- I can do everything I need to do in a given day - a self-contained city
- we can find a movie house and a full service bookstore
- it is like a bodega
- parking in downtown is eliminated and pedestrians have total access
- city hall continues to be open to our voices
- we can send a shout out to our great sanitation services
- Life thrives
- You live, work, learn and plan
- Mayberry meets Berkley
- Small town dream lives on
- You know your neighbor
- Mr. Rogers would feel comfortable
- There is always something interesting happening
- We communicate and cooperate
- There is no wrong side of the tracks and all the different groups work together
- people who live there, love it.
- people who visit it, love it.
- generation of families thrive

- life is clean, green, active, and attractive
- the police department is concerned, active, involved, and responsive. Respectful, integral part of the community, focus on safety.
- Can call it "home" - long-term
- All generation live together
- Proud of local government
- Intentional identity
- We are carbon neutral
- Everyone is welcome
- There's a festival for that
- You can sleep, drink, work, live, shop
- You can see every species of bird in the southeast
- I'm proud to live
- Roof farming capitol of the world
- Interesting people are always passing through
- It's hell to drive
- You park your car and walk
- Built for people and not for cars
- Schools set an international standard
- Cars are at the bottom of the list
- Bicyclists and pedestrians have the right of way
- It's easy and relaxing
- Where neighbors know each other
- A model for other cities, "the best village / small city in the USA"
- Lots of sister cities, in addition to the ones we currently have
- Citizens are listened to
- Community is key
- A healthy city for every age
- You've got to come and see . . . (signature event / something in bloom / Decatur's green necklace)
- A city that connects the dots
- There are no scary streets
- Government works

Session Two Ideas

In Session Two, citizens were asked to offer ideas and images in six areas. Here were the questions:

1. Think about Session One and about how the city has developed and grown. How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?
2. How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?
3. How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in how we travel about in the next 10 years?
4. When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?
5. Who are the people who will need housing in Decatur in 20 years? What kind of housing do you think they will they need?
6. In terms of “healthy living,” what would make the most positive difference for the residents of our city? What activities, programs, or changes in the things we build could make a difference?

Sustaining and preserving Decatur

Think about Session One and about how the city has developed and grown. How do we sustain this city? How do we preserve the things we appreciate?

- Mixed use development (Resident/Business)
- Keep taxes in check to promote economic diversity of the population of Decatur (so a variety of people can afford to live here)
- Maintain safety/security (e.g., crime) - both public perception (i.e., "feels" safe) and the actual crime rate
- Stress the environment in planning (i.e., consider green space)
- Promote a walking environment - keeps people healthy, gets them out there (so there is presence and increased perceived safety), sidewalks
- Bikes
- Need bike lanes
- More courtesy for bikes from motorists (share the road)
- Have areas where it's safe for kids to bike as well (especially residential), not just bike lanes, but raise awareness
- Cyclists need to be courteous too

- zip bikes to share - public bike program
- Crossing railroad tracks is difficult for bikers and pedestrians, need more options, will help connect Decatur Square area to Oakhurst
- Pedi-cabs
- Festivals - perhaps add music festival, food festival and soap box derby
- Preserve green space
- Update/upgrade school/recreation facilities (e.g., basketball hoops at local school in disrepair)
- Need variety in new businesses (not just new restaurants). For example, a bookstore.
- Maintain recycling and other programs
- More than 2 electronic recycling days per year
- Trash amnesty days where residents can dispose of anything
- Keep initiatives manageable so they get accomplished
- City ordinances to keep property attractive (lawns, broken cars) - Keep Decatur Beautiful
- How do we support the city financially? - More commercial revenue, it's currently too lop-sided with residential
- Explore incorporating more commercial land into Decatur (annexation)
- Face up to organized resistance to annexation
- Increase downtown business, too much unused commercial land.
- Increase diversity/variety of business type and population
- Short term & long term planning, reassessing as we go in the strategic and tactical (doing good now, keep this up)
- Offer incentives to businesses that don't require retail space
- Better partnership with the county on traffic control
- Challenge - Neighbors that are adjacent to commercial areas are opposed to change
- Challenge - Waste of commercial space (i.e. SunTrust bank across from Ted's should have been 2 stories with office space above - 'fake' 2-story facade should not be allowed)
- Assess and improve current building codes and zoning requirements (historic neighborhoods cannot make their homes more energy efficient because of historic building regulations)
- Stricter zoning requirements to preserve neighborhood and commercial feel and continuity (limit infill design and size)
- Tree canopy maintenance and required tree replacement for sick and dead trees
- More frequent strategic planning sessions (5 year updates)
- Strategic growth of residential units based on targeted population levels and demographic mixes
- Bring a Fortune 500 company into Decatur
- Planned school growth in coordination with population growth/annexation
- Decatur WPA program (use citizens to build infrastructure, create jobs)
- Preserving the small town feel of the city:

- Limiting size (population and geographic area)
- Maintaining a caring government that is easily accessible
- Maintaining green space
- Maintain police and fire department quality
- Renovate/expand the Decatur recreation center
- Develop the College Avenue streetscape (trees, sidewalks, lighting)
- Research best practices for using railroad green space (incorporate it into the city rather than ignoring it as a separate space and barrier between the north and south of the city)
- Move power lines, phone lines underground
- Commercial signage ordinances to limit size and height of signs
- Indirect lighting in commercial areas to limit light pollution
- Create a cohesive community communication plan, including improving website, moving towards e-governance
- We need to sustain our aging population given high taxes and this economy. We need to make sure the needs of our elderly population are being met and that the cost of living is kept affordable
- Tax Base: There is a lot of non-profit tax exempt property. Examples of this are the football field, Saint Thomas Moore and Agnes Scott. Sometimes these properties actually do generate income and that income should be captured with some type of tax.
- Giving back to the community: The Brick Store gives back to the community with the Beer Festival. We need to encourage businesses to give back.
- Who owns the land above the Marta station in Downtown?
- Tax Exemptions: How long should a resident's taxes go towards the school system? It's ok to send your own kids through school and possibly a few other generations but there should be a limit to how many years or generations you have to support through the school system. There is differing opinion as to if tax exemptions or breaks would actually help sustain the City or not.
- Who decides tax exemptions?
- Taxes should be called taxes. Don't call things a fee, call them a tax.
- There needs to be service prioritization. The current citizen participation in the budget process is great. Decatur 101 is great. The county is considering storm water fees and we already have them which is good. One of the things we like about the City is the services. We need to have the funds to continue those services.
- Annexation: We need annexation to sustain the city. This would help increase the tax base and reduce the tax burden especially since the population projection shows the population going down. That being said there is the same number of properties and value so the population should not affect the tax base.

- Density: More density would help to share the burden but density should be done in a thoughtful way. The community doesn't want 20 story buildings. We want density without going over 7 stories. There are opportunities for more dense development such as the Trinity Triangle project.
- Local Businesses: Could they get a tax break if the owner lives in the City? We need to do more "shop local" campaigning to support local business. Ex. Austin/Ashville
- Home Businesses: Some of the business categories are prehistoric. Are we capturing all home businesses that exist? How do we know so that they have to get a business license? DBA can help to keep track of home based business. Maybe an older person running a home business shouldn't be taxed the same way as younger professionals. There needs to be variations in the fees. Right now, by paying for a home business license and your property taxes you are getting double taxed.
- Maintain African American population
- Maintain and increase socio economic diversity of city
- Require affordable housing as part of development process
- Support public housing
- Develop incentives to promote affordable housing
- business development - keep viability of being a "destination" - brings \$ in to sustain community
- round out "destination" offerings : need men's clothing, ice cream, book store, turn Blue Moon into B and B, public library is essential/don't lose it
- we've had good leadership - good governance - Peggy is best in state
- we're in positive financial state
- capital improvements only when there are grants
- need to plan well for succession of leadership to maintain the quality we have had
- structured ways for citizen involvement - continuous pulse (without being overwhelmed)
- We need to protect our emergency services in the budget- we have excellent fire, police, etc.
- Maintaining our own services (as opposed to DeKalb) is very important- Keep them in our budget
- Maintaining our own services - Includes waste management
- Maintaining our own services - Quality education
- Maintaining citizen involvement is key
- Maintaining and care for the character of the architecture in our city and neighborhoods, which call up the importance of zoning
- Taking care of our trees- Having a plan to replace old trees and maintaining a healthy tree canopy which can include having an active and functioning tree ordinance
- Sustaining the city requires a balanced tax base with increased revenue from businesses as well as residents
- Maintain appropriate density and the appropriate scale of commercial and residential development

- Preservation of neighborhood character through ordinances, set backs, etc.
- Discourage "McMansions"- Encourage development appropriate to neighborhood
- Develop guidelines to create scalability within neighborhoods
- Enact ordinances to prevent "McMansions" and make it more difficult for tear downs
- Preserving diversity (racial, socioeconomic, etc) can be enhanced through appropriate neighborhood builds and affordable housing.
- Keep engaging the community through processes such as the Strategic Planning processes- may want to re-visit every 3 years and then have 'major' effort every 10 years. Ensure we keep engaging the community
- Use community groups to connect with each other through shared events and city-wide events
- Keep shopping locally; encourage local small businesses
- Spread the word about our City
- Volunteer !
- Promote life cycle housing
- Educate the citizens about the challenges we face and the solutions
- Promote and encourage affordable - Housing
- Promote and encourage affordable - Taxes
- Maintain a variety of retail - Types of Merchandise
- Maintain a variety of retail - Price points
- Obtain access to sales tax revenues
- Intelligent annexation
- Meet your government Day
- Residents remain vocal and continue to participate in civic life
- City develops creative ways outside of property taxes to find funding
- Maintain and strengthen Decatur's brand (i.e. Oakhurst flags, Decatur logo)
- Create Decatur Chamber of Commerce to recruit new businesses
- Provide small business advisory (i.e. SCORE Atlanta)
- Market Decatur to Metro Atlanta
- Reach out to and convince larger retailers to find ways to serve smaller, walking cities such as Decatur
- Comprehensive review of zoning codes and variance policy
- Follow best practice for development, look to Boulder, CO and Naperville, IL as best practice leaders
- Create buffer zone between residential and commercial properties
- Ensure new development meets needs of diverse community and encourages diversity and sustained growth (diversity described as racial, age, socioeconomic)
- Develop affordable housing

- Keep small neighborhoods
- Need better interaction between neighborhoods
- Need ways to help people maintain their houses to keep them up.
- Need a city directory of residents
- Stamp out elitism - How? Foster attitudes
- Balance gentrification - How?
- Each citizen needs to be personally proactive to help keep diversity in city
- Ensure continued community participation. There is strong commitment and enthusiasm to community involvement. It is not lip service.
- More business development to help shift taxes more to commercial vs. residential.
- I am ok with taxes b/c of strong community infrastructure
- Attract more entrepreneurial business whose workers would want to live here or use public transport
- Continue focus on mixed use development
- Need more day time business workers to help sustain local shops and restaurants vs. just residents shopping locally
- Consider better partnerships with the county - Decatur is county seat
- Sustainability is linked to population so we need to leverage existing space vs. building new. Increasing population does have an impact
- Fiscal responsibility of government
- Budget is developed around goals
- informed by strategic plan
- not a lot of infighting among departments
- trying to get mix of retail / other downtown
- stimulate community involvement
- partnership w/ DBA
- need good retail mix
- balance between increased density and close knit community
- movie / music crossover venue needed (like Variety playhouse)
- limited recreational opportunities, more in the evenings and more for adults, example: city sponsored pub crawl
- The city works hard to develop a plan (zoning, land-use, arts, recreation, strategy) and sticks to it
- we might want to revisit planning more often but not to re-invent a strategic session but perhaps to tweak it
- Be trend setters for others communities. Be more Green
- Keep an eye on Taxes – let's keep the city affordable
- how do we do this though when 20% of the citizens are over 60 years old?

- Look carefully at increasing commercial tax base
- continue to engage community via activities - an increase in festivals
- city leadership must continue to be great., i.e. Decatur 101, volunteerism, informed citizenry
- Foster business growth - don't rely entirely on DBA (while it is good it often becomes a lazy way to pitch services to the business community)
- Encourage local shopping
- see economic development continue
- are there holes in our community infrastructure in terms of the types of businesses - why no liquor stores?
- better grocery options
- gas stations
- boutique hotel
- independent art-house movie theater
- performance space
- civic center
- we question the population statistics....
- explore New Urbanism ideals for development
- city leadership needs to prepare for leadership transitions for those in non-political roles
- resolve city/county issues
- Maintain communication avenues open between city government and citizens, developers and planners.
- Support small businesses as citizens and through government support programs
- Continue to balance population density and business growth
- Address transition between light industrial/commercial and residential zoning.
- Preserve pre-War housing stock, are well built and provide sense of place
- Limit tear downs, encourage renovation of houses instead, use incentives- e.g., limit size of new house if tear down vs. renovation
- Need survey of housing stock
- City and school system need to work together to manage growth (annexation and otherwise)
- Maintain image and sense of identity among City residents
- Educate residents and others on what City is doing and promote same
- Decatur is a free-standing community with economic diversity. There is the danger of losing this diversity and becoming an enclave of only one economic strata.
- We need to maintain public housing.
- We need to maintain the "in-between" housing for working class (teachers, firefighters, etc.)
- We need more apartment complexes
- Encourage more Emory students to live in Decatur, High disposable income

- Create a college town environment
- Re-develop brownfield properties or abandoned properties.
- There has been an increase in the number of small families moving to the area and the current housing stock does not fit the need. (the value of the land higher than the value of the existing house - encouraging tear downs and complete rebuilding)
- Avoid the example of the VA - Highlands, Overpriced homes, Overpriced businesses (due to overpriced rents), All leads to a loss of economic diversity
- How do we sustain the entire city?
- How do we incorporate the views / needs of all city residents (across all economic levels)
- The process (government / bureaucracy) should not be / become a barrier to participation
- Can city support landlords who create affordable housing / apartments?
- Need more adult only swimming pools, services, and amenities for the elderly
- Jitney Services - licensed by the city
- Survival / wilderness training (for when things fall apart)
- Keep doing round tables - even after this process is over
- Themes that are discovered in these round tables need to be followed/communicated throughout the community so that when we go to solve these issues, people remain involved.
- Increase use of "Open Government" tool.
- Provide early notice of agenda topics for city council, planning board, zoning board, etc. People can't just drop whatever they're doing and attend meetings within the next 24 hours!
- We love the Decatur Focus. It should include early notice of agenda topics and also provide a forum for suggestions, feedback and how to support a positions.
- We need to bridge the gap between round table meetings and official city meetings (school board, city council, etc) and make them forums for civil discussion rather than them becoming so volatile and emotionally charged. A continuous channel of communication might help carry over the civil discussions/disagreement into the other meetings. We are able to disagree in harmony in the round table meetings, why not in these other ones? These could even be symbolic gestures.
- There is value in "wild" spaces (similar to Waddell Park). Not every bit of land needs to have a use. Sometimes it is enough just to let it be a wild home to nature.
- Enact mini-roundtables for the kickoff for topics and issues coming up in the next year. For example, get people together to kick off 2011 themes perhaps around walkability and environment. Theme each year and get people together to discuss in roundtables at the beginning how to put plans in action. Use this round table as a start!
- Get younger people involved
- Too many rules makes Decatur seem "fuddy duddy"
- More activities for tweens and parents
- We need a skateboard park or a way to make skateboarding accessible in downtown Decatur

- More outside basketball courts
- Take care of what we have
- Support Trees Atlanta ((Oakhurst)
- Glenwood Park-looks well cared for
- Allow unique character to stay
- More little shops/ charm
- Continue and expand involvement
- Encourage people to spend locally
- Make it a "destination location" and bring money into Decatur
- Monthly or bi-monthly street party (close traffic off)
- Maximize use of web site and internet
- Better links
- Create one central website for city and neighborhood and business organizations
- Fuller city calendar of events
- Preserve historical sites
- More alternative transportation
- Reduce impervious surface
- Age & capacity of storm water system
- Challenge to keep development from encroaching what we consider our greenspace
- Identification of important resources
- Street sweeping, trash pickup more often
- Compost pick up, encourage and promote
- Reduction of trash
- Encourage more recycling by providing containers
- Centralized center for recycling
- Conservation of water
- Encourage rain water recycling
- Best use of flood plains
- Helping residents with storm water issues on their property
- Naturalized greenspace protected
- More pedestrian only areas
- Encouragement of car pooling, business incentives, partnership with City
- patronize local businesses; keep small (independent) businesses thriving; is there a way to prevent big box/chain stores from locating in Decatur? Our unique stores and restaurants keep people coming here
- enhance walkability

- educate people about the history of Decatur; "Decatur 101" is good way to learn history, could offer more often and with more focus on history, e.g., Decatur's role in civil rights, school desegregation; someone could develop a specific session or course, Encyclopedia Decatur
- more winter/fall activities, festivals
- Why is there no diversity in these round table groups? [Because of] how it is advertised and communicated?
- Diversity is about more than race, also income and age
- Community preservation should also include preservation of the people who make up the community. MLK work weekend 1x/year a good gesture, but need more effort to preserve Decatur's cultural heritage through preserving economic diversity, helping people stay in their homes..
- Importance of economic diversity: our police officers, firefighters can't afford to live here.
- Need more affordable homes, trusts to keep homes affordable.
- Attract more businesses to support the tax base.
- Need for Callaway Building to be bought and redeveloped. [Facilitator's note: group included a former City employee who mentioned this - most or all of other participants did not know which building it is, or what occupies it or who owns it. All agreed redevelopment would be good.]
- Establish more historic neighborhoods preservation- local historic districts
- Aesthetic harmony in neighborhoods
- Keep harmony in neighborhoods
- Keep involving public in decisions
- Sustain sensitive populations (long term residents, elderly, low and mid-income) with tax beaks
- Benefits/savings for long time residents so they don't leave
- Increase environmental sustainability.
- Composting (can be money maker)
- Alternative energy (methane gas)
- Yard and food waste composting
- City compost area should be better used and advertised
- Compost should stay within the city- not go to county compost
- Better local composting in general
- How are we preserving water (no one is group knows) Needs encouragement and funding
- Green roofs downtown on flat roofs
- Subsidize energy and water preservation, incentives
- Government buildings should be green leaders. DeKalb/Decatur City should work together.
- Is there available info for smart sustainability? What is best?
- We want to learn, plan. Lead green development, Decatur should be positive example.

- Create green cooperative so can learn about sustainability such as bike co-op and a place to learn how to make rain barrels. Trustworthy, reliable information.
- Don't get bigger, get better. Regulations necessary to control amount of building, size. Housing should be built for seniors from beginning, should have laws / regulations to fit the vision of changing demographics. Review existing code
- Concerns over 14% commercial tax base - unusually low. Plan smart to grow commercial tax base. Should encourage high density / mixed use / mixed income development. Encourage commercial property / annex commercial areas.
- Preserve historic districts / char of city, cure "McMansion" problem. Manage transitions between commercial / high density and lower density residential areas. Review regulations on how we designate historic areas, get guidelines now before expansion / development so that everyone knows standards before hand - lead to less controversy.
- Renovate existing structures
- Increase diversity of shops, need for general store, not just boutique shops
- Affordable rent for businesses
- Large stores (i.e. Trader Joe's etc) would be good to drive residences and people to Decatur area
- Creative ways of charging non-profits for services (trash / recycling collection, etc)
- City is repaving Willow Lane. DeKalb County plans to repave as well. DeKalb contacted City of Decatur, but Decatur is going ahead with paving b/c of needing to spend state money. Road crosses flood plain
- Patillo Way and Greenwood Circle has had flood problems for years. Had to pay 1000. To add lip to driveway. City came by and repaved, destroyed lip and covered manhole covers. City claimed it was use of state money and could not do anything about it. Later came back and milled pavement a foot deep.
- Poplar and Inman has dangerous storm water drainage issues. Child could be hurt
- DeKalb County most paved County in GA. DeKalb goes by old paradigm. . "pave it over"
- Decatur should adopt same ordinances as the City of Atlanta regarding landscaping parking lots. Could use ordinances to remedy Callaway parking lot
- Decatur must appreciate and preserve historic buildings
- Stick to current city limits. Plans to annex not valid.
- The variety of housing types - historic to brand new - is a real asset.
- The diversity of Decatur is wonderful but some kinds of diversity are diminishing (e.g., racial).
- More lo-tech communication - bulletin boards, local radio
- Better directional signs - to library, parks, parking
- Economics: the tax burden needs to spread away from home owners, But we do get good return for our tax dollars, Lots of non-profit entities that don't pay taxes
- More business development

- Brick & mortar business might not be the only answer
- Cultural activities--theaters, etc.
- Technology can facilitate this (cultural activities)
- Current office space should be better used
- How to attract?
- Real estate expensive
- How do we achieve and keep our neighborhood feel?
- Don't approve every permit for larger homes. Declare certain areas affordable? Subsidies? Hard to sustain.
- Neighborhoods give Decatur character--keep what we have, but allow for change.
- Look at revenue alternatives
- We could charge for driving in to the city, as they do in London. "Pay as you drive."
- Nice to have activity on the streets at all times of the day and night
- Our city personnel are passionate, caring and visionary. Pay them well and keep them--don't let other cities lure them away.
- Attract independent businesses that are self-sustaining
- Decatur Job board- where all businesses post job openings
- Protect our natural environment
- Taking care of the older population
- Help in transitioning elderly to assisted living in the neighborhood
- Help elderly with transportation
- Attract volunteer groups that work with the elderly
- Filling in the ugly spaces, make walking routes safer and more scenic
- Make ground level areas pedestrian [friendly] (it's already happening but just keeping improving it)
- Need nicer office space/repurpose buildings to attract more & upscale businesses
- Make Decatur more attractive to creative businesses with features like open floor plans, loft space, cool/modern spaces, shared incubation space/networking
- Attract developers who specialize in creative/loft style space
- Bring in more affordable restaurants/delis/casual eateries (NOT fast food though) and a child-friendly pub (good beer and play space)
- Need a toy store
- Consider closing Ponce de Leon to make a pedestrian mall (traffic study needed)
- Lower taxes
- Offer tax incentives for storm water reduction, corrections
- Credits for volunteering against taxes or traffic fines/penalties

- Issuance of more parking tickets, rigorous enforcement of parking ordinances - which would lead to increased revenues, encourage walkability and sustainability
- Sustain City by becoming, continuing to be a model (i.e., leader in education, parking, transportation)
- Citywide coordination of parking
- Rationalized parking, cooperation between and among businesses, locations
- Tax breaks for work force
- Public safety remain a budget priority
- Incentives for businesses - bulk up commercial tax base, fill-in "Dead Zone," revitalization of business areas would create jobs, relieve traffic congestion, distribute tax base
- Greater economic development by City, partnering with private
- RETAIL MIX. Include in development plan, limit national chains, meet downtown development plan requirements, grocery store. Our group expressed pleasure with the current retail mix in the City and want to make sure that similar efforts are made going forward. An exception to the displeasure for national chains was expressed with respect to Starbucks, since they fit into an existing historic space well.
- CODIFY OR CREATE ECONOMIC INCENTIVES. Explore options like required local ownership, rent controls or such things that would assist with maintaining and expanding the type of retail mix we presently have.
- Balancing grow[th] and livability
- Zoning, smart growth and forward thinking
- Small town feel and affordable home
- Recycle the land
- Maintain people's small houses
- Expansion of partnership with seniors and anyone that needs help
- How to provide housing stock for diverse income levels
- Sustain what we've been doing with controlled growth
- These Round Table discussions periodically would be a good tool for sustainability
- Help proven businesses to stay in the city during tough economic times --taxes too high, rent too high
- Encourage businesses with zoning benefits, incentives
- More cooperation between the City and School Board
- Fear that the big chain restaurants could replace the local businesses
- Continue to actively pursue the businesses to come to Decatur that we want here
- Incentives for people to come into Decatur to buy/spend money
- Review land use / zoning – especially commercial/residential transitions
- Tree preservation

- More sidewalk trees
- Planting and replanting
- Education and support for tree owners
- Encourage green building/development
- Green building ordinance?
- Encourage trees in parking lots
- Preserve commitment to height ordinance—80 foot max
- City fiscal responsibility
- Too many employees?
- Pensions?
- Careful consideration of all annexation issues
- Review/strengthen infill rules
- Implement overlay zone on all C-2 / R-60 abutments
- Achieve uniformity
- Planning Dept and Economic Development are important in the process
- Encourage younger talent to get involved
- Safety
- Maintain stable tax rates
- Spend wisely
- Have credible leadership
- Maintain transparency of government
- B: How do we preserve the things we appreciate:
- More strict guidelines for redevelopment
- Maintain diversity thru more affordable housing
- Affordable housing does not equal low income
- Maybe we stop paying taxes at a certain age
- Age 65 and no children and stop paying school taxes
- Keep the city as walkable as possible
- Specifically, Clairemont is built for cars and could benefit from looking at a “complete streets” program to overhaul it.
- Scott Boulevard is terrible for cyclists
- Fixing some of these problems might cause congestion, but would be better for pedestrians
- Crossing the tracks from Oakhurst to downtown also needs to be improved
- A major challenge in doing this would be getting cooperation with the city’s regional partners
- The group felt that the city could work better with Emory University, which is currently doing lots of campus transportation planning

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

Tending to the natural environment

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

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

- City buildings should pursue environmental certification
- Promote planting of trees, not just bushes, etc.
- Maintain recycling programs
- Continue to be resourceful
- Promote rain barrel usage and A/C drainage collection
- Partner with ASC to use their vacant lots as green space for now
- Encourage walking, but increase "rest areas" (i.e. benches)
- Promote water use contest (i.e. Gallons per person per day) as a fun way to educate about conservation & recycling
- Educate about air pollution, what contributes to it? How can we reduce our impact?
- Promote green space donation
- Increase amount of green space required per population density (i.e. in multi-housing developments)
- Challenge - Aging trees
- Challenge - Cost of land
- Create a carbon neutral city
- Make the city a zero-waste zone
- Mandate composting, provide a pick-up service
- Make sure city practices green procurement (local, recyclable, sustainable purchases)
- Require commercial recycling or provide a commercial recycling program
- Electric car recharge stations around the city (government parking lots)
- Pay as you throw enforcement for condos and businesses (based on weight of trash in dumpster, charged to HOA/business dumpster rental because individual charges are impossible)
- Rain barrels/cisterns for capturing and reusing rainwater
- Community recycling/waste management education programs
- Liaison to bring city and school planning together
- Gathering places need recycling bins
- There are concerns that the recycling doesn't really get sorted
- We need more public awareness and education about what you can and cannot recycle
- The City needs to publish what happens to recycled items so we can patronize those new products
- We need centralized recycling and less hassle for condos, multifamily, businesses, and single family residential
- We need compost pickup and facilities for condos
- Compost should be tied into the city farm idea
- We need an "Orca" which is a high capacity composting machine that makes a "tea"
- Cooking oil should be used for alternative energy
- We need education and incentives for alternative energy solutions in homes

- We need a co-op that provides energy efficient upgrades to be done a below market costs
- We need local tax break by the City for energy efficient upgrades
- We need a commercial recycling program
- We need a recycling program for building materials during renovations and new construction
- We need to educate the community about how to recycle building materials
- We need Electric Car facilities, like plug ins
- We need service stations that sell alternative fuels
- We need a comprehensive sustainability policy
- The Sustainability Board is a good thing, but the public needs to keep track of what is going on and get updates
- Preserve the existing tree canopy
- Improve air quality
- Use Smart Growth guidelines from the National Resource Defense Council to guide development
- Smart Growth means higher density, multiple uses, transportation choices and that the town looks unique
- more pervious space - get rid of paved parking lots
- each business should be required to plant green
- minimize footprint of parking by building parking decks
- more public / private partnership for alternative energy i.e. solar, geothermal
- codes to promote energy efficiency (which costs less when new build)
- reduce air pollution through less car use
- green space - preserve it, get more of it
- Water: While not having our own services - since DeKalb County provides- we can still be aggressive through actions such as the city providing a Toilet Replacement Program;
- city providing a program to encourage rain barrels at residences;
- Water treatment is energy and chemically intensive- Develop methods to reduce the need for treated water such as a city-wide grey water system
- Be aware of impervious surfaces and their impact on the natural environment
- Looking for alternatives to asphalt
- Porous paving for sidewalks, e.g., {use of rain gardens}
- Education of the public to the issues and the need for pervious surfaces
- Promote additional green space (while being aware of the cost)
- Require tree replacement when trees are cut
- More carrots less stick: e.g. Have a resident STAFF expert on grant matches for environmental matters
- Use tree planters to reduce urban heat island effects in parking lots, etc.
- Encourage green and white roofs

- Provide Incentives through Grants- the Grant Coordinator
- Decatur should be proactive with greening the building stock- city could offer incentives for improvements similar to toilet replacement program where green development is encouraged
- City could aggregate energy efficiency technology (so that certain technology may be cheaper through a bulk contract)- Does DeKalb County have program already in place?, Perhaps through a tax credit or a financing mechanism to incentivize insulation, e.g. such as the PACE concepts
- Green roofs
- LEED/energy efficiency incentives
- Environmental education in the schools
- Community gardens
- Flood plain reuse for gardens and/or recreation
- Stronger tree ordinance
- Incentives for automobile-less lifestyle
- Parking incentives for alternate transportation/scooters/small cars
- Encourage energy audits
- Month Focus article about environmental topics
- Decrease airplane noise pollution
- Establish habitat certification with organization like Audubon Society
- Minimize storm water runoff and encourage capture and re-use
- City sponsored rail barrels ala recycling bins
- Expand recycling program
- Canopy replacement
- monitor water quality, air quality so we can look for appropriate solutions
- Storm water is a threat to water quality
- Consider permeable pavement - is this an option?
- Incorporate eco-based storm water quality treatments on public right of ways
- Support composting program for the city
- More urban farms
- Divert restaurant waste to composting for farms
- Improved bike and pedestrian mobility
- Ensure we have a healthy tree canopy
- Have a tree ordinance "with teeth"
- Explore no net loss of canopy. E.g. Emory - they may take a tree down in one area but they put one up somewhere else.
- Stop proliferation of power lines. Bury them!
- Harvest, recycle and reclaim water
- traffic -- minimize idling by timing traffic lights

- trees - set canopy goals
- ordinance only applies to new construction
- need more trees in parking lots.
- community gardens...maybe even in parking lots
- more composting options -- city coordinated
- Recognize interdependence with Atlanta
- Be engaged with the larger Metro Area
- Include biking, walking in a transportation plan
- actively seek greenspace opportunities
- encourage tree planting
- add green space around DeKalb County courthouse (pretty it up!) and same with the prisoner holding area across the street from the courthouse
- explore constraints to improving our natural environment by being the county seat
- Resolve relationship with the county
- investigate need for all that parking space (lots) on Church and Commerce and DeKalb Medical Center
- Improve flood areas
- Reduce erosion
- Laws around 40% greenspace
- Increase education around how increasing parks and greenspace will increase property value
- Figure out where we are in energy consumption and waste in Decatur and share numbers with community.
- Educate on true time to walk places
- Add 1 cent sales tax to buy old houses and take them down and create green space.
- Improve Dearborn Park
- Get people out of cars
- Manage air space with airplanes==help to reduce air pollution
- Make streets safer
- More organized trash pickup-create community involvement- volunteer and get a t-shirt
- Take more pride in city-increase trash cans around town and have kids from schools paint them.
- Lower speed limits
- Studies to better flow of traffic, traffic lights and commuting with bikes
- Balance design of roads to include bikes and walking
- Bike sharing
- Education on environmental policies in place
- Impact of idling in car
- Tax benefits for hybrid/alternative fuel vehicles and special parking benefits

- Increase number of bike racks
- Bike valet at all festivals
- Stronger tree ordinance should be approved and implemented
- Continue with dog parks
- Continue city "flood plain" purchase
- Consider educational arm to encourage personal conservation efforts
- Broaden existing programs and knowledge base to make citizens aware of environmental issues
- Provide incentives to developers for creatively balancing density and greenspace
- Approach institutions with ample land to "double-duty their property for resident use (as city green space). -i.e. Agnes Scott / Columbia Seminary
- No idling zones
- Charging stations for electric cars
- Promote light-duty transportation vehicles
- All gov't cars should be natural gas/electric powered, including garbage and recycling trucks
- Schools should compost
- Recycling program for businesses
- Need better control of storm water runoff from both public and private property, recreate natural environment in doing this, not with curb and gutter, reduce runoff to more natural state, code changes are needed, Toco Hill library branch is good example
- Drainage systems can be turned into streams (more natural body of water), Westchester Park is good example, use to connect green spaces
- Create incentives for individuals to collect and conserve water, educate public on how and why need to do this using Focus, festivals, etc., do outreach activities, make sure zoning codes don't discourage this
- Central City does well with trees, place more emphasis on tree protection and education of public about trees
- Need to replace and revitalize tree canopy throughout the City to offset coming loss of large canopy trees, encourage replanting of such trees city and county wide, partner with Trees Atlanta and other such entities
- Look at partnership with DeKalb County to encourage use of rain barrels, composting, etc.
- Transportation improvements would improve air quality (one group member was surprised at Atlanta's poor air quality)
- Use alternative fuels in public transportation (e.g., biofuels)
- Create green space walk way connecting cemetery to other parts of City, in particular with intersection at East Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce Drive, ideas for this area were walking path or community garden in blighted property along Commerce Drive

- Ban sale of English Ivy in City, remove all invasive plants from public spaces and educate homeowners on need to do same
- Keep parking spaces along Church Street near Glenlake Park, need traffic calming along Church Street
- preserve lots such as the lot on the corner of Church & Commerce
- Utilize city owned lots as - Community gardens
- Utilize city owned lots as - Usable pocket parks
- Utilize waste from restaurants, Grease as biodiesel
- Connect parks and other areas of greenspace
- Create a green beltline
- Dedicated funding to buy more greenspace
- Utilize flood plain space
- Air quality, Charging stations for electric cars
- Encourage/require alternative energy sources in new developments, Provide city-backed loans to aid this
- Improve standards for newly built city buildings (LEED)
- LED street lights
- Retention ponds and re-use of H2O
- Decatur could be more self-sustaining
- Multi-use pocket parks
- With increases in the number of city gardens we need to use pesticides carefully - limited types, only certain times of day, etc.
- Protect green spaces by ticketing those who walk across them
- More focus on storm-water run-off and the use of landscaping chemicals that can pollute run-off
- Conduct a study of water run-off and encourage better run-off management by property owners
- Protect green space for walking, for farming
- Focus on noise pollution (emphasize the value of silence), leaf blowers, unmuffled cars, radios / car stereos
- Composting or other use for food waste generated by city schools (biomass energy)
- No Styrofoam
- We need to figure out how to balance the return on investment on land while preserving greenspace. Knob Hill did it wrong.
- The city has to step up and own the environment - the city controls the zoning, thereby affecting price. So, a lot worth 3 million right now zoned for 90 homes maybe should only be zoned for 45 in the future. But the bank won't loan 3 million on a lot for 45 homes, but that would naturally drive down the value of that lot to about 1.5 million. The homes would end up actually having a higher value because the trees planted/preserved add value to the land. The city creates the

economic environment through zoning and can zone to require more greenspace. - This would be visionary zoning.

- Natural environments should be required in development.
- The tree ordinance on the table should be supported.
- There should be a zoning requirement around the tree canopy and number of contiguous trees.
- We should have a quiet zone/time - for example on Sunday mornings from 8-12 and it should be part of the noise ordinance. No mowing/leaf blowers, etc.
- The zoning codes should include requirements around green practices with dealing with storm water. Every lot should be required to be storm water neutral. However, we need to think beyond retention ponds. That isn't the way to deal with storm water.
- We should give credits/incentives for green practices like Pervious cement, Green roofs, Rain barrels, Rain gardens
- NOW is the time do all of this. Real estate/land prices are down and so if we enact zoning changes now, it won't be in the midst of a fever-pitch real estate market and we can actually take time and be thoughtful about what we want to achieve and work to avoid any unintended consequences.
- More parks and community gardens
- More education (i.e. composting, rain barrels)
- Clean up and control storm water
- More trees and 'smarter trees'
- Eliminate or reduce car transportation
- Encourage car pools
- Use web to find buddies (carpool)
- Live/work units
- Local tax credit for alternative use of energy
- Tax credit for sustainable energy
- Decatur version of Cliff Bus
- eliminate some [vehicular] traffic
- reduce energy use: create subsidy for people to invest in less expensive solar energy systems so they can generate own power and sell excess back to the grid
- rainwater harvesting
- City provide information to residents about how to reduce energy use
- secure grant funding to support senior residents investing in rainwater harvesting, solar energy systems
- tax incentives for green solutions
- increase landscape plantings wherever possible, even small increments, to relieve all the pavement; find neighborhood groups to maintain (instead of City)

- encourage people to reduce turf and use more native plants
- establish a green award to encourage people to value biodiversity in their yards, reduce use of chemicals
- City acquire green space when it becomes available to preserve
- invest in consultants to get needed expertise
- No /reduce Styrofoam / plastic in restaurants. Encourage recycling in business and apts / condos. Demand is there, just need operational ability
- Increase fines for tree removal
- More bike / pedestrian lanes for travel
- Highlighting natural resources through education, signs over waterways, etc
- Stick and carrot approach, ordinances + tax incentives, combine with fed, local, and state (i.e. solar power water heaters, etc)
- Water / sewer - poor pipes and infrastructure. Review current and assess county vs. city conflicts
- Label drainage / education. Use online resources reports for air quality other statistics, working into public events. Spread information about how Decatur is doing with regards to sustainability
- Better light timings - improve air quality, left turn arrows at specific intersections are not timed correctly. May be a county issue, should see if Decatur community can influence county action
- Would like more green spaces, but concerned on impact on taxes
- Electric Shuttle between neighborhoods, help relieve traffic. Could charge nominal fee and could sustain itself. Make it unique, like a trolley.
- Smaller parks / greenspace. Areas with benches with grass, along tracks, etc
- Signage for parking lots, parks, etc. larger and more noticeable.
- Street trees need to be a part of Decatur's future
- Use pervious pavement (Cornell Structural soil) for future parking lots
- Intersections that need landscaping and safety attention: Church and Commerce, McDonough and College and McDonough from DHS to the square
- City needs its own arborist: could educate public on appropriate trees to plants regarding sidewalk issues, root structure, life of trees, canopy, utility wires, etc.
- City should dictate all utilities Companies when dealing with City's trees. GA Power comes through and chops trees tops
- We want all utilities in conduits like Peachtree City
- Trees were torn down with Housing Authority buildings
- Need to be actively planning and planting trees for future tree canopy. Current canopy in decline
- City needs tree ordinances for private property owners.
- City needs to educate private property owners regarding types of trees to plant
- Developers should replace trees taken down with 4-5 new ones
- City has to be more responsible with builders regarding trees

- Canopy dictates our storm drainage, AC and power bills
- Do not sell public property, maintain and add to public land, create green space
- Take long-term view with public property
- When making policy, be empathetic to how it would affect you and others as citizens
- Create a citizens' advisory board
- Create a green space commission
- Create a green or emerald necklace through the city
- City should buy property on Scott and Clairemont next to woodland gardens. If developed, has to be mixed use space of green space and building
- Urban development should have the same ordinance or codes and builders.
- Pedestrian traffic must be addressed at corner of Candler and College
- Trees: intentional canopy replacement
- Storm water drainage needs attention
- How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?
- More flowering plants to complement all the green
- Wildflower fields
- Preserve our trees - the wonderful green canopy. But don't force tree planting on home owners
- Have public composting sites as part of waste management (San Francisco has a pilot program along these lines)
- More attention to flood-risk areas
- Attention to water run-off erosion
- A bird sanctuary
- How about a squirrel-powered source of electricity?
- Provide communal green space near where people live. Make sure each neighborhood has green space, and connect them to one another.
- Lots of green space not used right now. Buy "at risk" properties.
- Along with the job board mentioned above, have natural preservation board
- A message board for volunteer opportunities, Have it not only on website- but make sure the website is publicized through email, Make website more like a blog- have more news and e-mail blasts
- Replace dying trees
- Ordinance encouraging [environmental]preservation
- Bike lanes on the actual street
- Decatur Transportation system
- Closing Ponce on the square and McDonough- make it a pedestrian mall
- More communication in neighborhoods

- Have neighborhood areas on website
- Annual "clean-up Decatur day" With a festival after it
- Figure out a way to keep Atlanta pollution out!
- Encourage green businesses that provide solutions to environmental issues
- Develop alternative transportation infrastructure (see notes #3)
- List the properties that could be greenspaces (that exist but are undeveloped) on the website so communities could use, turn into gardens, use by schools, etc. and who at the city should be contacted for this
- Clarify roles in maintaining and developing parks/greenspaces - what is the role of neighborhood vs. city
- Figure out ways to collaborate and share greenspaces that exist already
- Develop pocket parks
- Communicate if there is a plan to acquire or develop greenspace
- Keep the dogparks
- Tree replacement program
- Expansion of recycling program to multi-family residential and commercial and to include food waste
- Curbside composting
- Fully utilize MARTA, CLIFF
- City involvement in MARTA
- Expand sidewalk program to both sides of all streets
- Expand bike lanes
- Storm water policy, improvement
- Rooftop gardens
- Inventory and designated greenspace
- Tax incentives for LEED certification
- Environmental construction costs more, but that will diminish over time
- Study of water shortages - drought tolerate plants, landscaping; limitation on number of car washes
- How do we preserve and improve our natural environment? How do we protect our air, water and green space?
- STOP OR LIMIT DEVELOPMENT. Our group would rather have a moratorium on any development rather than allow any development that isn't carefully considered with respect to meeting the standards that have been established.
- GARDEN TOPS. Can these be incorporated in development requirements? Hooray for rooftop and ledge type gardens and greenery.

- RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS TO COMMERCIAL. Comments about the restrictions on re-development that have been adopted with respect to residential rebuilding efforts led to thoughts of having similar restrictions commercially.
- LEED AND ENVIRONMENTAL REQUIREMENTS. Greater effort should be made towards encouraging or requiring LEED Certification or other types of environmental certification for all new construction and rebuilding projects in the City.
- BEYOND DECATUR. It was noted that environmental issues often extend to or apply to issues beyond our borders, and the group encourages our City officials to work with DeKalb County, Atlanta Regional Commission, and state officials on efforts in these areas.
- STREAMS. Upon noting that several streams originate within our City, the group felt that greater cleanup efforts are needed. Also increased policing of pollution problems, as it was noted that any problems with the water leaving our City had far ranging impact on both sides of the Subcontinental Divide to the Atlantic and Gulf. Concern was also expressed over the parking lot runoff from our City to the streams.
- WATER RECLAMATION INCENTIVES. The City should explore options with respect to educating citizens and encouraging water reclamation efforts.
- Maintain what greenspace we have
- Balance greenspace throughout north and south Decatur
- Upgrade storm water infrastructure, improve/prevent erosion, reduce storm water runoff
- More pervious surfaces
- More parks and playgrounds for everyone throughout north and south Decatur
- Conserve 'open' space without trees as open play areas, turf area
- Enforcement of regulations by local authorities
- Encourage the school system to protect / expand their green spaces
- More unpaved trails
- Add extra greenspaces so current greenspaces aren't overused --set aside funds for this
- Athletic facilities are overused --not enough of them
- Parks are being impacted by overuse
- Buy land for additional park space and athletic fields
- Create lots on edges of town to park cars so interior is more walkable and bikeable --create car-free zones
- Provide more places bicycles
- Encourage water collection and containment --use to improve the growth of plants
- Buildings to collect water for plant material, parks (incentives) --residences too
- Runoff problems - improve the storm water system to handle runoff --encourage permeable surfaces instead of hard surfaces
- Reduce traffic to improve air quality

- Use a "fur bus"-like system to go around to businesses
- Encourage and support restaurants in using green take-out containers
- Encourage/require institutional and commercial recycling
- Enhance walkability
- Improvements to Commerce Drive for pedestrians / Ponce to Clairemont traffic calming
- More sidewalks and bike lanes
- Pedestrian islands on large streets
- Bike lanes and other improvements for biking on Clairemont
- Review execution of new parking on Church Street at Glenlake Pool – traffic safety? (road narrowing and reducing lanes is a good idea)
- Enhance/support bike parking/racks
- Educational programs (rec center?) for nutrition, personal finance, and gardening
- Encourage more personal and community gardens
- Pedestrian/bikeways connecting neighborhoods and other areas
- Public garbage cans—add more
- Add more dog waste stations
- Collaboration with Trees Atlanta
- Public transportation
- Add multi-use trails
- Condemn/re-appropriate more greenspace
- Have co-operative agreements between neighbors (foottrails and greenspace)
- Performance/protection bonds on construction sites for trees, etc
- Ways to conserve water and capture with rain barrel capture systems
- Save gray water
- Revise/develop regulations for erosion control
- Incentives for impervious surfaces
- Take traffic off roads by adding more free bike exchange
- Plant more trees
- Regulate idling car engines
- Have infiltration systems to capture more water
- Rigorous enforcement of industrial parking lots
- Shuttle services i.e. cliff valley
- Joint development with other municipalities and institutions
- Recommendation from appropriate professionals for use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides
- Acquire greenspace thru storm water utility fund
- Tree Ordinance

- The city needs to create a better balance between residential and commercial needs around the issue of tree removal
- It was suggested that Emory University has an interesting policy on trees and open space on the campus, and would be worth looking at by the city's staff
- L.E.E.D Standards
- There was disagreement in the group about whether mandating LEED standards for downtown buildings were a good idea.
- Recognition of importance of being energy efficient, but skeptical over the effectiveness of the LEED program
- It was suggested that the city use trade-offs to incentive developers to use certain building standards downtown, but not specifically what those trade-offs should be
- Group members wanted to make sure that any brownfields in the city were identified and cleaned up
- Lead paint is an issue in Decatur because there are many older homes
- Water
- Public education is a good way to help people conserve water
- Run-off is a problem in the city. Chamblee, Sandy Springs and other cities require run-off septic tanks
- Parks
- McKoy Park's pool is built way too small for the population, but the park is important for the community's cohesion
- Glenlake park has a storm-water run-off problem
- Pools
- The city should look into developing a private pool in Decatur
- The city could form a task force or conduct research on what other cities are implementing around sustainable practices
- underground utilities
- Trees-subside the fear of the falling trees and preserve and protect good ones, plant new ones
- City arborist/program to plant new trees, inspect property upon request
- Create a policy on maintenance of healthy canopy
- Policy of waterways/ storm run offs to be enforced by city, make decisions more uniform so many individuals problem solving and not in a uniform way. Example- peavine creek
- Don't see DeKalb water maintaining and checking waterways and storm draining.
- The system now is dependent on homeowners and can be costly if over 50 feet so it can go not fixed
- Energy efficient incentives
- Wildlife management/arborist to help with all the great new green space

Present and future mobility

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

- More pedestrian space around Square. Shut down street, eliminate competition for parking spaces
- Eddie's Attic side of courthouse loop backs up with court-goers trying to get a close spot. Eliminate those parking spaces (and ones in front of Brick Store?)
- Make entry into courthouse parking deck easier to alleviate traffic on McDonough and cut down on idling cars
- Add a deck or two and eliminate small parking spot clusters
- Better advertise free parking at courthouse after hours
- Promote walking, less driving - *show* people where to park (signage)
- More trees/benches on MARTA plaza
- Some worry about push back from the city that current green space is not used enough in order to justify developing even more - need to prove demand
- Pedi-cabs
- Make it easier to get to all areas of Decatur (e.g., a fare-based trolley, link to other neighborhoods and Emory)
- More people work at home
- Promote safe alternatives to motorized travel.
- Wider sidewalks - Create double-wide sidewalks on one side of the street and bump the road over.
- Make one-way streets around the courthouse/city center (Ponce, W. Trinity, Church & Commerce)
- Implement traffic calming measures (i.e. brick crosswalks, Bulb-out like in Candler Park, "All Red" Crosswalk phases for pedestrians if someone presses the button)
- Ticker more often for people who don't brake at crosswalks when people are present.
- Continue to encourage kids to walk to school (Safe Route to School)
- Educate and follow-up on the rules for pedestrians and drivers
- Relay the message/get attention with folk art signs posted at crosswalks
- City should get control of traffic lights in Decatur - get a traffic engineer
- Clustered businesses on each side of town so people don't have to cross town as often.
- Add a shuttle/street car / tram like we have with the Fur Bus during Terrific Thursdays, Tour of Homes, etc.
- Explore further shuttle opportunities, shuttles for concerts, or a reliable paid-shuttle.
- We currently travel by: walking, car, bike, the Emory "Cliff Bus", Pedi-Cab, Scooter

- Paths connected to the beltline to incorporate Decatur into the greater Atlanta area, connect historic neighborhoods
- Improve train track crossings for pedestrians/cyclists
- Bike paths on College Ave, sidewalk improvements
- Expand brick crosswalks, install more in neighborhoods
- Publicize benefits of stopping for pedestrians to encourage compliance
- Install more bike racks downtown
- Trolley line to connect Emory and Decatur
- Encourage parking at Avondale, East Lake and train rides into Decatur station by having a special subsidized card (especially for festivals)
- Shuttle between three MARTA stops that runs frequently; free on nights and weekends
- Need more bike parking.
- Need more shuttles: Shuttles needed between grocery store and housing authority, In the past there have been shuttles between the housing authority-Allen Wilson and Clairemont Elementary School
- Need more bike facilities like bike paths and bike lanes
- Bike paths should provide safety to non bicycle traffic such as walkers
- Need carts that allow people to carry groceries home
- Emory and Owl Shuttles are good
- We need to map who is traveling where.
- Need more traffic calming. The crosswalks are a good start
- Need better designed roads: West Howard Avenue has a limit of 35 but the road is designed to invite faster speeds
- The intersection at Commerce and Clairemont is very difficult to cross
- Need to close Ponce de Leon Avenue to traffic between Church Street and Commerce Drive
- People need to be taught to stop at crosswalks
- Pedestrian crossing timers need to be lengthened to allow more time to cross for kids and elderly
- When streets are very wide they need a half way point to facilitate ease in crossing
- We need to target streets that need to be calmed
- Church Streets temporary parking due to park renovations has help to calm traffic
- We want Decatur to be known as the City where you "slow down"
- We need signage that designates Decatur as a pedestrian friendly community and asks motorist to slow down as they enter the City
- We need a true vehicular bypass around or through Decatur
- The railroad tracks are a very dangerous situation and the school crossing guards encourage students to cross the tracks. The police don't enforce track crossing issues. A tunnel under the tracks like Agnes Scott but by the high/middle schools would be good but very expensive

- We need to remove parking on East Court Square and North McDonough Street in front of the Courthouse and expand the square
- We have enough parking ramps but need more bike racks
- We need alternative transportation in the Clifton Corridor on Clairemont Avenue
- Decatur's commitment to complete streets will help to provide these above facilities
- Remove parking from North McDonough by square and East Court Square
- Redevelop "dead zones" on Commerce and Church between Commerce/Ponce
- Remove or renovate bandstand on the Square. It is not functional as a performance space and blocks view of Old Courthouse
- Current parking decks in the city seem unfriendly
- Wayfinding signs blend in
- Parking decks should connect to the square visually
- Connect city through elevated gondolas
- Provide a suspended bridge from parking decks to square
- should be able to use alternative forms of transportation
- stop traffic on Ponce Commerce St. to Commerce St. (or at least Church) - pedestrian only
- more bike lanes and bike parking
- sidewalks on every street
- open air electric bus (like Tech trolley) not just through business area but through neighborhoods too (Thursday-Sunday?)
- rework dangerous pedestrian crossings
- golf cart friendly
- bike station: park, snacks, bike maintenance
- Train- 3 stations plus multiple bus stops
- Sidewalk improvements are making walking more doable
- Cars (although members mentioned having car-free days)
- Bikes - PATH and bike lanes, Expansion of PATH
- CLIFF bus (free, convenient, good schedule): get into Oakhurst, e.g.
- We want to be able to be at a destination more quickly- visual and other interest more often (i.e., we get to a 'place of interest more quickly- a shop, a store, a park, etc.)
- Promoting alternatives to the car for travel within the city
- More bicycling capabilities
- Promoting more walkability and bikeability and easier intersections!
- Find ways to divert or re-route traffic (non Decatur traffic) around the city so that we don't have all those folks cutting through and looking for shortest, fastest
- Bikeways encourage slower traffic
- Have a revival of the trolley system connecting all of Decatur

- Cars still need to be able to get in/out of Decatur BUT we want to limit through traffic
- Need to be able to be comfortable/ feel safe walking from downtown Decatur to various places outside the core city - perhaps better street lights along College, Columbia, etc.
- Provide a small, alternative fuel circulator system that moves through town (CNG or electric, similar to Chattanooga, TN non-stop, electric trolley)
- The RR crossings are intimidating, Marked crosswalks, Bridges
- Implement a shuttle service
- Encourage bicycle/scoot travel
- Bicycle/scoot - Dedicated lanes
- Bicycle/scoot - Close streets to automobiles
- Bicycle/scoot - Parking racks
- Golf carts
- Promote alternative transportation success stories
- Education citizens about alternative transportation methods
- Establish Ride-a-[bike/scooter/electric car/walk]-Day
- Promote and encourage short and long term parking near public transportation
- Have businesses provide incentives to customers and employees using public/alternative transportation
- Run a trolley along main arteries to connect neighborhoods with downtown and other frequently visited places within or near the city (Emory, Edgewood, DeKalb Farmers Market, E. Decatur Station)
- Improve parking signage
- Implement bike lanes, specifically on Clairemont, Church, College
- Create pedestrian zone by closing Ponce from SunTrust to Leon's
- Eliminate parking on E. Court and N. McDonough and turn into green space
- Intra city shuttle that has a regular route around business district, Need grants to fund it, 10 minute interval schedule, Regular route
- Need more bike lanes
- Volunteer repair workshop to help people build and repair bikes
- Program similar to yellow bikes for loan or rent (need a way to keep from getting stolen)
- Need Improved Crossings at Intersections, Will help improve traffic flow, Will make it safer for walkers
- Trouble spots are Candler/College and Atlantic/Howard
- Need a way to connect the high school with Renfroe, tunnel or bridge across RR
- Walking, Available shopping will result in more walking
- Walking/Shopping - Need essentials, i.e. place to buy underwear, office supplies
- Walking/Shopping - Need a variety store (example - Richard's Variety Store)

- Walking/Shopping - Keep big box stores away
- Walking/Shopping - Need more than boutiques but less than big box
- Walking/Shopping - Idea - use one of the large buildings for a Marketplace that houses many vendors of essentials - not gifts -
- Walking/Shopping - Need a movie theatre or show movies at an available space (in schools?)
- Trolley
- Encourage more electric cars (example Baskett's GEM car), have available charging stations, monetary incentives
- Driving, Discourage use of gasoline cars
- Need better signage for parking areas
- After hours agreements with offices to allow parking
- 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
- better publicize available parking
- City is bikeable & walkable but we could do more if we had more "every day" life/essential amenities such as grocery store
- Some areas are not hospitable to bikers/walkers
- Need to create a safe infrastructure for kids for biking
- Frustrating when bikers stop up traffic lanes
- Consider "Bus Rapid Transit" like LA. Basically a fast bus that drops people at subway line to maximize use
- Need more "end of trip" facilities to store bikes
- Need to better understand when people use their cars and determine if City can address that thru attracting certain types of businesses
- Encourage small pockets of commercial spaces to make accessible with short walk (e.g. 5 min)
- walk / drive
- city bus
- awkward to bike through town
- Some take Cliff
- idea of tram to connect neighborhoods
- need more bike paths, lanes

- safety is an issue for walkers and bikers
- we have too much drive through traffic
- walking past probation office on Church is a problem
- need traffic lights sped up for walkers
- need pedestrian bridges over the Railroad tracks
- need alternative to get to Emory area
- need more parking
- need more publicity for free parking in city garages on nights and weekends
- progressive, alternative transportation connecting neighborhoods
- Need to connect to coming Beltline
- Join our bike path to Ponce corridor and the parks along Ponce
- Must work with surrounding cities and counties
- Community Bus that transports folks from nearby neighborhoods to downtown for festivals, shopping, dining, etc.
- Better sidewalks - farther from busy roadsides
- Make traffic more manageable
- wider sidewalks
- Encourage smaller cars
- Explore a trolley from East Lake to Avondale and Clairemont to VA to Agnes Scott.
- Better public transportation for people who cannot bike and walk.
- More time to cross street-alternative crossing lights
- Traffic lights on raised crosswalks like in Seattle
- Improve sidewalks
- Ticket people that run crosswalks
- Crosswalk at Marta stops
- Educate on carpooling in schools
- Use technology that is Decatur specific to support carpooling
- Zip car back in Decatur
- Increased awareness about taxi cabs
- More pedi-cabs
- Better mass transit
- Have Decatur people lobby for MARTA
- Decatur beltline
- Gas car (daily)
- Bike/Scooter (medium frequency)
- CCTAM/Marta BUS (only for work and rarely)
- Walk (daily)

- Cad/pedi-cab (rarely/ some not aware of pedi-cab)
- In future, more likely to use electric cars (or other electric vehicles)
- Use (implement) small group (scale) city transportation that has frequent stops at regular schedules
- Implement late-night solution for business-to-home transportation
- Increase bike and scooter lanes
- Consider that destination is not always downtown Decatur, public transport to and from Oakhurst and other perimeter satellite centers will be needed
- DeVry property will be a nodule (satellite center) for activity and residential
- More motorcycles and scooters
- Provide incentives for development that has none or limited (or deeded) parking in order to encourage pedestrian/bike/scooter/public transport
- Walk, bike, and drive to work and other places, teenagers seem to walk everywhere, three people in group ride bicycles regularly, some others in group are afraid to ride bicycles on roads, all in group drive places
- Commerce Street sidewalk is not pedestrian friendly, in 10 years make it more walkable by adding green space between sidewalk and roadway, grassy median, reduce to 2 lanes
- Recent skateboard ban in downtown area went overboard, skateboards are viable form of transportation
- Shuttle to Emory is used by some in group, good model for City in future-
- shuttle to get around City, encourage residents and visitors to park car at beginning of day and then not use car until end of day
- Develop and encourage use of alternative transportation methods to get around City- pedicabs, rickshaws
- Set up remote parking with public transportation into City- Suburban Plaza, old Chamber of Commerce building parking lot are possibilities, model would be Emory shuttle
- Bring back trolley line in Oakhurst and connect to downtown area
- Keep all MARTA stops in City
- Improve section of Church Street between East Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce Drive, now a dead zone, unfriendly to pedestrians
- Free parking is not the solution
- Better ability to park once for multiple activities on the square
- More "bulb outs" in neighborhoods to calm traffic
- Bike lanes - More lanes in general / make them safe and well thought out
- Bike lanes - On Clairemont
- City-wide campaign for biking / walking
- Aging residents not able to bike / walk everywhere.

- Provide a Decatur Bus (electric) / transit system
- Be sure lower income areas are included in transit plan
- Better rail crossings
- We need to feel safer and be safer to get around without a car
- Create a "Yellow Bike" program: free bikes available around city for anyone to use
- Create a bike program to get people out of their cars
- Create a tax or toll for those driving their cars into the downtown area (i.e. London)
- Educate people on how to get around without cars
- Safety! Protection from motorized vehicles and from criminals
- Jitney service for the elderly and disabled
- Turn empty lots into city owned parking garages
- Get more people to use the existing DeKalb Co. parking deck
- We need transportation options in and out of Decatur
- Currently can only run limited number of errands on foot
- It takes from 7 to 15 minutes to get from Oakhurst to here (downtown Decatur)
- I live downtown and walk a lot
- We can ride Marta to the airport, arts etc
- Growth in pop. Density will create parking issues
- City Ordinances need to have "vision"
- We need lots of options downtown: Zip, bus, taxi, Cliff Bus, bikes
- Support the Beltline
- Trolley
- Expand the Cliff Service
- How can we encourage people to walk (or drive less)
- You can now download an app that tells you where Cliff and buses are in real time
- Incentivize walking or using mass transit
- Educate, advertise and promote options
- Offer more options than driving
- Healthier
- Make it physically safe to ride bikes with bike lanes
- Create protected bike paths (designated like in Paris)
- Make it safe to ride all the way to five points
- How about no cars in downtown Decatur (i.e. Quincy Market in Boston)
- Light rail line down Clairemont
- Hydrogen powered buses – congestion
- Traffic lights, timing, not good for pedestrians or cars
- Ability to move around Decatur

- Services within alternative transportation reach
- Trams, buses, light vehicles for local access beyond MARTA
- Continue pedestrian/bike friendliness, increase safety for both
- More mid-block sidewalk crossings
- Emory shuttle – extend services, tie in for above services
- Railroad as an obstacle for pedestrians, cars & bikes
- Additional crossing between Citgo and Renfro that is pedestrian only
- Policies should consider beyond automobile
- Enforcement of speed limits
- Control of greenery to keep sidewalks clear
- Tree lined sidewalks to encourage walkers
- shuttle service, alternative transportation
- keep vehicles out of downtown core and offer free perimeter parking
- free scooter parking, free bike parking (there is some, need more)
- continue sidewalk improvement/repair program, but find a way to preserve the large, old trees that create most of the problems!
- close Ponce from Commerce to Commerce
- Facilitator's note: Many aspects of this session could be summed up in the statement "All roads lead back to traffic management." Finding more and better ways to manage vehicular traffic--and enable equitable, workable sharing of the roads among cars, bikes, and pedestrians--seemed to be a significant factor affecting virtually every issue addressed.
- close East Court Square loop to extend square & make parking for bikes only (GA Power and courthouse decks could be alternative parking)
- must connect decks, improve signage and safety concerns & make more attractive. Better walkways.
- Convenient bypasses (and traffic flow) around Decatur
- Shared bike membership program. Fee, locks- intelligently designed program
- More bike lanes, infrastructure
- Speed control especially Oakhurst
- Safe travel for walkers, bikers. wheelchairs, & strollers
- complete street policy all modes of travel accommodated
- actual and perceived safety
- College Ave & S. Candler- fast traffic near schools and in general, need a tunnel under the tracks by the high school and Renfro (like near ASC). (Note: lots of discussion about train tracks and crossing safety)
- Shuttle for the city using alternative fuel
- Network trail around city for jogging/walking. Tied to green spaces.

- Link green spaces with a trail like a Decatur beltline. Off-street with no car traffic.
- Light rail (at grade, on street)- Decatur, Emory, Oakhurst, Lindberg
- Force cars to bypass downtown Decatur by closing part of downtown Church so pedestrian traffic only and/or close part of Ponce. (Close Ponce between Commerce and Commerce. Close Church between Commerce and Trinity)
- From last week: shuttle buses between different communities
- Shuttle
- Education - Schools
- Decatur Yellow Bike? / Bike Sharing , how to sustain such an effort
- Special fares for MARTA from East lake to Avondale stations, charge by distance, senior citizen rates
- Transportation from Oakhurst - Decatur, Aging population
- Driving Age requirements, push to older
- Restrictions on number of vehicles people can own, tax incentives and penalties
- Car pooling incentives
- Increase flex cars, more in neighborhood areas, right now in downtown which isn't that effective
- Change mindset of people to not drive around city, but use alternative forms of transportation. Do a good job already, how to improve, who is missing and still driving?
- Used to walk child to school--now drive
- Clairemont School encourages individual drivers with new car drop off
- Parents still drive even though they could walk
- Need better pedestrian and bike paths
- Columbia and college intersection very dangerous
- Parents of Winnona Park do walk
- With restructure of schools from K-5 to K-3 Decatur added car congestion and added number of schools parents need to get their children to
- Need to celebrate how our kids have the choice to walk to all schools and our crossing guards are great
- Need better crossing opportunity with railroad tracks and renfroe
- In next ten years--increase parking opportunities outside Decatur and run shuttles into the city. Make downtown district a walking district. Free up space from parking for trees. Ban Gas cars. Add conduits
- DeKalb employees should have to use MARTA and shuttles into the city
- Begin using golf carts
- With school reconfiguration and 5th Ave. school not being centrally located we should provide shuttles for kids to ride
- Safe routes to school should expand to all schools, churches, and employers

- 5th Ave should be a K-5
- Education has improved with reconfiguration but not geographically friendly
- Need multi use trails. City needs to accomplish goal of completing sidewalks on all streets-- should use pervious concrete. Sidewalks would be a good test for pervious concrete
- Use shuttles or designated cars that loop Decatur for major stops. Like in DC
- Decatur should have loop shuttle to YMCA, schools, and athletic fields like a cliff bus
- Empty parking lots and get rid of them
- Transportation. Consider shuttles, bypasses, multi use trails, get rid of parking lots
- Address intersection of Church and N. Decatur. Parking lot wasteland
- How do you get from place to place in Decatur now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?
- Gridlock in downtown 5:00 - 6:30pm
- Parking - private parking ownership limits flexibility of parking options. For example, it is difficult to park in one lot and go to multiple businesses.
- There is no other way to get around downtown other than on foot.
- Bicycling in Decatur is dangerous.
- The heat in the summer months is a huge disincentive to walking, biking, etc (i.e., not use your car)
- City of Decatur does not have total jurisdiction over use/change to its roads, streets
- Cooperative use of parking lots - i.e., businesses contribute spaces in their lots that can be used by people other than their direct customers.
- Churches may be willing to contribute spaces for weekday parking
- A downtown trolley or shuttle
- A larger satellite parking lot on the outskirts of downtown served by shuttle/trolley
- Shuttles that run between neighborhoods and downtown
- More left turn lanes to cut down on back-ups during high volume times
- Crossing guards need more training on traffic management. They are the cause of back up or confusion in some cases.
- Consider limiting where you can drive in the city, i.e. Times Square or downtown Asheville.
- Safe walking = increased commerce
- Ability to walk allows a diverse (aging) population to live here
- Park and walk.
- Now we drive or walk.
- Would like to see a Decatur trolley or transit. Green, Could be small business, Would need reliable ridership, Could be more sustainable if it went outside the city limits, Survey traffic patterns, Trolley should go to Zip Car locations, then people can further out. Stop at major Decatur sites., Connect parts of Decatur.

- Reduce car ownership in Decatur.
- Help physically impaired get around. Ties into transit idea. Also to issues of aging.
- Now, use of Square difficult for physically impaired.
- Need easier way to get from north part of city to south, especially on foot. Railway tracks and Scott Boulevard act as barriers between parts of city.
- Shuttles from companies that have employees in the city, CNN, CDC, Emory, Coke
- Electric taxis or shuttle service for residents (start with the weekends)
- More sidewalks (by the railroads)
- Bike lanes, bike racks
- Continue sidewalk installation and improvements
- Need light rail that respects existing neighborhoods (no demolition)
- Continue to provide scooter support like parking
- Keep up the complete streets program
- Need better railroad crossings!
- iPhone app in development which would provide on demand ridesharing -could we be a pilot city?
- Intelligent transportation systems (ITSA.org)
- Expand the Zipcar program
- Be creative in developing non car solutions
- Need bike parking everywhere - consider bikes as a mode of transportation and provide infrastructure - don't consider it just recreational
- Need bike lanes - this is a safety issue not just a transportation issue
- Love the yellow bikes -figure out a way to secure them or have a card that unlocks them. Don't just let it go because it wasn't secure
- Like the pedicabs
- Have shuttles around town (family friendly built in car seats)
- Have shuttles for special events to move people around
- Have a cliff bus type shuttle that circulates around the city so that one would come w/in 10 minutes rather than having a bus schedule
- Shuttle will promote local business by making it easy to shop w/o dealing with parking
- No sure if City is proactive in developing technologies - electric cars, access to biofuels - add electric plugs to parking meters
- Pedicabs offer a viable alternative form of transportation
- Safer rail crossings
- Designated bike lanes, walk lanes from car lanes
- Aging population will decrease the number of commuters
- Large SUVs will reduce because shortages of resources (i.e., oil)

- How do you get from place to place in Decatur, now? What might change in how we travel about in the next ten years?
- RR FRUSTRATIONS. The group re-visited briefly the difficulties presented by the CSX protections under federal railroad regulations, minimizing options with respect to any City efforts involving the rail right of way.
- REGIONAL EFFORTS. Any efforts made by the City should be done in conjunction with any regional transportation plan efforts.
- ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION SIGNAGE, INCENTIVES. The get around town signage should be altered to indicate distances to locations, and any other information conducive to walking or biking to the destination.
- COUNTY EMPLOYEE INCENTIVES. Noting the number of county employees that commute in to Decatur, thought should be given to working with DeKalb to offer alternative commute incentives for them.
- POSSIBLE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS. The group encourages the City to work with PEDS, the Atlanta Bicycle Campaign, the Clean Air Campaign and other possible partner organizations to explore and promote alternate commute options.
- BLOCK CHURCH STREET AT SYCAMORE. Noting the through traffic on Church from Trinity to Ponce, the group thought explorations regarding blocking Church to through traffic on either side of Sycamore (note: such that access to the church parking lot was maintained).
- STATE ROUTE RESTRICTIONS. The group commented on the difficulties faced by the City in making changes to streets that are designated as state routes.
- FOLKS WITH DISABILITIES. The group felt strongly that adequate provision for individuals with disabilities should be included in any transportation change efforts.
- LOCAL TROLLEY. The group was very interested in the establishment of a free trolley to encourage movement in and between the commercial retail districts of the City, particularly during events.
- CHARGING STATIONS. The group felt that exploration of designated parking locations that offered charging stations for electric vehicles would be a method of encouraging the City's commercial districts as destination locations for individuals driving them.
- TRAFFIC CALMING AND ROAD DIET. Further efforts in these areas would be a positive thing to pursue.
- Choose to live here because we can live without a car
- Shuttle buses as feeders to MARTA
- More bike facilities, bike lanes, bike parking, bike racks
- Education of drivers and cyclist
- Electric bikes and vehicles
- Build and develop alternative transportation infrastructure, electric, natural gas, etc.

- Allow for rental units, garage apartments, zoning flexibility
- Transportation - what is the timeline for implementation, execution,
- Get to Daily necessities
- Zip cars, shared cars
- Shared vehicles, utility vehicles, vans, trucks, pick-up trucks
- Shared facilities
- Public rental access to city owned vehicles
- Continue Decatur government al accessibility - ease of access
- School Board ?
- Expansion of city limits
- Maintaining/increase diversity of property
- Increase commercial tax base (Decatur is low, in areas, of on commercial property)
- Annexation of NE commercial area
- Free transportation in the down town core of the city - trolley
- Park on perimeter of city, ride in on trolley --concerned about the cost of doing this ...how to pay for it?
- Zip cars
- Shuttle bus like at Emory
- Need more places to house bikes
- Pedestrian zones become more public space - like linear parks
- Decatur to be known as a bike-friendly city --bike friendly and promoted as such
- Education program for motorists and bicyclists and runners --bike etiquette
- Drive
- Bike
- Walk
- Marta/ public transportation
- Shuttle
- Super impose maps for cliff shuttle/MARTA
- Better and wider bike lanes
- Better pedestrian paths to connect north and south Decatur
- Meet to park/carpool for folks that live in Decatur and work elsewhere
- Rideshare website
- Meet neighbors because of carpooling
- Could spend less time traveling with better traffic signal timing
- Alternative vehicles(electric)
- Golf carts
- Scooters

- Need bike paths on Clairemont
- Would like to see a light rail system from Agnes Scott to Emory with no more than a 10 minute wait for pick-up
- One person mentioned that the Cliff Bus both eco-friendly and free for all residents, and that the city needed to explore more partnership opportunities with Emory around this
- A trolley bus was also discussed How could this work?, Possible for tourist use in the city, Density is a huge issue to make something like this happen
- Someone also said that they would like to see a Emory to Decatur to Oakhurst bus route
- Creating a more accessible downtown Decatur to those with disabilities is important
- More dedicated handicap parking is needed
- Would like to see use a commuter lots
- And would also like to see a new phone app that tells you exactly where an available parking spot is
- walking
- biking
- scooters cars
- cutting across railroad
- Might change safety of traveling
- counters for crossing street and sound beepers (pedestrians)
- more alternative fuel cars, and places to plug in
- positive reinforcement and education of road rules etc...
- increase signage and more sidewalks
- DeKalb relationship with city

Life in Decatur

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

- 4th of July fireworks
- Gatherings, festivals - all the things that make Decatur look good to non-residents
- Wine, beer, book festivals - all develop community feeling
- Like balance of Decatur-resident-g geared festivals vs. events that draw from wider Atlanta/SE crowd.
- Attracting artists/authors from far and wide
- Forefront of technology (e.g., Wi-Fi)
- Great restaurants (don't have to leave Decatur and can walk to them)
- Food festival
- Larger farmer's market and move to a more central location
- Put everything on the Decatur website - "advertise" what is going on, improve communication
- Share each other's neighborhood association information - links/directory to contacts, maybe put links to associations on city website
- Blogs - community volunteers - centralize information
- Walking tours/maps (Mayor's walking tour)
- Put information about the city at the Oakhurst fire station or restaurants so that Oakhurst residents feel connected and don't have to go to Square area to get information about City of Decatur
- Incorporating school facilities into our community for performing arts, etc.
- Expand our downtown areas during festivals (like we do for the Book Festival) or maybe expand down street in front of high school
- Diversity in events is important - mostly family oriented, but fits all kinds
- Maintain integrity of events
- Challenge - Space
- Challenge - Crowds
- Provide support for all kinds of art
- Create more localized, neighborhood specific gatherings
- Decatur Arts Alliance should coordinate rehearsal space and exhibit space for artist community
- Utilize church facilities for art
- Utilize vacant buildings and sites for artist space
- Promote neighborhood theater events
- City should provide a liaison for the private market and artist community
- Utilize "dead space" on the outside of parking garages for art exhibits/stalls
- Expand little Kroger on Commerce

- Taste of Decatur outdoors
- B and B on the square
- free parking during festivals
- farmer's markets
- amphitheatre
- on paved MARTA plaza: raised beds with trees, kiosks selling newspapers-candy bars-ice cream-etc., canvas canopies/umbrellas for shade, food vending truck, chess board /game tables
- cultural arts master plan - include use of performance arts space at DHS
- remodel/redevelop/revitalize police station, Ebster, Beacon Hill area
- more revitalization in Oakhurst - make easier walking across intersection
- move police to where Maud Baker on Church St. used to be
- Vibrancy of core city- need retail and dining diversity
- Engagement through activities such as Decatur 101 and the Strategic Planning Process
- We have a small town feel- you know almost everyone - by connecting at events
- Concerts on the Square help connect us
- Frequency of community events is key to community engagement
- Festival focusing on Books is a very neat idea
- Abundance of Irish-style family pubs is a key
- Having places to go after hours after dinner- shopping, art galleries, other
- Perhaps have 'Terrific Thursdays' (or similar) throughout the year with wine, shops open, destinations after hours
- Develop outdoor art (such as Valentine)-
- Host temporary exhibits such as the Cow or the Sandy Springs Turtle
- Encourage Agnes Scott, Emory and other universities to use Decatur as their art exhibit space
- Tie the art exhibits to the city schools expeditionary learning program
- Plot visual exhibits on a map with walking tours
- Have neighborhoods host similar [art] events
- Develop scavenger hunt (through the cultural arts council) that relates to the outdoor art
- Decatur fireworks has a very small town feel but very accessible, friendly, 'Awesome'
- Revive the Fidelity Bank Building Christmas Tree
- Christmas Tree/Menorah Lighting in Oakhurst
- Other events in Oakhurst: Blues, Wine Crawl, Oakhurst Arts and Music Festival, Jazz nights
- Norway has an affinity for teachers: Honor teachers with festival and parade
- Patio party at Solarium with auction, food, bird houses, rain barrels, multiple beer festivals
- Could we make some of the beer festivals Decatur only residents?
- Festivals/community gatherings
- Schools

- Convenience
- Walkability
- Outdoor cafe seating
- Participation of religious communities
- Feeling of common community
- Safety
- Small town feeling
- Community volunteerism & outreach
- Variety of businesses
- Strong neighborhoods
- Continuation of community/government interactivity
- Approachability, responsiveness, and stability of City leadership
- Display of "Decatur spirit"
- Create/support thriving arts scene
- Keep residents happy (Happy residents = Happy neighbors = Happy community)
- Encourage and fund block initiatives aside from block parties (i.e. block garden; block composting program, tree plantings)
- Maintain festivals
- Strengthen/improve communication coming from the City
- Spotlight businesses, programs, people
- Safe Ways/places for teens to gather
- Safe ways for teens to get home
- Policing of school after hours to make sure kids are [not] abusing the area - i.e. smoking on grounds
- Parent involvement in schools and neighborhoods promote safety and all parents share in keeping watchful eyes on kids
- We have a great downtown area - need to maintain the small town destination aspect.
- Keep zoning in place for building heights - 80'
- Concentrate high density building in the downtown areas
- Growth isn't always good - evaluate growth with services to achieve proper balance
- Hold the line on disallowing high density developments in neighborhoods
- 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
- City does great job of having mix of events. I don't go to all but I can pick and choose what I want
- Have more regular marketplace type events, street fairs, etc.
- The Arts Festivals we have
- Art Galleries, How can we promote the arts? Make our city a mecca for the arts
- Film Festival
- Increase Public Art Space
- Explore how other cities (Santa Fe, Taos, Asheville) have successfully fostered the Arts
- Increase working space for artists
- Find a way to encourage and support our existing Arts/Crafts/Musical/Theater Community
- DBA should coordinate public showings of community arts within local business establishments
- Provide opportunities for artists to perform in public spaces., i.e., have an open-mike on bandstand on Friday evenings
- Beer Festival and Wine Festival are GREAT
- Let's keep an eye toward diverse audiences for public performances
- Want to feel safe
- Want to have fun
- Important to connect with others
- Cultural activities need quality improvement and growth
- Take advantage of existing new facilities for community/cultural events (i.e. DHS auditorium)
- Create event-specific outdoor venues (i.e. amphitheatre)
- Evaluate available facilities at private/public institution for city use
- keenager programs
- Athletic programs at REC center, that are very successful
- Community gardens
- More public art
- Tap into/create DeKalb County/City of Decatur foundation for the arts (for grants/scholarships and research)
- Diversity - schools- inclusive gatherings- not just in theory-but not all
- Diversity - population groups attend events- need to encourage ways to broaden
- Diversity - audience- one possibility is to have more variety in the bands for Concerts
- Diversity - on the Square- another is to add more festivals- food events, multicultural

- Diversity - events, want to maintain all current festivals and events
- Artistic creative feel of city- architecturally and with businesses, losing galleries or music venues would be detrimental, need to maintain and encourage this atmosphere
- Public spaces- uniqueness of Square, cherish, maintain, improve, and invest in these spaces
- Expand feel of Square to other end of Ponce de Leon Avenue, Farmburger is perceived as far from Square, disadvantage to businesses that are farther away from Square
- Glenlake Park has been missed- some people may have forgotten about other parks, number and distribution of public gathering places (parks, etc.) is important
- Walkability - work to improve places off Ponce de Leon Avenue to encourage foot traffic to them, make them more vibrant, continue developing and connecting all parts of city
- Connection between neighborhoods and downtown business district needs to be improved for pedestrians, use Oakhurst business district and surrounding neighborhoods as model
- Expand positives of Square outward to encompass whole downtown business district
- district
- Make use of new high school auditorium as indoor cultural center for City
- Make all intersections leading to downtown business district safer for pedestrians and bicycle riders (discussion centered on Commerce Drive intersections, especially one with Church Street)
- The book festival and maintaining Decatur as a literary center
- Utilizing the square more on a day to day basis:
- Need street vendors or other activities
- Close off Ponce de Leon from Clairemont to Church or even Commerce to Church - during warmer months
- Get more people on the plaza and not just inside restaurants / more outdoor seating
- More street vendors
- Festivals
- Some noted the Beach Party is too crowded
- More teen activities
- More structured teen activities
- CREATE A TEEN COMMISSION
- Maintain the small town feel where people know one another
- Gun free zones - schools, festivals, entire city
- Our festivals and events are not engaging all of our residents (not very diverse)
- Diversify our schools equals diversifying our city (start with kindergarten)
- Create a culture of diversity awareness, We are not all alike
- Block parties
- Tea and coffee conferences
- City Schools of Decatur sporting events

- Use city website for a city wide "conference call"
- Fun activities create a community: Book Festival, Arts Festival, Beer Festival, Beach Party, Concerts on the Square
- Combine active living to include all active living- maybe even have an active living festival with yoga and tai chi on the square and a casual bike tour of Decatur. Bikes, Tai chi, Yoga, Table tennis
- The green festival was a great start, keep it going, make it bigger!
- Have the Marta plaza be a welcoming place where people can practice Tai Chi, Yoga, Dancing.
- Create a free tram and continue to support the pedi-cab business. These help people decide to go into downtown Decatur and other retail areas (Oakhurst) and address parking issues.
- Have a free/low-cost shuttle connecting residential areas including condos with the DeKalb Farmer's Market and grocery stores. It should make stops all around the city - Winnona Park, Oakhurst, the square, Westchester area, Great Lakes, Ridgeland Heights
- Expand Pool hours/calendar! The pools should be open through September. At least after school and on the weekends. We had a lot of interest and consensus around this topic and we think that if you create a partnership with a swim team such as Swim Atlanta, this could be done. Parents and kids want to swim after school. Retirees and stay-at-home parents want to swim during August and September. We know there's an old ordinance that says that pools can't be open when schools are, but is that really necessary? What are we really trying to achieve with that?
- Retail is a huge part of cultural life in Decatur. The square is great, but maybe having one chain shop beyond CVS wouldn't be a bad thing. Something like the GAP might be a great addition that might actually draw more people to the square. Also, we're missing a huge opportunity with Suburban Plaza. We realize it's out of the City of Decatur limits, but even if it doesn't become party of Decatur, it is the entrance to our town and we should work with the owners to attract new, businesses there. Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, GAP would be welcome.
- The Book Festival
- Festivals in general
- They bring the community together and attract outsiders (festivals)
- People come back (festivals)
- We need huge parking signs
- We need a Decatur Arts Council with money to spend on activities and approve projects
- More ongoing support of arts
- Ongoing partnerships between businesses and events
- Monthly major event – not just summer
- Sponsored neighborhood associations to improve communication
- Neighborhood gatherings to improve community/educate/input “Parks & Rec” (TV show) style meetings

- Organize bicycle rides, designation rides, incorporate businesses
- Cultural arts integrated and communicate
- Adult education free, low cost. Decatur active learning, involve community and businesses
- Educate/Advocate for programs for citizens both federal and state
- Getting people to attend & volunteer, services & expertise, extract expertise from community, encouraging people that they have something to share
- Continue with Volunteer Decatur
- Good customer service/ make people feel welcome
- Need more cultural venues, e.g., a place to see independent films, maybe a film festival but ongoing. Library offers some; might be good venue.
- Encourage informal performance, e.g., street performers. Need areas for them; making Ponce a pedestrian mall would encourage (from Commerce to Commerce)
- Spoleto [mentioned as example of great cultural event]
- weekly market, more than organic food, include arts, crafts, performers
- more activities in parks (not have everything at the Square)
- more sharing of rec facilities (between City and CSD?)
- progressive block parties a way to help neighborhoods get acquainted; could use parks to host; in winter could be inside
- garden walks
- walking tours
- Safety in parks, out skirts of city, square at night. Issues of loitering and pan-handling. Around MARTA station
- Diversity of events to variety of people, Beer festival for young adults, Beach parties for families, big draw to city
- Library
- Rec center, active living - collaboration between organizations
- School System, know schedule - Master Calendar
- What is going on in the city today - schools, city, businesses
- Maintain look and feel of city. Have plans and requirements already set, regulations and expectations in place so developers know what standard should be
- Square
- Festivals: Arts, Books, Wine, and Beer. Book festival brings in a wide variety of people to city
- Concert on Square
- Beach party
- Commercial aspects of Decatur brings residents out regularly
- Beach party very Decatur, all ages, see a lot of people from Decatur. The events give back
- 4th of July event, parade and fireworks. Can watch them from front yard

- Churches are vital to downtown
- Schools and school events
- Flea market at Baptists Church on Clairemont. Citywide flea market
- Cooperation of churches
- GA Center for the Book
- ASC venues open to the community
- DHS needs to open stadium and auditorium to the community for city even
- Community needs to know about school events are venues for the community.
- Bring Semi pro soccer team to Decatur, Attract sports teams in Decatur or traveling youth teams, Bring in English league teams, bring in world cup
- When you think about the overall environment of our city (our public gatherings, our festivals and cultural life) what is most important to you?
- There is so much going on in Decatur but we would like to see more. Not just festivals
- We would like to see more public art
- We would like to see more smaller gatherings
- We would like to see more ongoing features like the cow sculptures a few years ago
- Events that draw a diversity of ages.
- Involvement of kids is essential
- Use the public space for more informal gatherings
- It seems like there is either a big event or nothing. We need more smaller, simpler, regular public activities.
- There is a sense that you can't use the Square unless there is a large event or you have permission. Few people go to the Square just to hang out, have a picnic, sit and relax. What would attract people to do this?
- A kiosk on the Square that announces current events
- Structures on or near the Square that can be used by groups for informal gatherings
- Shade on the MARTA plaza (topside)
- Food carts
- A play structure near the Square
- Do something to encourage street performers
- Have students performances in public spaces
- Foster farmers markets in the neighborhoods
- More outdoor seating for restaurants, cafes etc
- Move the weekly farmers markets to the Square
- Provide incentives for businesses to host outdoor events/activities - small events, on a weekly basis
- Need entertainment in the city, Movie theater, Venue hard to find, Tough business

- Arts Center renovation could help
- Money follows culture, so encourage/promote the arts
- Foster social networks
- Neighborhood potlucks, small group meetings, social get-togethers
- Mixers across neighborhoods
- Keep the roundtables going, perhaps quarterly around the issues of the day. Have food and drinks to foster community.
- Take the block party concept across neighborhoods--a "progressive block party" with different neighborhoods hosting.
- Develop a "shop hop"--people shopping at local business are entered into a drawing for city items.
- Keeping people connected helps with an aging population.
- We have great festivals, but we probably don't need more.
- Develop small, but good, arts venues--museums, galleries, theaters, etc. Would bring people to city.
- Eddie's Attic a great asset.
- More classes for adults Like yoga
- Gym at the rec center (place to work out), Lower prices for residents, Just pay each time you go
- Open up the gym at the high school to residents during the summer
- Have an Arts director for the entire city
- Improve the quality of the beer and wine festivals- suppliers and number of people attending
- Allow community to use CSD property, Work on scheduling (baseball field example)
- Maintain small town character- no tall buildings
- Continue to offer variety that appeal to all ages
- Continue to be respectful of proximity to residential
- Safety is important
- Responsive public safety
- Increased street lamps
- Improve technology, city website (no comparison between effectiveness and usability of Strategic Planning website and the City's regular website)
- Keep city meetings in the evenings
- Invest in proper land use planning
- City needs to study the impact/benefits/costs of MARTA; pool/tennis courts/rec. center; existing parking to identify best use of resources
- A plan of succession for city employees, especially city manager and volunteer coordinator

- **VENDOR SELECTION.** There was discussion over the "carnival style" vendors permitted at many of our festivals, and the group encouraged greater effort to have local and perhaps healthier vendors providing food and beverages at our events.
- **SECURITY.** Appreciation was expressed for the understated police presence that provide a relaxed yet secure environment at our events.
- **STREET VENDORS.** Why are there no street vendors at the square or at Oakhurst (generally, not at the festivals where they exist temporarily). Discussion noted that if there were legal or public health issues, or competition with local retail establishment issues, that might be understandable. But if not, why not?
- **NO DOGS.** Recognizing the balance between dog lovers and others, interest was expressed in making some of our events "dog free".
- **CLOSE MORE STREETS.** The group was really interested in the concept of closing more streets to vehicle traffic during events. They would like to see the City experiment with expanding the boundaries of non-vehicle traffic at select events to evaluate the effects of doing so. This could expand the boundaries of the event itself.
- **FURTHER EVENT EXPANSION.** This involved continuing efforts to expand the boundaries of events via use of trolleys or other transportation efforts to incorporate commercial locations beyond the downtown area in events.
- **SPANISH SIGNS.** Consideration should be given to adding Spanish translations to way finding and other City signage as a recognition of the increasing bilingual population and in keeping with our general attitude of acceptance.
- Decatur does a good job in developing events
- We love the events, book festivals,
- Should consider an international festival
- want to see 'more of them' (people) in downtown Decatur
- foster a community that is welcoming
- mixture and balance
- Decatur: we are interested in Art, so we have an Art festival
- we are interested in Literacy, so we have an Book festival
- if we are interested in diversity, we should have an international festival
- Outreach- Solution - govt and non-govt groups
- How does the CITY govt and people does to promote diversity and festivals
- Communication of what events that is going on in the city
- Create opportunity for local destination
- Get to Daily necessities
- Concerts on the square popular with residents and visitors to the city
- Promote, encourage freedom to express religious views

- Happy with ALL the festivals we have --love the book festival
- More diverse
- A variety of things to do(r/b and gospel concerts)
- Artwalks
- Music/concerts
- Local feel(local food and music)
- Restaurants and amenities are within easy reach
- More neighborhoods getting involvement
- Arts festivals
- Share best practices between neighborhoods (invite public officials)
- Keep accessible financially
- The book festival, Very cool that it's the largest in the country
- A theatre is missing in the downtown area and could be very good for retail and restaurants
- A movie theatre could also draw lots of people in and could be part of a larger art space
- The city should use its existing parks to create more of a destination, such as adding carousels or mini-golf, etc.
- The Decatur beach party is great, and so is the music on the square and in front of the solarium
- It was suggested that the city could set up an outdoor market for both existing and new vendor to sell their wares.
- Boise has a huge successful outdoor market, which includes closing off streets
- Another positive characteristic is that the police and fire departments will work with you on a neighborhood block party, This needs to be better advertised
- The Georgia Center for the Book is another great asset
- book festival and arts festival
- concerts on the square- has gotten really crowded spread out over the year they are so important it would be great to spread more out over time and space
- volunteer program
- such a variety of stuff to do
- holiday festivities- egg hunt, marshmallow roast, 4th of July, bfast with Santa
- DBA continued support growth

Future of housing

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

- Don't think people live and die in Decatur (some disagreement on this point)
- Will I be able to afford Decatur taxes on a retirement income?
- Attract young folks - to expand tax base and alleviate taxes for older citizens

- House values going up - becoming less affordable - how can young families afford to move in?
- Starter homes are endangered (people build on, less and less 2/1s in City, etc.)
- Smaller and more affordable homes will attract not only young folks (singles, couples, beginning families), but also empty nesters who wish to downsize, widows/widowers, etc. which will contribute age diversity to Decatur.
- Help older folks continue to afford their homes
- Continuing care, independent living, assisted living (nicely done, not a high rise or condo)
- Apartments and rentals
- There is the threat that with many in the same demographic moving in at the same time, we are boxing out new residents (will there be mass exodus/turnover).
- We are a victim of our own success
- Force builders to balance new expensive houses with affordable housing (e.g., for every \$700K home, ensure a \$200K house built)
- Remain attractive to young singles and young families
- Market City of Decatur as different from Greater Decatur. Perception that Greater Decatur is rough, dangerous.
- Annexing underutilized property to build affordable housing
- Live/work areas for artists (e.g., Castleberry Hills, Studioplex)
- Maintain multi-housing units zoned towards downtown areas
- Affordable housing, people who work here should be able to afford to live here. Shouldn't be too expensive for teachers.
- Require certain % of new development to have affordable housing
- Maintain tax exempt level for seniors
- Create a rental market in downtown
- Promote higher density living by demonstrating benefits (i.e. like tour of condo gardens that was done)
- More density in downtown area
- Development concentrated around 3 MARTA stations
- More multi-family units in neighborhoods (especially for the elderly); requires zoning changes
- Variety of housing price points to encourage income diversity
- Assess lowering the age for school tax exemptions
- Mandate mixed use development
- Enforce "smart" building codes (environmentally efficient)
- More town-home communities
- We need a retirement community that has private space, community space, 3 and 4 wheel parking and events. Clairemont Place is good because you buy the condo and the fees go to dining and meals The old Devry might be a good place for this as long as it had shuttle service

- We need a movie theater: We need a multiplex movies theater. We have several make shift theaters: Holiday Inn, High School, Library. Chattanooga put their movie theater in a parking deck which helped safety issues
- We need a community village
- We need zoning that allow 4 or 5 families to live together and support each other, cook together and support each other's health/insurance needs.
- We need to create alternative ways to support families
- Extended Families: Zoning should accommodate accessory dwellings and we should reduce size limits on accessory dwellings, Decatur should be known as a place where we let you bring your family to live with you...but people are worried about too many cars
- Affordable housing can be a magnet for artists and creative people
- In Seattle, secondary structures on properties encourage density
- Small lots don't make it difficult to deal with storm water issues
- City engineering codes are too black and white with regards to storm water, what are FEMA's thoughts? Codes should allow for rainwater harvesting which ties well into community gardens and gardening in general
- We need roof top gardens and regulations that allow them
- We need to allow multifamily living when houses have 4 or 5 bedrooms from a zoning standpoint
- We need more density in creative ways such as garage apartments and multifamily use in single family dwellings
- affordable for: city work force, i.e. police-fire-teachers, military, seniors, people with disabilities, young folks, transitional college faculty, racial diversity
- diversity of housing prices - mixed income
- question about quality of life versus what's realistic
- rental and ownership
- we want to know what's happening with public housing area on Trinity and Commerce?
- % of affordable housing in any new builds
- lots of discussion about "what is affordable" and for whom?
- salary incentives to live in city for city workforce i.e. housing allowance
- more housing like Benson/Oakview lottery for city workforce
- What do the demographics look like?
- We need housing for: Low income; people who work here; seniors; families; college students
- Healthy mixed income housing stocks spread out throughout the city especially with respect to school age children
- How to accommodate seniors in home- from city planning synergy to encourage smaller, non-McMansions

- For the 'Keenagers' - Wide sidewalks, options for alternative means of getting around, having access to neighbors, and access to amenities
- For the 'Keenagers' - Accessibility, visitability (wheel chair accessible, door width, bathroom accessible and ramp accesses) - Copy 'Easy Living' program
- For the 'Keenagers' - Ensure adult children have opportunities to interact positively with adult parents
- Adult living research, make senior living in Decatur a model community, leveraging ARC senior living program
- Provide incentives for 'work force' housing such as those along Oakview Road
- Ensure people can continue to live in their homes through financial accommodations, tax relief, etc.
- Find other ways to fund Decatur rather than through property tax, which will help alleviate the burden on seniors., Consider increasing fees for non-residents for services such as the dog park and festivals
- Smaller families
- Starter/affordable homes
- Young singles
- Impact of annexation ?
- Multi-generational housing - Code issues?
- Continuing care senior communities
- Live/work incentives
- Local jobs
- Life cycle housing
- Disabled accessible housing
- Mixed use housing for aging population (i.e. necessities available in development or within walking distance)
- Incentives for property developers/owners to encourage affordable housing, look to Charleston and Savannah on rehabbing existing buildings with incentives and tax credits
- Cooperate and partner with non-profits on grant applications for affordable housing (affordable housing needed for low income earners, young professionals, young families)
- Balance density with affordable housing
- Convert unused commercial property to residential (affordable) property
- Who, Elderly, Young Professionals, Workforce, Teachers
- We want to maintain diversity of home owners - elderly, racial, work force, lower income. How can owners of houses afford to pay for houses as costs rise and taxes rise?
- Need a task force to figure out creative ideas so people can afford house in order to maintain diversity -

- Elderly need to be able to afford their houses. Perhaps build specific housing for elderly in pockets of areas - i.e. small cottages, or group houses
- Condos in downtown area
- Co-Housing (Eastlake model)
- Infill housing (Balance with greenspace - for example houses could be clustered as long as there was some common greenspace)
- Annexation - this is good and bad - helps with tax burden, but could stress infrastructure, schools
- Apartments in denser areas for lower income, young workers, students
- if affordable housing continues to decline, diversity will decline
- boutique hotel really is a need--had not considered that before
- wheelchair accessibility in homes, buildings and outside (crosswalks)
- Maintain decent, affordable housing for all income levels
- Leverage existing housing - no new development
- Restrict demolition of older homes to build new bigger homes
- need for more rental options that are accessible to those who work here
- increasing the \$ diversity of residences
- apartments downtown are too expensive
- need other locations for condos
- need rental options for younger residents w/o children
- need to keep taxes down for older residents on fixed income
- tax deferral until after death, for examples
- housing inventory is aging
- need incentives for housing renewal
- strengthen tree ordinance
- need stronger lighting / noise ordinance
- stronger enforcement of infill rules
- neighborhood by neighborhood performance standards for size and style of new housing / upgraded housing
- encourage developers to work with neighborhoods
- In order to maintain diversity, there needs to be affordable housing
- Very diverse population (Families, singles, partners, seniors).
- Universal design standards should be encouraged
- encourage LEED
- plan on including places for our city workers to live
- no more senior high-rises
- emphasize aging in home
- seek tax solutions to enable this

- Empty nesters-affordable condos, affordable taxes, look at tax exemptions
- Young families with children
- Increase diversity of population
- Increase high density condos that include 1, 2, and 3 bedroom condos
- Encourage developers to build more responsibility-less parking spaces
- Green building-increase LEEDS certification
- Rooftop gardens
- More families with school-age children
- Consider that the above may be "squeezing" out the young professionals, the aging population and the public servants
- Current families that want to age-in-place
- The young, child-free families that will be drawn to the walkable benefits of Decatur's city center.
- Housing type - Higher density
- Rental (single and multi- family)
- Garage apartments
- Workforce housing (mid-range in cost)
- Public housing with market-rate housing mix
- Special -needs, group-homes (i.e. elderly)
- Single-level residences
- Explore allowing accessory dwellings for caregivers (paid and family members) for senior citizens, police proper use of such dwellings with periodic licensing requirements
- Decatur is a city, not a suburb, therefore density will be greater and is not a bad thing, multifamily housing should be part of the housing mix
- Increase affordable housing for all income levels and age groups, MLK service Project is a model for helping not only seniors, land trust as done in Athens is another model- land owned by charitable trust which pays no property taxes and resident pays taxes only on value of building, such housing can be located in any neighborhood
- Lower income groups, Lower the standard of what is affordable, 250k is not affordable to many
- Need a stronger rental market
- How can the city become more involved in improving affordability?
- Require a % affordable of new developments
- Provide housing options for seniors - one story living
- Be careful with tax breaks, so as not to encourage only the wealthy to move to Decatur. (such as allowing seniors not to pay school taxes)
- Trade greenspace for developed space, Of course this tradeoffs hurts affordability
- Provide jobs to areas of low income housing
- We call Decatur diverse...but is it really?

- The City is still segregated in some ways
- The conversation about being racially and economically diverse needs to be encouraged by the City
- Expand MLK day to address this
- Strengthen capacity of minority groups
- Need for more housing for disabled (like Park Trace) - there is a very long (60 people) wait list for vacancies.
- More available senior / disabled housing (not necessarily assisted living)
- Develop resources for those with Alzheimer's (or other disabilities) and for their caregivers
- Transportation resources for the elderly
- Walkability
- Senior day care (incorporate into recreation center like Fulton Co.)
- Create partnership between schools (after school programs) and senior orientated groups. Cross-generational exposure gets the young thinking about the issues of getting older and being older
- Create a property tax freeze for those meeting certain criteria, Those of age 65 and, Owns a home that is paid in full and, On a fixed income
- Review and overhaul the rules regarding Historic Preservation, Do not stifle growth or personal tastes, Still protect historic components, Current rules paint with too broad a brush
- We need housing for young and growing families - affordable condos and single-family homes.
- We need to figure out how to enable retirees to stay in our community. The tax burden is too great for those on a fixed income.
- We need housing that is affordable for all of our Decatur citizens including our school teachers, police officers and fire fighters.
- We need to plan for growth that maintains diversity throughout our community.
- There needs to be a diversity of housing including varying density with a conservation overlay. Dense housing doesn't mean no trees. It means more shared greenspaces - greenspaces that aren't just grass, but lots of trees.
- Cluster developments - an updated version, would be a good solution for Decatur. This could be done in the defunct car dealerships and the old DeVrey Tech location. Get rid of the huge parking lots and build cluster homes with significant shared greenspace. However, this would mean that instead of 40 homes going into a development, you'd only get 20 or so, but then the land would end up being cheaper if it was zoned that way. It all starts with the zoning.
- We don't want developments like Knob Hill and the new townhouses on Church Street and Scott Blvd. We want ones that have more shared greenspace and less concrete.
- Having more height like 4-5 story in the downtown area would help with density especially if it was created as a live/walk to work plan similar to the space over the Yogurt Tap. So, if we took a

lot of the 1-2 story buildings in downtown Decatur and built them up to 4-5 story, we could significantly increase our density while not getting rid of greenspace.

- I live in downtown Decatur so I can walk and enjoy the parks.
- Local shopping can enable people to only have one car
- Mow (dead) buildings down and create more parking
- Underground parking
- How about a Trader Joe's?
- Redesign Kroger
- Urban grocery: smaller footprint
- Multi level Kroger
- Need affordable housing-apartments
- Make it safer to cross tracks
- More affordable taxes
- Annexation-higher density equals more revenue
- More community gardens
- Put pressure on school board to accept and prepare for growth
- Lots of options to do mid rise developments
- Quality parks and transportation will make people want to live here
- How about a Central Park in Decatur? (Like New York)
- More assisted living options for older people (all 3 levels: independent, assisted, and nursing)
- Single families: Smaller lots, more efficient and better designed homes
- Portland and Seattle: great design
- Provide help with meals, a la carte options
- Be green and environmentally alert
- Enhanced, need based tax, income testing, mixed, ability to pay, not necessarily age, combined with residency length
- Predatory lending
- Other ways to increase tax revenue, income tax, max pay-out
- Assessment issues, more careful, more creative, not tied to neighbor
- Increased commercial for tax base
- Entities that are not taxed
- New construction/renovation causing assessment impact on unrenovated, demand
- Tax on long time residents at time of sale
- Maintaining diversity
- Seniors do not want to be displaced from community, more options
- Increased home health care
- Taxes

- Affordable housing – increase rental properties
- Challenges for young people and young families
- Challenges for elderly – assisted living, cost, taxes
- Attracting jobs to employ residents, so live & work in community
- Aging in place – children live
- Senior rec. center/living center
- Work with developers for % affordable housing
- Neighborhood opposition to affordable housing
- Tax/rent control
- Parking Lot:
- Schools
- Moss Park @ College Heights
- need to be age-friendly, affordable for retirees and for moderate/low income families and individuals
- more mixed housing: mixed ages/life stages, mixed incomes --- INTEGRATED LIVING
- Decatur should strive to be a model for integrated living and healthy living
- need critical amount of affordable housing mixed in throughout the community (not concentrated in one place, like public housing); look for established models elsewhere in the country
- need services closer to where people live, to promote walking for the entire City, e.g., groceries
- shuttle as part of solution, to provide access to services
- older people need lower maintenance housing
- housing swap program (see Oberlin, OH): match older/empty nesters with young, growing families, who swap houses with each other
- can't neglect the young for the old!
- Over 60 population is projected to be huge (housing)
- They (older) won't want lawn, won't want to have to move from Decatur
- Need place to retire that's not a traditional retirement home
- Easy access to medical care
- If annexed Suburban Plaza then DeKalb Medical Center is more integrated and not isolated
- Cooperative for senior services- active seniors help older seniors and earn "credit" for helping them. The credit can then be redeemed when they need help themselves.
- In general, like ride share concept (senior cooperative)
- City workers like police should afford to live here. Work force housing- we need more.
- Service industry workers should be able to live here too
- The group has concern about the lack of housing affordability in general.
- East Lake & Avondale could be more dense because they are near public transportation
- Density increases affordability- condos, etc and can still feel like a neighborhood

- Avondale Columbia Park would have provided density near public transportation
- Density near public transportation that still keeps neighborhood feel. OR live/work design in commercial area. Strategic density.
- A participant asks, "What will be green building in Decatur and how will we incentivize it?"
- The city could give mandates on new construction (ex. LEED silver) How do we balance green with affordability?
- Review laws about garage offices, homes, etc
- Concern for low-income housing being lower-quality, should try and maintain quality
- Racial Shift - does not speak well, good for schools. Need to backup with housing
- Higher density would offer better choices for affordability
- Need more single-people , other demographics than families. Age, marital status, income, etc. cost of homes leading to missed opportunities.
- Affordable houses, not just condos
- NORC - Naturally occurring retirement community. Existing houses, stay in community
- Smart house - universally accessible designed
- Boomers will need housing as they get older
- Will want to sell home and move into downtown condo
- City needs to loosen codes with multihousing
- Need more affordable housing for younger people
- Decatur needs a healthy balance between single and multifamily housing. There is a stigma if don't own a home in Decatur
- Decatur needs to glamorize downsizing
- Build smaller homes
- Bring in more fee simple townhouses
- Create a retirement home like Parksprings in Stone Mt. Build on edge of the city near DeKalb Hospital and use shuttle to move people back and forth. Use Decatur hospital and all the space for currently used for parking lots for retirement community.
- People move outside of Decatur when they retire to avoid taxes like Avondale Estates--
- Cheaper to rent then to own in Decatur because of taxes
- Statistics correct on data sheet?
- Provide variety of housing for elderly
- Middle income professionals (teachers, fire, police)
- Low income families
- Seniors
- Very elderly - those who need assisted care of varying levels
- College/grad students
- Young families

- Decatur does not have much in the way of "active senior living."
- Paying the tax burden is difficult in retirement. What will make it possible for seniors to stay in their homes?
- What kind of solutions?
- Supported living for seniors
- Reduce the tax burden for seniors
- Increase the share of business/commercial property that generates tax revenue for the city. What incentives would attract business/property owners for this purpose?
- How do you resolve the problem of single-family houses being so expensive?
- The group recognizes that there are several plans/developments in the works that may address some of the needs diverse housing needs, mixed use etc.
- Some members of the group mentioned some problems with standards and regulations for in-fill housing or renovation of existing houses. Current standards may not be adequate to address situations that arise. Some suggested that the City may need a greater willingness to engage in more cooperative give and take with builders and developers.
- Mixed income housing important. Place for teachers, city workers, etc.
- Issue: when affordable housing rises in price, people sell and move, then there are fewer affordable homes.
- As baby boomers age and downsize, what are they looking for? Mixture of housing types, Affordable prices, Smaller homes, Single level homes, Low maintenance--small yards, no painting, etc. HOA neighborhoods.
- People are moving here from the NE and Florida to retire
- Accessibility will be key to (aging in place)
- Provide live/work spaces. Have access to a local business center within walking distance. Build into new developments.
- Permits should preserve neighborhood feel.
- Consider co-housing: supportive communities that are walk-able with perimeter parking. Communal kitchens, gardens, office space.
- Services near population centers. Types of businesses important--markets, groceries, etc.
- Include renters in city planning. Need more rental property to increase diversity--nice apartments.
- Hard to build because available plots of land too small.
- Neighborhoods often oppose such development
- Concern that renters not invested in community
- Aging in place Complex issue, Involves every aspect of city, Decatur seen as a model/example of how to do this, 75% of citizens do not have kids in the schools; many citizens over the age of 50. (This probably has not changed much over time.)

- [housing]Who? Older population
- [housing]Empty nesters
- Civil servants- need affordable housing
- [civil servants]They will need affordable housing
- Requirement for notifying the neighborhood citizens of zoning changes, Email list
- Sales tax to offset property taxes
- Tighten zoning restrictions for single family housing, To reduce the cost of houses
- Merge school system with DeKalb
- Abolish school system- make private and charter- both of these are in an effort to lower taxes
- Just make schools more responsive to parents
- need a staff and citizen commission dedicated to housing issues , trends and attraction strategies.
- Increasing numbers of seniors who may want to Age in Place Why can't they?, Taxes - need relief/exemptions, Transportation - need shuttles, Maintenance - keep the MLK project and expand - encourage more people to have their home worked on, may be stigma keeps some from asking for help, Physical layout of home no longer works
- Attract businesses that serve seniors
- Have a seniors 101 program that educates about services and programs for seniors and provides support for family caregivers
- Expand MLK concept to neighborhoods -neighbors helping neighbors - develop a website the connects those who can help with needs in their own neighborhoods
- Lower income households including workforce (teachers, police, etc) young people starting out, DHS grads who want to move back to Decatur but can't afford it as well as families struggling in poverty and working poor
- Need to balance - look at housing market as a whole - we are not sure how but we want a community that includes housing for all of these groups - economic diversity
- If we want to be a place for artists need affordable live/work space for them to be able to afford to live in Decatur
- Live/work space also for entrepreneurs
- Annex DeVry space for new housing?
- Young families [housing market]
- Downsizing from within Decatur[housing market]
- Challenges will be to provide affordable housing, maintain racial/economic diversity
- Increasing housing prices size out and price out diversity and lead to larger infill
- Policy = zoning overly policies that are specialized and individualized
- Reverse white flight and housing market demand will increase demand that will require increased density and supply, which squeezes out low income residents
- Policy = protection of public house

- Decatur is attractive to young families, but not to seniors
- Increase PR to attract retirees and seniors
- Equitable taxation based upon ability, age
- Increase commercial tax base
- Demand increases squeeze out the middle
- Density is only a part of solution as most residents desire single family housing
- Policy = work force incentives, tax incentives to offer affordable housing
- Multi-generational, mixed families
- Preserving community
- College housing (DeVry, Agnes Scot, Columbia)
- Annexation will create greater stock and supply
- Concerns about whether annexation will actually result in lower taxes, changes to neighborhoods and walkability
- Annexation may help lower/stabilize housing costs
- Annexed properties should have their taxes frozen at pre-annexation rates for 10 years
- City should facilitate and advertise available tax freezes, tax rebates, etc. for historic preservation, renovations
- Decatur should have an Annexation Policy - overarching policy of when, trigger points, goals
- AGING POPULATION. Recognition needs to be given to the increasing percentage of elderly residents. A lot of discussion focused on other than high rise style affordable independent living options, perhaps with an economically feasible mid-rise approach.
- CITY EMPLOYEES. Options should be made available to city employees that enable them to live in the City, or send their kids to school here.
- NO ONE-OFF DEALS. Concern was expressed against offering opening onetime tax breaks or price reductions in affordable housing efforts.
- PARTNER INSTITUTION EFFORTS. Explore options with Columbia Seminary, Agnes Scott, etc. for encouragement of housing opportunities for their employees, City and school employees, etc. Collaboration efforts could extend to other non-residential building and facility usage policies.
- DIVERSITY. This was a broad topic revisited several times by the group. An emphasis was placed on the fact that a mixture of age, income, race, gender, etc. creates a unique neighborhood and City, and there is a value to be placed on this uniqueness. Discussions about how we accomplish and encourage efforts in this area suggested that we find incentives for private investment in mixed income housing efforts like the Villages of East Lake.
- Have bike parking at high density housing
- Encourage mixed use in existing neighborhoods to support aging population
- Housing for continual living in Decatur as we age

- Don't want 22-story housing --keep it quaint, 5-stories or fewer, needs to stay cute
- Happy to have condos in the downtown to move to later in age
- Preserve the homes that are already here --we'd be doing well to hold the line
- Want to be able to age in own home
- Look to lower the age for school tax exemption --graduate it, based on income
- Delay property tax until home is sold or owner passes
- Senior independent living—encourage and add more
- Allow and encourage combined facilities (independent/assisted living/nurse care)
- Encourage parking alternatives—shared parking, reduce parking lot requirements near MARTA, etc.
- Support/encourage work force and affordable housing
- Seniors
- Young people
- Workforce
- Next generation of children
- Students
- Teachers
- Active senior developments
- Student housing
- Mother-in-law suites
- Smaller townhomes/brownstones
- Appropriate sized for user group
- Youth hostels
- Garage apartments
- There will be a need for both single-family housing and multi-family housing in the future
- We need a variety of housing for all sizes of families
- There is a good amount of rental units in the city now
- In terms of things done well, the redevelopment on the housing authority property is a positive for the city
- Specifically because it adds density to downtown
- Existing under-developed parking lots could support more density for downtown
- Another positive is the Artisan development, in terms of size, scale and in-fill nature of it
- However, the city needs to establish height transitions between downtown and single-family housing neighborhoods
- The city also has to recognize that while gentrification may not be widespread, it is occurring to older and lower income residents

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

Healthy living

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

- Walkable
- Programs for kids and elders (in Decatur magazine)
- Let schools allow residents to use grounds (model is Winnona Park; Renfroe is other extreme and is chained up)
- Develop city to encourage residents to get moving/healthy
- Green space and gardens - get people outside and eating local food
- Is a Whole Foods grocery store coming?
- Feed better lunches at schools
- Several new restaurants specializing in local foods
- Improve water
- Make it easy for anyone to walk/bike anywhere
- Feeling safe everywhere (presence begets presence)
- Trolley would cut down the number of cars
- More parking decks and close off parking in city square would encourage walking - have very local, circular trolley to help
- Mark mileage on "paths" through the city so you know the marked circuit (Oakhurst has marked trees)
- Cops walking or on bikes
- Create live/learn retirement community with ASC, Columbia, Art Institute, DeVry - a community that partners with learning institutions. Continuing Education opportunities in retirement.
- Walking maps that indicate location of benches, water fountains and bathrooms, even on private property and in neighborhoods
- Continue to promote Safe Route to School and crossing guard program, need to educate community about it.
- More stores in downtown supplying daily needs would promote more walking

- Partner with medical centers (i.e. DeKalb Wellness center, Emory, Kaiser) for health seminars, screenings, etc.
- Get flu shot clinics available downtown
- Challenge - Lifestyle / culture
- Challenge - Lack of time
- Challenge - Participation (i.e. community involvement, coaches for teams, etc.)
- Install bike lanes on most major roads in the city
- Sidewalk improvement to encourage walking (repairing cracks, adding curbs, cutting back overgrown vegetation to improve safety)
- Improved railroad crossings to get from north side of city to south side and vice versa for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improve building codes to improve building health, air quality, water conservation, and energy conservation
- Incentives for new construction and retrofitting existing buildings to meet/exceed federal standards for environmental conservation measures
- Healthy eating educational programs for children and the elderly
- Easier access to tennis courts (longer hours)
- Marked trails
- Incentives for building owners to create cultural venues downtown in addition to retail and restaurants
- Household waste disposal for toxic chemicals semi-annually
- Water quality improvement for local streams (eliminate pet waste contamination and building codes to move pet parks and buildings away from polluting local streams)
- Storm water control (permeable driveways, sidewalks)
- Park renovation and maintenance (organized volunteer school groups/neighborhood associations to help with maintenance)
- Beautification of walking routes leading to downtown area (lighting improvements, curbs, trees) and landlords forced to maintain store front areas
- Reduce car speeds through downtown area (make roads brick)
- Quality grocery store downtown
- Tax incentive to reduce cars per household
- Reduce intra-city car use through advertising alternate transport, providing safe infrastructure
- Make trails a destination as well as a conduit by adding artwork, nature trail signs, walking botanical garden, fountains
- Central fountains in the city (European model to encourage congregation, beautification)
- Community connections for work at home people: places to congregate and work, regular gatherings to engage this group by creating a "water cooler" gathering place)

- Gathering spots other than the square, more social urban spaces throughout the city
- Terminal vistas (roads ending in a landmark, fountain)
- Provide bicycle racks everywhere
- Create a magnet retail project downtown
- More farmer's markets
- More community gardens
- In the future streets are so safe, no need for crossing guards
- Drivers speed less because speed limit is enforced
- All streets in Decatur are 2 lane streets
- More bicycle lanes
- MARTA plaza - shade awnings with game tables, chess etc.
- more community gardens, CSA
- more available garden space through rooftop or convert paved surfaces
- new YMCA in downtown Decatur, updated
- cross reference our transportation ideas
- use "healthy living" as barometer for any decision city makes
- Rec center and YMCA collaborating more around sports instead of kids being stretched between
- farm to school
- access to locally grown food for all incomes
- revitalize empty buildings with healthy living in mind
- free/cheap education about healthy eating - process vs. fresh, using kitchens in schools, rec center, Cooks Warehouse for this
- Decatur believes in getting all children to be successful through mentoring, 'Tide lifting all ships'
- Celebrate teachers and education through special programs and events
- How to institutionalize- getting City Schools of Decatur together to celebrate Education
- Decatur Education Foundation, DBA and City of Decatur Volunteer Coordinator to collaborate on healthy issues
- Active neighborhood watch programs
- Walking to destinations
- Having something for the children to do once they are through eating at restaurants- have a playground or some other sort of entertainment
- Access to convenience stores
- Zoning: could have pockets within larger residential zones where limited services could be offered such as convenience store
- We share a common value of education of both children and citizens- Tap into and maximize the diversity of education, experience, culture of the residents

- Encourage development of community gardens and local foods, co-op aspects, Community Supported Agriculture support in Decatur (Sugar Creek Garden, Farm to Table programs)
- Have Grant Coordinator find funding for these activities
- Continue to encourage block parties throughout city, including block parties that are thematic such as with musical instruments or 'progressive porch parties'
- Neighborhood associations promote block parties
- Finding Trader Joe's or equivalent that has healthier food choices
- Access to good health care
- Limit automobiles to improve air quality
- Promote walkability
- Access to fresh food (e.g. farmer's markets)
- More opportunity for physical health activities - City sponsored or promoted
- Business incentives to offer healthy living products and services
- Efficient use of existing resource - people planning, etc.
- Carpooling incentives
- City shuttle service
- Create a pedestrian mall - Ponce Clairemont to Church
- More bicycle routes and racks
- Preserve existing trees and encourage more
- Building code options/incentives to encourage efficient building, LEED, Green roof
- Encourage and promote community gardens
- Sidewalks in good repair
- Continued recycling emphasis
- Expansion of greenspace
- Teach children to walk and bike early
- Implement bike lanes and trolley
- Create "bike stations" (i.e. areas of racks) and offer "bike days" (clinics on using, fixing, maintaining bikes)
- Create more and improve existing greenspace
- Create more community gardens
- Leverage existing resources, better use of public buildings and educational institutions as healthy living and multi-purpose spaces open to citizens, non-profits and businesses (i.e. Decatur H.S. and Agnes Scott)
- Secure funding for Decatur Rec Center overhaul
- Implement intergenerational programs such as gardening and arts at Rec Center
- Engage medical community in active/healthy living programs
- Make the Decatur Focus more timely (by the time the Focus arrives events are often passed)

- Have active living department serve as a clearinghouse for all active events in the City (not just the ones offered by the Department of Active Living/Rec Center)
- Create Decatur Active living / Healthy Living Newsletter available in hard copy and online
- Communicate resident benefits to residents
- Engage Decatur businesses with active living efforts (i.e. running stores, restaurants)
- Implement micro environmentalism such as Decatur initiatives to: use alternative transportation; use less power; visit community gardens; eat healthy in Decatur
- Create community bulletin boards and place throughout the City
- Recreation center - A good functioning center
- Recreation center - Needs funding for improvement
- Recreation center - Location is good, walkable
- Recreation center - Satellite locations would be good to have in various neighborhoods
- Parks - Need to be more accessible - perhaps via a shuttle
- Parks - Need to have a variety of activities, More casual space for just "hanging out", Dancing, Bocce ball
- Parks - Each park could have recreation center type facilities
- Parks - Resource sharing - example use the Boys & Girls Club as a senior day care when it is not in use
- Parks - Adair Park needs upgrade -- water, restrooms
- Parks - Use facilities in parks to help keep seniors engaged - senior activities and places for them to meet
- Parks - Have enough parks and green space - keep parks updated and vital
- Trails and Nature Walks - Need more of these within city or within parks
- Pocket Parks, Need more, Trails, Benches
- 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
- 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
- Encourage kids/families to walk more/bike more
- Promote better connectivity of paths, green space
- Have more active recreational activities in parks such as basket ball courts and shuffle board, etc.
- Promote Farm 2 School - more healthy options
- Have more "spontaneous" gatherings & gathering places to encourage community
- more walking and biking
- farm to school programs
- grants for Rec Center
- kids run program
- family activities
- promote push mowers
- have neighborhood competitions for healthy living
- too much car idling leads to poor air quality
- traffic lights should switch to flashing yellows after 11PM
- left turn signals will cut down on traffic going through neighborhoods (Avery Drive cut through, for example)
- Encourage walkability
- Bike/walking trails
- bike/foot patrols (police)
- Greenspace promotes healthy activities
- sponsor races/walks/biking that would touch local businesses too as a draw to Decatur
- Continue Decatur Youth Rec
- Expand Decatur Rec for Adults;
- Focus on renovating or improving the Decatur Recreations Facility
- Revisit free community bike program
- Define green for Decatur
- Balance green requirement with diversity
- Educate on how to save money in Decatur by decreasing energy use.
- More efficient use of space to create more diverse housing without eroding current homeowner property value

- Look at what needs to be done with single family homes.
- More Rec Center offerings for general population
- Dance hall in Decatur
- Health care co-op
- Healthy eating groups for kids and adults
- Decatur Triathlon
- Walk between green spaces/parks in city
- Once a month close streets in Decatur for walking, biking eating connecting and shopping.
- Food Revolution in Decatur
- Bike riding classes for adults
- Encourage eating locally grown
- Allow for urban "farms"
- Maintain the sidewalks
- Sidewalks and curbs should be handicap accessible (also provide for visually/audibly impaired)
- Update existing facilities without editing architectural value
- Close part of Ponce for pedestrian-only activity (certain times only)
- Involve the schools and educate early on the topic of healthy living and food choices
- Increasing walkability of City and other environmental ideas already discussed, would encourage healthy living
- Maintain and increase recreation center programs to create community connections and give residents a place to go
- Create a senior/youth mentoring program possibly using MLK project as vehicle by extending it beyond MLK Day weekend, aim to increase connections between different age groups on regular basis
- Have Oakhurst Community Garden and recreation center work together to achieve above goals
- Create more community gardens
- Consider establishing traffic free time in area of City so residents can walk, bike, etc. without having to worry about motor vehicle traffic, Some group members had questions about what City is doing now about this subject, suggest establishment of committee to oversee
- Need more activity space at schools
- City owned athletic fields should be made more accessible to general public (e.g., McKoy ballfield, Ebster Park field)
- Better cultural arts coordination
- Allow urban farming- small livestock - chickens, goats but no cows
- Make stairs more accessible
- More Corporate support of physical fitness
- Educate workplace to be healthier

- Eliminate student parking at Decatur High
- Farm to school programs
- Require restaurants to have truth in advertising (within reason)
- Promote and expand recreation centers active living
- More place to play (fields for ad hoc games)
- Open more school spaces
- Use grass not mulch
- Better options to dispose dog litter
- Healthier kids-more recess
- More after school activities, more play grounds
- Activities for those between kids & active adults
- Staffed parks/activities manager, keys to “equipment shed”
- Encourage community to volunteer, to conduct activities
- Teen Center at Decatur Rec
- Co-op with schools to expand active programs for community
- Underutilized public facilities
- Frisbee Golf
- Use expanded on public ball fields
- Inter-neighborhood leagues
- More lenient usage of ball field, parks, etc.
- More open air markets for fresh food and other goods
- Fit station course for community, use bike path
- Use asphalt for bike path for running & walking safety
- more walking and bicycling
- improve traffic lights for pedestrian safety, add audio signals
- improve conditions at all RR crossings (Candler, S. McDonough, Atlanta St.)
- make possible to cross Scott Blvd. safely
- improve curb accessibility, significant problem for elderly people
- enhance safety for bikes and for pedestrians; consult experts at Ga Tech who are developing new ways for all transportation modes to share roadways
- need warning siren in more locations [one participant did not think Decatur has a siren at all, sparked substantial discussion; facilitator recommended she find out when the monthly test is conducted and make a point to be at home and see if she can hear it]
- provide bike safety education, esp for children
- provide a shuttle service to reduce traffic, e.g., like the Cliff Bus at Emory
- electric cars and buses; privately owned so not a drain on the City (another biz to pay taxes!)
- more Rec programming in different locations around town, e.g., tai-chi at the MARTA plaza

- more community gardens where people can grow their own food
- better amenities in parks: benches, water fountains
- Growth of Decatur Rec center, active living, connection with schools, seniors. Maybe review people who use facility
- Promote Farmers Market - have dedicated area
- Expanding runs, clubs, biking, better knowledge/info - Calendar
- Walking tours and Volunteers
- Tourism, draw incentives, "foody" city that is green. Being a destination
- Access to events are free, cheap
- Movie Theater, independent, small
- Boutique Hotel
- Holiday Inn conf center improvement, Emory, CDC
- Expand commercial Tax base - tourism
- Strong doctors in DeKalb Medical center, proximity a plus, good for aging population
- Connect neighborhoods with paths, and bike routes
- No generally accessible field, no baseball park
- Keep parks safe
- Make public space safe
- Allow kids to move around Decatur alone
- Police force needs to be visible. Add bike police force, have police walking sidewalks.
- Need active neighborhood watches
- Parks needs visible safety measures
- Put Emergency number in cell phone
- Public Housing needs to be mixed use for young and elderly
- Drug deals are going on within Public housing and on Patillo way
- Do not want people coming into Decatur to buy drugs
- High School needs better surveillance
- In terms of healthy living, what would make the most positive differences for the residents of our city? What activities, programs or changes in the things we build could make a difference?
- There are a lot of healthy activities already. Perhaps more attention to marketing what is available.
- More community gardens
- Continue developing the farm-to-school program
- Connect walking/running/biking groups with each other
- Health programs in partnership with Emory Healthcare and DeKalb Medical
- Nutrition and exercise programs sponsored by the City
- Have public exercise on the square - e.g., yoga or tai chi

- Decatur Business Association sponsor health-focused events featuring business with health-related products
- The list of Park & Rec programs could also list informal groups - e.g., running groups, meet ups, etc
- Decatur is healthier than other metro suburbs, partially through self-selection. We walk more here than in other places.
- for the residents of our city? What activities, programs or changes in the things we build could make a difference?
- Goal: Healthier aging population
- Need to provide facilities to keep population healthy--environment should keep us active.
- Interconnected green spaces would help.
- Plan to connect through signage, count of steps between green spaces
- Develop a zip line or a tree canopy walk as attractions and healthy activities.
- Host a Decatur neighborhood field/sports day at high school field--all kinds of activities for kids and adults.
- Could be a fundraiser for Active Living and/or school system (neighborhood field/sports day)
- More pedestrian friendly
- More classes for adults and a workout center
- Encourage walking and biking clubs
- Centralized message board
- More awareness about what already exists
- Bike lanes- separate from road
- Work with Emory
- Like Peachtree City but without the golf carts
- Kids need centrally located areas for activities
- Repeal skateboard ordinance
- More pet parks
- However, maintain the balance of "live and let live"
- Focus on fresh, healthy food for all, support farm to school
- Farmers market downtown is too expensive , expand it so costs can go down
- See transportation ideas for improving healthy living (bike lanes and racks)
- Fund the expansion of the rec center
- Active living - bike lanes, tennis courts
- Oakhurst tennis courts are lame - bathrooms are gross - unreasonable to have to obtain a key from City Hall
- Rec Center should focus on more than just kids
- Larger swimming pools with real, useable lap lanes

- An arts program that rivals Callanwolde
- Arts partnership lags benefit
- Local farm-to-table food instruction from city
- Encourage schools, restaurants to use local foods
- Gardening courses, teach where food comes from
- Expansion of local, community gardens
- More athletic fields - allow rec to expand to soccer, lacross
- Bike racks, places to lock bikes, bike rentals, self-serve bike rentals
- Study effectiveness and usage of ZIP car
- Wi-Fi is not reliable - unsure if this is a proper city role given competition w/ private providers
- Bury power lines - or at least conduct a cost-benefit analysis between costs and damages caused by trees
- Lower taxes
- Outdoor arts, amphitheater
- A better hotel - different, boutique, unique - a huge need given the size of houses especially around graduations
- Explore gambling
- WALKABILITY. Wider sidewalks are needed. Create ways to make walking more interesting via distances on way-finding signs, tree and plant identification, historic points of interest, etc.
- ACTIVE LIVING. Continue current City department efforts.
- TAI CHI. Picture it: Tai Chi on the square.
- CAMPING OPTIONS. Once upon a time Boy Scouts camped on the square. Are there options available within the City for limited camping opportunities?
- 24 HOUR ESTABLISHMENTS. We need more places that are open all the time.
- KIDS URBAN PLAY OPPS. We should partner with organizations that teach kids how to play safely in an urban environment.
- WORKOUT PATHS. Incorporate workout or exercise paths, the kind with exercise stations usable by seniors, in our parks.
- (Define Healthy, not just bodily health. Health is life, mind spirit)
- Like to know where we ca[me] from, southern history
- Getting more seniors involved
- Proactive approach to our history
- Communication - public communication
- Bring people together and to gather
- Get people out of their cars
- Neighborhood walk and talk
- Breakaway isolation

- Communication is healthy
- Intertwined in our lives
- Communicate with one another
- Government to go to the people, outreach to people
- Get seniors to be involved in schools, and kids
- Get seniors to teach history of Decatur\
- Storytelling as part of book festival, art festival
- Take festivals to different part of the city
- Neighborhood gatherings
- How can we encourage and empower people in the city to make the difference
- Citizen's group, organizations
- Bring the 600 people (roundtable participants) together every quarter, periodically to share ideas
- Finding a way for the people of Decatur to interact, maintain connection, roundtable participants be a group of people to foster action
- Community gardens!! Puts people in touch with their food, potential hobby/activity -- the more gardens the better
- More greenspace and athletic fields
- Encourage opportunities for walking
- Education effects healthy living --educated people are healthier
- Use school focus for education forum
- Downtown market year round --food market, artisan/craft market
- Pl[aces] designated for gathering for activities --Ex.: drum circle places, fitness course equipment
- Knowing your neighbor and trusting the place you live
- More activities / groups like fitness bootcamps --neighborhood walking groups, neighborhood stretching groups
- A path the weaves together all the neighborhoods in the city
- THEMES from this meeting:
- Overuse of greenspaces
- Adding greenspaces with designated use -active -wild places -passive
- Encouraging the businesses that we want to be located here --small businesses
- Encouraging pedestrian and bike use --decrease vehicle use
- Housing options for elderly and students
- Making the schools an educational community center --social forums
- Farmers markets
- More community gardens
-]more swimming pools and well maintained

- Awareness with community supported agriculture(CSA)
- More bike paths
- Recreation facilities
- Gyms
- Solar panels on school bldg rooftops
- More LEED certified bldgs
- Indoor performance facilities
- The group was not aware of a senior center in town, outside of the Recreation center and library
- The recreation center has a lot, but it is “rundown” and does not accommodate everyone
- The farms to schools program is good for people’s health
- The Oakhurst Community Garden’s classes are a positive for the city as well
- renovation of rec center
- variety of location of programs (keenagers)
- integration of activities-partnering with others
- maintaining park renovation
- bathrooms in location of sports activities- they are always closed or non existent

Session Three Ideas

In Session Three, citizens were asked to offer ideas and images in response to the following questions:

1. In this process, we are having productive conversations and making important decisions together. What are some other Decatur ways to build and maintain common ground, even on difficult issues where we can't reach agreement?
2. 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?
3. How can the city and its citizens communicate with each other effectively?
4. How do we create ways for citizens to better communicate with each other? How can we take advantage of the internet and foster other healthy conversations?
5. Who is missing out on this conversation? How can we get them involved?
6. Individual change: What could one person do to make progress on a particular issue?
7. Organizational change: What are the many types of formal and informal organizations? How could these organizations and other groups of citizens make a difference?
8. Institutional change: How could our institutions like schools, religious congregations, governmental authorities and others make a difference? What kind of partnerships can the City create with partner institutions?

Building and maintaining common ground

In this process, we are having productive conversations and making important decisions together. What are some other Decatur ways to build and maintain common ground, even on difficult issues where we can't reach agreement?

- 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.
- 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

Getting people involved

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?

- Make people aware of what currently exists and what the volunteer opportunities are. Several participants noted that they were not fully aware of all the opportunities
- Decatur 101: great way to learn about the city/expand # of groups/expand # of times per year
- City schools planning to do a similar program to Decatur 101, so the concept seems positive
- Familiarize the community with the Public Safety program
- Internet but there needs to be a better link on the city site
- Metro blog
- Some members noted that the use of Twitter could help
- City blog
- Introduce/announce upcoming openings on commissions - try to increase involvement in discussions and also noted that maybe a turnover in commissioners would encourage more participation
- For the most part, citizens want to be involved but depending on life situation/realities, some cannot participate or have little participation
- Promote how it affects them (in a positive way)
- Decatur 101-(create an) overview, have more than once a year, (create a) mini version for younger people
- (Continue to communicate) volunteer opportunities and non profits
- Talk about how activities build income and positive changes
- Advertise value of hours (volunteer)
- Incentivize involvement

- (Offer) homestead exemptions (for volunteering)]
- (Offer free) concert tickets
- create more community gardens
- important to encourage a resident's first volunteer activity; how do we do this?
- BETTER INFO ON WHAT BOARDS and ORGANIZATIONS EXIST
- Maybe create a website or print item that says, "if you are interested in 'X'...here is your organization."
- Better describe how the structure of particular boards work
- 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"
- 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
- There are those who want to be involved and don't know
- There are those who don't know and don't want to
- Establish neighborhood and demographic liasons
- Furnish them with instructions, contacts and material
- People will get involved if they feel threatened
- Provide incentives for service - e.g. gift cards
- Use block parties to spread the word
- Music
- Children's activities
- Free food
- Use alternative means of communication - not everyone has internet
- Focused neighborhood meetings on important topics - e.g. annexation
- Ask people to get involved - one-on-one. Some people will respond to one-on-one while not responding to more general invitations

- Community volunteer expo
- Continued emphasis in Decatur 101
- Activities for family involvement, not just individual - e.g. street cleanup
- Dedicated column in Decatur Focus about volunteer opportunities
- Target younger population keeping in mind that they may not have as much free time
- Keep the schools in the loop about available opportunities
- Continue opportunities and continue to publicize them
- Make it a 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
- Through neighborhood associations
- Offer child care so more people can participate
- Offer incentives, e.g., coupons
- Emory Cares Day is good model: one-day commitment for variety of volunteer activities, something for everyone in terms of what they can do, what they can offer. Similar to MLK service day but more varied.
- Promote a "Volunteer of the Month"
- Publicize citizen boards better; street banners in multiple locations to announce events, meetings
- Opt-in to text messages with info from City; use multiple communication methods
- Does the City have a Facebook page? If not, get one. Also use Twitter
- Offer Web-based "live chat" sessions on a regular schedule with various City departments.
- 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)
- 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

City and citizen communication

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

- 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;
- 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
- All residents should receive publications (print or electronic) such as "Decatur Focus" to be kept informed.
- City has various "volunteer" e-mail contact lists - these should be maintained.
- Various on-line blogs are good communication tools, especially if they contain links to other blogs.
- City website it is good. It could benefit from including links to websites/blogs maintained by various neighborhood associations/groups.
- It is beneficial for the City to offer many volunteering opportunities, especially in connection with various public special events/festivals
- For emergencies/warnings, in case of natural disasters like tornados, the "phone blast" system and audible sirens are very helpful and should be maintained/kept
- City-sponsored meetings with neighborhood groups (e.g. W. Ponce de Leon neighbors) to resolve specific issues are a good method for encouraging citizen engagement/official accountability: they can be a very positive experience.
- School/Education-related discussions can get very contentious. This is because the parents are very involved and vocal. There is a lot of passion exhibited by all.
- City appears to be responsive to its citizens: ideas/projects proposed are supported. However there seems to be a separation/disconnect between the City and the School Board. There is some impression that the School Board actions are politicized and not always in the best interest of students and parents.
- Decatur Focus provides good information to residents
- City government reaches out to neighborhoods when there are development issues that may affect them
- Red Alert system provides timely warnings to residents
- City Twitter feed provides good information updates
- Sanitation service handouts given to residents
- Crime report e-mail service
- Decatur 101 course provides valuable information about City government
- ING marathon traffic management information was communicated well
- Festival banners along Scott Blvd. are good advertising for Decatur events
- City needs to do better in reaching out to businesses and churches regarding development and historic district issues
- Mayor needs to update blog more frequently
- City should do more blogging along lines of Decatur Metro Blog
- City needs to do better job of providing follow up on results of various meetings (e.g., cultural arts task force), good at announcing them but not at providing information on results

- City needs to redesign website to make it more user friendly (hard to search for information) and make sure is updated regularly
- Website should include easily found online directory with contact information for City departments and other services residents may need, directory should include description of what each City department and volunteer board does
- Better signage for public parking is needed
- More visible directory of businesses on Square and in other areas of City
- Better control of flyers and other plastic wrapped papers thrown on resident's property
- Remove or change "Come Back Soon" sign at East Ponce de Leon and Commerce
- Decatur Focus is good but only monthly
- Neighborhood listserves
- www.decaturga.com
- Indecatur.com and other local websites?
- Oakhurst Neighborhood Association Newsletter
- Winona Park Newsletter
- AJC Metro section
- School and Church newsletters
- Civil Defense warning, robocalls, weather sirens
- Decatur 101 Class
- Volunteer Decatur - Leigh Ann Harvey is fantastic!
- Social networks--Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
- Can a city-wide listserve be developed and moderated by the city with areas of specific interest?
- Maybe try an experiment with TV/Public Service Announcements
- Current city website is hard to navigate and cumbersome
- Make more user-friendly
- Section for recent news items
- posts from citizens
- Try YouTube videos similar to the ones used for the Strategic meetings
- Videos on the website
- Flyers
- Open city hall - post more issues or agendas
- City management can meet more frequently with community groups
- Sandwich boards at major intersections, as needed, to communicate pertinent info
- Publicize how to get on commissions agendas
- City is very responsive to individual emails from citizens so this should continue
- Encourage citizens to reach out to city reps or to the commission

- Community message boards should be encouraged
- Update and publicize minutes from HOA or community meetings
- Liaisons from community groups to meet with city management and commissioners
- Talk with neighbors/get to know them and drive a sense of community
- Community events and BBQs with a neighborhood
- Encourage adults to get to know the neighborhood and the kids in the neighborhood
- Internet
- provide opportunity to vent but sometime too much
- blog is a good exchange sometimes
- for example, who to contact on certain issues/informative responses
- Festivals, Oakhurst Jazz nights
- Neighborhood blogs to move citizens to action
- Referrals on blogs (for local contractors, etc.)
- Yahoo Message Groups
- 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.
- 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
- Ongoing status updates on major initiatives
- Clickable Google map
- Non emergency opt in?
- Open City Hall
- Connections via Internet are good
- Received info about Round Tables in multiple ways, which is good, and it was announced more than once
- Wish there was a city newspaper
- Decatur Focus is good
- Need information booth (for visitors) in more prominent location than currently (in City Hall somewhere), staffed with volunteers
- Decatur 101 is great for knowledge exchange, but needs to be held more frequently.
- May need town hall meetings, good way to get face-to-face resolution on difficult topics; hold open meeting 1-2x year with open agenda, less structure than City Commission meetings

- 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)
- Open City Hall good way to solicit information
- Ensure we figure out how to bring widening income gap into the conversation, e.g. college heights did this with parents.

- Use festivals to gather and discuss issues. Example have a tent and do a mini City Hall type gathering
- Have a single point of contact for citizens to air concerns and then route appropriately to ensure follow up
- Demonstrate impact of volunteering so people understand how they can make a difference. Results are an incentive to people at the
- Average citizen may not have to get involved.
- There seems to be a feeling of apathy in general - society as a whole (not meaning Decatur in particular)
- At the individual level it can seem overwhelming. How do we overcome that?
- Need to show what's in it for me.
- Need to have in person meetings to bring people out.
- Consider issues brought up through roundtables and ensure groups in place longer term to address
- Effective communication is key. People need to feel heard and be followed up with.
- City needs to be honest. People often distrust government. Lack of trust.
- Ensure we make decisions for long-term even if painful for the short term
- Consistently urge people to stay involved. Use this roundtable as a way to launch.
- 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
- Newcomers / long-timers: "soft barriers" to overcome between these two groups
- Round tables, volunteer structure, newsletters -- all help connect
- Suggestion: interactive digital display on the square to invite public comment, "bring it outside our walls"
- City/community bulletin board (the old-fashioned kind), centrally located

- Focus newsletter is effective; information is good, but acting on it is difficult due to transportation issues
- City should encourage neighborhood associations
- Format is a challenge: paper / internet / email
- There is a good information foundation in place
- News sources are blogs, neighborhood meetings, neighborhood newsletters
- Neighborhood meetings in particular provide universal access, "social sustainability"
- Crossroads for information must go "cross platform," (human / digital / print) and therefore must be flexible
- How to capture / share community history? This has strong broad-based interest, esp. from newcomers
- Encourage (market) community participation through Focus announcements, emphasize opportunities for individuals to make a difference (MLK work day is an example)
- Need multiple avenues
- Mobile text--opt in, topic based, used selectively
- Blogs
- Combination of active and passive technologies
- All important communications should go 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
- 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
- Missing 18 and under - apathy on their part, engaged in other tasks
- Level of volunteerism in this group, other organizations, can they be created
- School system and 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 and 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 and more visible
- Decatur Minute - blog form communication, more Twitter style question and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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.
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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, sign up 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 and 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 and bulletin board
- 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
- Decatur Focus - add electronic distribution?
- DeKalb Neighbor and similar publications - uneven distribution
- Neighborhood newsletters - like ONA and WPN
- City Commission meetings
- Directed audiences - demographic, issue oriented, etc.
- Town Hall meetings
- Voice mail - incoming "hot line" and outgoing announcements (e.g Code Red)
- Outdoor signs
- Utilize schools and neighborhood associations to disseminate information
- Utilize Active Living department and attendees
- Facebook and Twitter
- Blogs

- Teleconferencing
- Telephone information line
- Kiosks
- Library and street
- Visitor and resident
- Interactive
- City information
- Directions
- Volunteer and service opportunities
- QandA that would be forwarded to a staff person if necessary
- Physical bulletin boards
- City radio station
- Limited range broadcast
- Internet
- 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
- Better use of website
- On time delivery of Focus
- Phone Tree
- Email tree
- Neighborhood Liason
- Decatur GA.com banner posted at Avondale
- Sign post banners with website info
- Have ongoing roundtables (facilitated)
- Meet ups at casual places to discuss topics
- Town meetings (are there current meetings that are "open" but don't encourage participation?) too formal
- Better publicity about how to participate- make the information easy to find
- Use low tech call trees as well as high tech internet, webinars, conference calls
- (ex. Rep. Stephanie Stuckey Benefield called the whole district)
- Get everyone in Decatur a computer (at least to borrow)
- Decatur wi-fi needs to work reliably
- Use written newsletters also (need to be timely so postings are not after the event)
- Distribute information in person, by phone calls, online, print, community bulletin boards (one in Oakhurst and in Decatur square but not used)
- Consistent, redundant, timely information in multiple places
- Project information (literally with a film projector) on the sidewalk to get attention
- Phone app, Decatur phone app
- 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, at parks/pools, wherever people congregate, on the square, at 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

Citizen to citizen communication

How do we create ways for citizens to better communicate with each other? How can we take advantage of the internet and foster other healthy conversations?

- Consider Neighborhood Plan Units like Atlanta has
- (Not everyone in agreement on this idea [NPU] because sometimes hard to get things approved, but others said it would give neighborhoods a more formal structure)
- Term limits
- New emergency call system (Code Red) works well
- Patty Garrett- (good communication) via website and letter
- strengthen neighborhoods organizations especially in lower income neighborhoods
- connect major organizations to work together; establish quarterly meetings of all organizations leaders
- engage religious organizations

- A weekly digest of city news and announcements - both in print and online
- Publicize other city news as well as the city publicizes festivals.
- Expand on the Decatur Focus. The Parks & Rec section is always huge. Why not do the same with other city information?
- The city could provide tools and support for establishing, growing and sustaining neighborhood groups and associations.
- The city could be more proactive in communicating or visiting with neighborhood groups and associations. Right now, it seems that they are responsive - but not proactive.
- The improved city website might include a section specifically for neighborhood groups and associations.
- Feature citizens with particular expertise (e.g., a teacher or a landscape architect) and tie their insights to broader city issues.
- Ways that citizens can communicate with each other:
- The group recognized that the city already does a lot to foster communication among citizens.
- The grapevine is a key medium for citizen-to-citizen communication but what is often missing is the facts.
- Citizen-to-citizen communication might be improved if the city produced more information about particular issues. Access to facts helps reduce rumors.
- Keep churches in the information loop. They are key places where neighbors gather and talk.
- How about a network of community bulletin boards?
- How about a mini-version of Decatur 1010 - like a lunch-n-learn format?
- Convene periodic roundtables focused on particular issues. It's a great format so why limit its use to once a decade?
- A city-wide network of phone trees?
- Teenagers
- Senior citizens - especially those who are homebound.
- Those who do not have ready access to the Internet, email etc
- People who live in low-income housing
- Non-property owners
- Local business owners
- Young professionals without kids

How do we involve others?

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

- 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 Fesitvals.
- 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.
- Non Technical People
- 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.
- Little old ladies and other elderly residents
- Lower income residents
- Students at Agnes Scott, Columbia Seminary
- Convention goers and other large group visitors
- Work with churches and schools to reach elderly and students, work with senior living centers as well
- Make sure Focus is delivered to renters as well as homeowners
- Put Focus out for public distribution like Creative Loafing, etc., use libraries, churches, Holiday Inn

- Put emphasis on getting information about Decatur and its businesses to convention goers and other large group visitors like DeKalb Convention and Visitors Bureau does, use new Tourism Board for this
- Add "know your neighbor" segment to Focus and website to highlight individual residents
- Seniors and those not Internet savvy may be missing out
- Some still use phone books
- Need to use all the different media to reach those not using the newest technology
- Reach out to youth to participate in city planning efforts
- For example, get them involved in thinking about the city in the future and their ideas
- Establish something that is exclusive/tailored to youth- input/exchange program with the city
- 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 (Group felt like they had already answered first part of question)
- Teens and young adults (may be missing)
- Make it fun or rewarding
- Beer for Votes
- Those not on the Internet
- City could provide a mobile digital library, a "technology bus" that would go to people who need access and/or help learning to use Internet, digital tools.
- African American community
- Retirement homes (Phillips, Clairmont Oaks, Sunrise)
- Maybe these groups are involved but many are not aware of it
- Is the city providing enough info to private business helping them know all the needs that are not being met in the community?
- Focus groups to low income housing; educate to increase capacity
- Engage leaders outside the community who specialize in this (such as Beverly last name? at Spellman College)
- Low incomes inhibit ability to participate in many Decatur events/activities
- Engage Decatur Education Foundation (Gail Rothman)
- 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
- not in my backyard issues
- commercial / residential clash
- There should be communication in advance
- Enforcement of ordinances
- Seniors, people have not transportation
- People that are physically and mentally not able
- Young not involved 20 somethings
- Are business owners involved
- 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 teenager 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.
- Use social events to spread the word and ask for involvement
- Try to target information - many people say they already get too much information
- Share your own experiences and tell others about your satisfaction
- Make it easy to respond
- Decatur Focus articles and columns

- Coming events
- Volunteer opportunities
- Feedback from previous participants
- Event photos highlighting individual effort
- Welcome wagon
- Coordinate with agents and management companies to identify newcomers
- Newcomer's kit of information
- One-on-one community knowledge mentor
- ASK ! One-on-one
- 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
- Meet in neighborhoods/places where all people feel comfortable like parks, schools, rec. center, churches
- Use brief postcard surveys to collect info, low tech
- Use many modes
- Offer rides to meetings for seniors
- Have neighborhood surveys person to person, groups of volunteers to knock on doors in their community, would foster relationships
- Multiple block parties/living room parties on same day
- Is there funding for block parties?
- Google groups or the like for small neighborhoods so the community is broken into manageable numbers. The city could inspire this so all neighborhoods have it. Then people could tap into an existing framework and get guidance.
- The government helps foster communication between the citizens themselves
- Encourage city-wide happy hour/pie hour- everyone gets out into the street at a designated time to meet each other. Or lemonade day.
- The city can foster opportunities and some people will participate.
- Have a free day before trash amnesty day. Everybody puts out "usable trash" near the curb so others can browse. A formal trash swap.
- We like the door hanger (public works dates), it could be expanded
- The week before electronics recycling day should be for the collection of working electronics. A freecycle day in Decatur. Make it easy- curb or drop off area or both, volunteer pickups

- The government can be a central idea communicator and celebrate and inspire and co-opt good ideas
- Create neighborhood ambassadors so very small groups are represented (not just neighborhood associations)
- No one comes to budget meetings- don't know how to get involved. Are people intimidated by place or scope of topic? Could we answer brief surveys or have small topical meetings?
- Break the budget into small topics and the public needs to be informed that the information is accessible and people friendly. Not just meetings. Use website conferences and polls. Make it clear that people's opinions matter
- Tax bills could include a response card survey! It would remind people that their input determines how the money is spent. Post the results and how their money was spent. Mail or drop off the card. (Facilitator note: This is in red because the group requested I circle it in red pen; it had lively support.)
- Cartoons/visual make the budget areas more understandable. Provide a broad overview.
- Have roundtables at dinner time (7 pm) and get local business to donate snacks or gather at a restaurant and provide/promote appetizers in exchange for people eating there during the meeting
- Some meetings should have childcare available/considered. Is church-offered childcare an option?
- Neighborhood ambassadors come to meetings to help provide a presence, build relationships and facilitate

General ideas about connectedness

These were general ideas about how Decatur could have more effective communication and find common ground more easily.

- 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.
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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.
- City's Online Open Forum - good way to communicate
- 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.
- 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.
- Decatur News Online
- This is a good source
- 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?
- 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.
- 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.
- Need to make information available on how to connect - a central source for finding out.
- Availability of computers for all
- Make it easy and clear about how to connect.
- The city website should have a box telling where to get info or who to contact about issues -- also where to get printed information.
- The volunteer coordinator is a good thing - helps people get involved
- Round table-type conversations are good -- need to have them more often. Twice a year?
- Perhaps the Commission could have some regularly schedule "Open Agenda" meetings so people can come and voice their concerns.
- Commission meetings need to be physically more casual. More open conversation type meetings so the commissioners have more opportunities to LISTEN to citizens.
- 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
- 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
- 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)
- 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)
- 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
- Know your neighbors
- (Create) a directory of names and addresses. If everyone doesn't respond to email, knock on their door.
- Layout of neighborhood (is key), more sidewalks more communication
- Sponsor block parties
- Websites, Monday socials, movie night, margarita parties, book clubs, wine and cheese parties
- (Find things) to attract all ages
- Public disclosure, forums (for discussion), closure (around projects and initiatives)
- (Find) what we can all agree on
- Face to face communication early on (is important) i.e. school closings and other controversial issues
- (Create) block captains and use as source of information
- (Create) a phone tree or Google group
- yahoo list serves
- neighborhood associations
- newsletters
- Maybe a Decatur Welcome packet could be created including:
- list of parks [welcome packet]

- utilities[welcome packet]
- list of restaurants[welcome packet]
- supply a few sanitation bags and the schedule[welcome packet]
- info on the library[welcome packet]
- numbers for police, fire and code red[welcome packet]
- explain warning sirens[welcome packet]
- disaster preparation plans and instructions[welcome packet]
- Cliff bus info/maps[welcome packet]
- Voting info[welcome packet]
- Places of worship[welcome packet]
- Event schedules[welcome packet]
- Volunteer opportunities[welcome packet]
- School info[welcome packet]
- Local websites like Decatur Metro etc.[welcome packet]
- Decatur Rec Center info[welcome packet]
- Decatur Business Assoc could buy ads[welcome packet]
- Maybe a shorter "Decatur Info Card" sent with focus
- 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
- Political campaign and meeting of candidates
- Groups by Geographical boundaries, by Interest
- Groups by age groups, family & children, vs. single & no children
- By school districts (geographical boundaries)

- Formalize role and purpose of subgroup eg neighborhoods, interest, so citizens are interested in giving input, requires the City to listen to citizens
- Need to help the City to listen
- Roundtables to occur more frequently than every ten years
- Continuing constructive dialogue
- Getting to know your neighbors "I use to know all my neighbors, now I only know 4"
- Cater to different ways of socializing with neighbors
- Interest groups often have single point of view, narrow focus
- Get a cross section of interest, view points, diversity of views
- Electronic/website/blogs, only reaches a sector of the population that is connected and interested
- 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
- Ways to build and maintain common ground even on difficult issues:
- On contentious issues - insure that all stakeholders, neighbors etc are involved in conversation.
- Provide many opportunities for stakeholders to express their ideas and opinions prior to decisions.
- The conversation process should be initiated and managed by the city, not by a particular group of stakeholders.
- Meetings for conversation and discussion should precede meetings or hearings for decision-making.
- Conversations on difficult issues should start with a presentation of facts by the city.
- The city could provide neutral facilitators (perhaps even citizen volunteers) for these kinds of conversations.
- If citizens know in advance what is the process for engaging difficult issues, then they are more like to participate.
- Ways to encourage all kinds of people to be involved in public life:
- For city-run boards and committees, there are already waiting lists, so it would be necessary to create more opportunities for involvement.
- Work intentionally to educate citizens about what boards and committees exist and what they do.
- Publicize the new 10-year plan heavily and highlight specific ways that citizens can assist or contribute.

- Publicize more aggressively the opportunities to serve.
- Use the Decatur Focus to communicate opportunities to serve on boards and committees, etc
- Actively recruit participants from neighborhood groups and associations.
- The medium for publicizing opportunities is an important consideration, too. Online information is good but there should be other media to reach diverse groups. Print information is still important. Person-to-person contact is important, too.
- Use neighborhood groups and associations to develop volunteer leaders.
- It would be great to have a local Decatur radio station as a medium for communicating to citizens about events and opportunities.
- 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 solicit 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 indecatr 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
- RSS for hot topics- land use, when hot ticket issues are happening people want to know about it before it affects them.
- Town hall meetings/small group gatherings
- Neighborhood groups
- #NAME?
- Conflict Resolution System
- Continue to have open communication from city to citizens
- Blogging
- We can learn from Hands on Atlanta's website how to successfully communicate volunteer opportunities

- Decatur Focus is good, but sometimes is distributed after volunteer opportunities, events occur - dated material
- City's website is not always updated or current
- suggested "rolling" sign-up for volunteer opportunities and direct contact, communication from Volunteer Coordinator
- Create and Distribute a "Decatur Handbook" for new residents - a "welcome wagon" geared to educate and plug-in new residents quickly
- Volunteer Decatur email blasts not widely known or used
- On-line volunteer sign-up form
- physical posting of volunteer opportunities at City Hall and Public Library
- Coordinate communication and advertisement of city activities, groups, volunteer opportunities with issuance of library card
- City successfully utilizes signs and banners to advertise
- Blogs/Open City Hall can be a good thing, but animity can be bad - electronic communications and blogs cannot replace the effectiveness of one-on-one communications and person-to-person meetings, conferences
- Website, blogs, electronic communications get the conversation started, but must be followed up with person-to-person communications
- City should involve businesses to host issue focused conversations, events
- City should work more with groups, especially neighborhood associations to get conversations started
- City could encourage "block captains" to involve individual streets, neighborhoods that then plug into larger groups/neighborhood associations
- Seniors may not be as connected to community and technology
- There is an absence in the City of interaction between the young and senior residents
- YMCAs would be a good focus for the City to partner
- City needs to inventory existing sources and build capacity, resources
- Refugee outreach is missing and leads to self-reinforcing stereotypes
- Disabled groups are not incorporated into the city
- opportunities to outreach, communicate, recruit and partner with religious institutions - although there is a feeling from some within neighborhood associations that such partnerships violate separation of church and state
- Deliver Decatur Focus to Companies, local businesses, MARTA, hospitals to reach non-Decatur citizens
- Decatur should have an outdoor bulletin board

- In this process, we are having productive conversations and making important decisions together. What are some other Decatur ways to build and maintain common ground, even on difficult issues where we can't reach agreement?
- Meeting with each other (it was noted by several members that face-to-face meetings or conversations greatly enhanced communication when there are difficult issues)
- Open forums
- Community meetings to discuss issues
- City budget walk-thrus
- Internet - Use of the city website
- Send mailings; for example, flyers on important issues
- Billboard announcements around town of important events or issues that need community feedback
- Sandwich boards could be utilized to communicate info for meetings, etc.
- Do not imbed important info in the Decatur Focus magazine as some only scan the issues
- More individualized communications when there is more desired participation
- Communicate thru City Blog
- Participation in Council meetings
- Make sure that those that are indirectly impacted are actively brought into discussion of issues
- Town Halls where the community can raise issues
- Quarterly or twice a year
- Special meeting as the situation warrants
- Greater leveraging of community group
- For example, city hall reps meet with presidents of groups
- Solicit neighborhood volunteers
- Flyer creation
- Communication thru the churches
- One issue that was raised was the need for more discussion on the hours or recreational facilities; it was noted that Glen Lake Park (I think) was only open for a very short period of time.
- Bring different sides of the city together for less of a 'cultural divide'
- for example, more discussion between the north side and Southside communities
- Find a way to bring city together with Boys and Girls Clubs
- Community center billboards
- On-line ability to weigh-in on issues, for example, a kind of 'open city hall'

Individual change

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

- Visual vehicle, pedicab
- Get out of car and 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
- Talent inventory for individuals and business in Communities, database
- MLK projects - how do you expand, use same model for other projects, other needs, legal, fundraising, etc.
- 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.
- 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
- 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
- Control of trees on one property (cutting/trimming for safety reasons) should not be over-regulated by the City
- Obey city quality of life ordinances (e.g., don't park cars, boats, or RVs in front of House
- Report violations of such ordinances to code enforcement
- Start petition asking for needed change
- Take advantage of opportunities for public comment at various community meetings
- Be informed and involved
- Communicate with city commissioners and other city employees about questions and concerns
- Create or join neighborhood associations and other civic organizations
- Believe your voice is important (City can help with this by reaching out to ask for input from all residents)
- Use Facebook, Twitter, etc. to publicize to residents and non-residents Decatur events and news
- VOLUNTEER!
- Pick up trash off streets and sidewalks, trim branches that interfere with sidewalks and other public right of ways
- Know your neighbors, walk around neighborhood and make effort to meet people
- Use public and other alternative transportation modes whenever possible
- Further education
- Register and vote
- Pick up trash
- Report problems to appropriate authorities (tree down, pothole, broken parking meter, etc.)
- Walk more
- Bike more
- Shop locally
- Eat locally
- Welcome new neighbors into Decatur activities, processes, Boards, etc.
- Stay informed
- Volunteer
- Take part - don't just sit back
- work to find out what opportunities are out there
- Talk to right person, for example, a commissioner
- Run for commissioner or other elected position
- Gather community support for particular issue

- Got to commission meetings and participate in discussions
- remind neighbors of rules, send reminders
- Work to engage people in volunteer activities
- skilled trades, professional services
- Accounting skills can be offered
- Commissioners - run for political office
- Offer classes to the community
- Computer repair
- SAT prep
- basic computer classes
- languages
- sign language
- legal and tax assessment processes - how to challenge and drafting statutes
- nutritional
- gardening
- exercise
- Signing at commission meetings
- City to offer classes on how to navigate website
- Willing to help the city re-design their website to be more user friendly
- Tutoring students
- Make citizens aware of volunteer opportunities
- list on website
- Classified section for volunteers, need screening process
- 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."
- 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 and Girls clubs, East Lake)
- A focus group of those who do not get involved
- Individual
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Educate that one person can make a difference
- Educate on process and where you can go to get changes
- (Make) environmental changes
- Practice what you preach-be a voice
- Donate land for community gardens
- Continued involvement in Strategic Planning
- Read outcomes (from Strategic Planning)
- Come (to meeting) in August
- Volunteer
- Talk it up, publicize, ask (drag) friends and neighbors
- Know one's neighbors
- Be informed, stay on top of things, be aware of what's going on
- Be involved
- Participate in green solutions

- Vote
- Walk more
- Attend/support community functions
- Patronize local businesses
- Invite others to be involved, to join in
- We are here
- Showing up
- Conversation partner for people learning English
- Continue to participate in this process
- find your passion/niche and volunteer
- call/visit city officials offices
- be a good neighbor/organize an event
- Be an ambassador of what you do know and share it with your neighbors
- Challenge naysayers 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)
- Encourage others with issues and concerns to get involved. Tell your neighbor to call the City if they have an issue.
- Need to engage lower income and more "senior" seniors, single parents etc. Go the extra mile.
- Consider home visits and neighborhoods canvassing to ensure all have been given the opportunity to participate.
- Do post cards to sign up people for City newsletter (electronic).
- Have more interactive website where people can share and react.
- City should take charge of abandoned and poorly maintained properties.
- Drive connectivity so people understand how this impacts and get them excited
- examples high school garden, Oakhurst community garden, encourage idea/action entrepreneurs; put spotlight on hometown heroes
- Personal mission: recruit a Trader Joe's in Oakhurst -- let someone make this a project!
- Tap into professional talents within residents -- raise awareness of available boards and commissions -- "Luca for DDA board!" (Seriously, he would like to see / help make McDonough Street into Decatur's Champs-Elysees.)

- Senior citizens telling their stories at monthly social events in conjunction with DeKalb History Center and the local library; or at a new senior center
- Constructive input
- Make the City know
- 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.
- 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
- 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

- 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
- Ask your neighbors what they need
- Compost and recycle
- Plant flowers
- Walk instead of drive
- Eat dinner with my neighbors
- Keep it personal -- Own It
- Promote boot camp for mature adults
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Take the initiative to find out the facts on particular issues.
- Align their skills and interests with what is needed for the city's strategic plan.
- Take part in Decatur 1010 and the other citizen academies.
- Be proactive in sharing what they know about what is happening in the city.

- Be willing to put in time and commitment on an issue.
- Encourage and organize the groups and organizations where they belong to make contributions to the city's strategic plan.
- Teach their children how to engage with their neighbors and as citizens.
- 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
- 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
- Be fact sheet researcher for city on issues that people are interested in and sometimes
- 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
- Contribute time and money
- Resource conservation and preservation
- Be a Decatur ambassador and marketeer
- Provide constructive feedback
- Listen to the community - report and inform
- The volunteer database needs to be fleshed out.
- Particular skills and knowledge available

- Use "Welcome Wagon" to collect data
- Establish a Leadership Decatur
- Include Citizens-at-large in strategic planning meetings and presentations
- Citizen involvement in selection of strategic planning consultant
- Publish a list of action/noaction items derived from this process (nobody knows what the 1998 list was)
- Provide regular status updates in Decatur Focus and other means
- Publish a FAQ for each phase of the process
- 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
- Ambassadors
- Block party host
- Be present at meetings
- Search out ways to be involved
- Encourage each other to get involved- go in groups
- Act like a small town and watch out for each other (kids, in particular)
- Do more and don't consider involvement a burden
- Participate in budget process
- Get involved in government (want accessible situations) City of Decatur- please make it easy to find out where to go
- Take small chunks like Decatur City 101
- Host a block party
- Find my neighborhood association
- Volunteer again (and avoid burnout)
- A participant says thanks to Lee Ann Harvey for soliciting and coordinating volunteers (but others don't know how to contact her or get on her list). Some participants didn't know this resource existed so didn't know to look for a volunteer coordinator
- Go to website
- volunteer, talk to neighbors, participate on a citizen board, vote, attend community and City meetings

- Things missing or that prevent individual involvements: work commitments, minimum time commitments (should offer the opportunity for split volunteer shifts or shorter commitments), child care, food
- What pulls people out? Building a safe environments, child care, time of the day (conducting City meetings at night is a positive and should be continued), weekends offer more time flexibility, a sense of urgency for the topic or issue, a "shame on me" or peer pressure if I don't participate, brief commitment of time
- get local businesses to fund volunteer opportunity advertisement, event/festival promotion
- Venue drives participation - a kids-oriented at ice cream parlors
- meet people where they are - what are you interested in, what are your talents
- 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.
- Volunteering to help at events is a good way to support the city and get involved
- Ways to Volunteer
- Schools
- Festivals
- Show up at events - attendance
- Support Farmer's Market
- 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
- 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

What are the many types of formal and informal organizations? How could these organizations and other groups of citizens make a difference?

- Small groups or businesses can sponsor "tea and 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 and 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)
- Be a sponsor/supporter
- Organize volunteers within the organization
- Disseminate information to member/customers
- ASK
- Provide skills and expertise that may be unique to the organization and/or individuals
- Provide appropriate political and lobbying support
- City of Decatur tech person available for neighborhood association. A go-to tech person
- Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs
- Neighborhood associations, garden clubs, example--adoption and improvement of common spaces like gardens in traffic islands
- Decatur Business Association and related activities on The Square--concerts, Beach Party, Beer and Wine Festivals, Holiday Tour of Homes and Garden Tours
- Friends of the Library
- Friends of the Cemetery
- 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 Debco.

- 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.
- DBA - Businesses have a vested interest in maintaining a healthy city.
- Decatur Education Fund
- PTA
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Can citizens “interest” groups be set up to lead the way on issues?
- We need to look at the way involvement by individuals/patrons can get businesses to do more recycling

- Actual cost/market and incentive-driven changes as well as changes in recycling attitudes are needed to expand recycling. YDFM Recycling business is effective.
- Decatur is a very “grass-roots organizations” type of town. There is not as much chance that a business organization or entity can “railroad” a project through
- Partner with each other, use members for power in numbers
- Partner with schools and other government organizations
- Communicate with residents about what they are doing
- Invite City representatives to speak at their meetings about topics of interest
- Raise money for improvement projects that City may not be able to do or afford
- Get involved in elections to promote candidates that agree with
- Partner with desirable City events as sponsors
- Blogs to communicate issues
- Church organizations can drive change or varying view points
- Place to network with other community groups/partnerships and support one another regarding issues
- Taking part in round tables
- community groups taking responsibility for driving issues, implementing solutions, focusing specific city department issues
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Defry/Art Institute
- 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
- Religious congregations, Neighborhood associations, Friday Rotary group, DBA, Garden clubs, book clubs, running clubs, walking groups, chat rooms, momma groups
- Grass roots efforts
- Inet or face to face
- Nurture leadership and youth involvement
- Business owners: mentoring system
- City wide job bank
- Temp services
- Communicate with other groups, be aware of what each other are doing
- Voice your opinions directly to local officials
- Establish volunteer coordinators in neighborhoods: person who stays on top of things that need doing, people who need help, etc., and rallies neighbors to act
- Establish "regions" by quadrant of the City
- Create a register of groups in the City (example given was a church stewardship handbook, which lets members know all the ways they can get involved)
- Welcome wagons in neighborhoods
- 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
- Bike Decatur is a great example of leveraging power of advocacy

- Basketball groups - Neighborhood pickup games at Oakhurst Park. This is great and informal way to connect residents
- NAVO - another example. The kids hang out after school. Even give out doggie biscuits.
- Neighborhood associations have lots of social activities but need to get them engaged in City issues.
- City police are active in the neighborhood associations, how can the City also engage.
- School board - DHS is a great example of tax dollars at work
- Fix the railroad crossings to encourage all types of residential flow
- Engagement is all about marketing and connectivity. Take the issues and map them back to the orgs/groups that have a "dog in the fight" - find the vested interest.
- Increase partnerships with academic institutions. Emory, DeVry, Agnes Scott etc.
- Opportunity for satellite campus - jobs and opportunities for classes.
- Transportation opportunities - The Cliff or street cars?
- Composting! Tap into Emory's program.
- Hold "speed dating" event for residents to meet local groups
- Boards should encourage and recruit participants
- Plan regular events for sharing concerns, informal town hall meetings
- Publish list of all community events each month
- Publish index of organizations
- Create a social association like DBA
- More D101! Give the people what they want! (referring to well-known waiting list); expand via local broadcast, make podcasts; make it a class elective at DHS
- Make your voice heard
- Create a clearing house for gathering and dispersing information
- Electronic vs printed
- Create ad hoc groups for better communication
- Exposure to the groups
- Electronic posting
- Create a 'Decatur wikipedia' for sharing of information
- City and Institutions to create communication forum
- Do Roundtables more frequently than every ten years
- Blogs is only one way to communicate to a portion of the populace
- Print copies can service various groups
- Decatur focus - good forum to reach out
- 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
- 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
- Get local organizations 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 other 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
- train people on how to assess home energy efficiency; green jobs training though 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.
- Cafe 458 is an example of social entrepreneurship and smart fundraising
- Drive more neighborhood disaster preparedness planning
- 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
- 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
- Nonprofits
- Performance groups
- Book clubs
- Garden clubs
- Other affinity groups (e.g., running groups, neighborhood moms)
- Neighborhood associations
- Business associations
- Friends and neighbors who socialize regularly as a group
- Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts
- Boys & Girls Club
- School clubs and groups
- Civic clubs

- Sports clubs for kids/teens
- Networking groups
- Blog communities
- PTAs
- After-school programs
- Gyms
- YMCA
- Formally ally with the city plan in areas that overlap with their mission.
- Encourage members to be involved in public issues and initiatives.
- Take their work and activities into the public square (e.g., a performance group can practice or perform in public areas).
- Offer "open to the public" events and opportunities.
- Think about ways to contribute to regular annual events in the festival.
- Adopt an aspect or facet of the ten-year strategic plan for the group or organization to work together on over time.
- 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
- 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 and 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
- Book clubs for all that promote all-inclusive adults...like the popular ones for kids at
- 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
- 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.
- Mid-level groups could help spread information and build enthusiasm
- Create a guide to existing organizations like garden and book clubs. Help them find each other.
- City could use groups to spread information and gather information
- For example, there are 25 environmental groups (facilitator note: there is a city worker in the group who states this) in Decatur- who knew? The city can help bring groups together such as garden groups (if they want to be open groups- not forced)
- Give a way for groups to physically interact with each other

- Link groups through like topics for networking opportunities (give them pie- bring your own plate!)
- Do kids and adults have a place for unstructured play?
- Inspire creativity!! (Facilitator Note: participants requested I circle the word creativity in red and add 2 red exclamation points because it had so much support)
- Ex. Everybody "comes out" on Wednesday evening or on a play day. Let fun/games happen.
- Open-ended art, experiment, jam sessions, neighborhood play dates
- Open up listing of groups, advertise groups
- distribute information
- balance w/ due diligence to make sure endorsed, listed groups are true groups
- Wi-Fi, free computers to DHA families
- Focus Newsletter - highlight, spotlight different groups
- very poor focus on the Rec Center - double down on existing resources
- if the City expends resources to cook up new groups it will deprive the city services, Rec Center
- City could guide - keeper of knowledge, facilitate/connect groups
- Central City Contact for groups and work to narrow/consolidate efforts/resources
- Beyond neighborhood group - don't see other groups - don't know where to look
- Light/litte groups - no heap, not so heavy topics/assignments
- no group combines all age groups
- City sponsored square dancing on the square
- have a Rec Center open house to forecast upcoming events - "Rec Night" and involve non-City groups to gauge interest, connect groups and individuals, narrow resources
- Continue to increase partnerships like Agnes Scott, Eddie's Attic, Churches, Boys and Girls Club
- there is a concern from neighborhood groups about partnering with churches because of separation of church and state
- schools should open up resources to the community - fields, gym, cafeteria (especially for seniors), career center
- seniors could teach career classes and cooking in schools to bring together all ages and cultures
- seniors in schools will bridge the gap
- everyone needs a place to bring something, give volunteer - not just take, but contribute
- there are plenty of places in Decatur to volunteer, but folks just need to know where to look
- if everyone is a part it will draw others out
- each neighborhood group should compile a listing of groups within their neighborhood and submit to the City
- priority placement for vetted, validated, established groups - there has to be some type of standard
- group open house - self advertisement w/ one sheet take away
- city does a good job learning from experiences, is not proud or remove and is mission oriented

- 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)
- Centralize and combined efforts
- Follow up, resolution, hold City accountable
- Concession stand at parks and games to put back in schools and community (money raised)
- Senior groups to mine talents and services specific needs
- Oakhurst Community Garden, grants, larger opportunity.
- 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 and other needs for neighborhood watch

Institutional change

How could our institutions like schools, religious congregations, governmental authorities and others make a difference? What kind of partnerships can the City create with partner institutions?

- 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
- 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.
- 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.
- Decatur Cooperative Ministry
- DEAM (Decatur Emergency Assistance Ministry at Holy Trinity
- Churches
- They support DEAM and DCM
- 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?
- City needs to put in more effort to make it affordable for elderly, transitional families, handicapped, working class. More effort for really affordable housing.
- Decatur Housing Authority - make a bigger effort to find ways to house people -- not just build projects, but find ways within neighborhoods.
- Houses and small apartments within neighborhoods for lower income and/or elderly
- Second BIG ISSUE -- Why do we want and/or need diversity???
- It promotes a healthy society
- It is part of our value-system
- It is the kind of community we want to live in
- It de-segregates the community
- The types of people that choose to live in Decatur do not want a homogenized community.
- 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

- Find ways to encourage local recycling businesses.
- Work with Emory and Agnes Scott on various mutually beneficial initiatives/programs
- City should encourage the “Cliff” Emory bus stops in town, tied to commuter parking lots.
- Decatur should work with MARTA and City of Atlanta on working to increase ridership, especially for some key bus routes into downtown, midtown and Buckhead to encourage work commuting via public transportation
- Explore encouraging creation of Van pools for commuting to Emory, CDC, Atlanta
- The City needs to cooperate with regional authorities on issues affecting the town (railroad, state roads through town like Scott Boulevard)
- The city should look at other towns’ “neighborhood stabilization” programs for dealing with blighted properties – to encourage availability of housing/commercial real estate.
- The City should look at a program, such as the City of Atlanta has, for providing for affordable housing for it’s services employees, such as firemen, policemen, teachers – so that they don’t get priced-out of living in the town they work in.
- Joint strategic planning for needed improvements so don't duplicate services (e.g.,
- Agnes Scott and City for cultural arts center)
- School system needs to do better job of communicating with citizens about what is going on with schools and provide more opportunity for public input
- School system needs to do better job of communicating with parents of new students on deadlines, etc.
- School system needs to do better job of promoting itself to community (e.g., test scores, ranking), more easily accessible information on schools on website, some members of group had heard schools were good but had not any proof of that
- Agnes Scott and Columbia Seminary need to be more involved with community in working for needed change and providing information about their activities (e.g., Agnes Scott alarm test done with no prior notice to surrounding residents)
- Businesses/banks to publicize info and issues with flyers in windows, sandwich boards
- Places of worship
- raise important issues
- flyers
- hold community meetings
- make announcements
- School
- youth involvement
- students to take info home
- community group meetings
- Entities partnering to provide meeting spaces

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

- Offer free bikes
- City should invite representatives from institutions to participate in the strategic planning process, to pursue alignment of goals and sharing of resources
- Partner with the City to offer free educational opportunities on variety of topics, e.g., using technology [colleges and universities]
- Internships [colleges and universities]
- City should reach out to institutions to find local talent that can support any or all initiatives
- Churches: can provide social services for the homeless
- Police department should make citizens aware of what they need in the way of support, e.g., neighborhood watches, citizen safety patrols, etc.
- Need a council of churches, a council of non-profits
- are churches and school space being used effectively when not holding a service?
- adopt a greenspace program
- better use of Clairmont Baptist library
- connect churches together maybe one church created something that positively affected the community and another could do the same
- continue connecting leaders to the community and reduce the "adversarial" role that sometimes exists
- establish a town hall meeting
- create a City Hall "open door" week, which encourages residents to go talk to city officials
- have commissioners and other officials go to the neighborhoods.
- A regular event where officials reach out to the community
- Build on the Decatur High School TV/public access program
- Create a "next step" connection This would give info to residents on where to go to take the next step when they have an idea on how to help their community
- Restaurants could cater events on the square instead of bringing in outside vendors
- 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
- City Agnes Scott partnership for the Softball fields - need more things like this.
- City should do regular checkpoints/course corrections and updates on their progress for the Strategic Plan vs. waiting every 10 years.
- More cooperation between city entities. Specifically, eliminate barriers between CoD / CSD. (Note: this came up often)
- Newsstand on the "Piazza," bulletin board for announcements and central place for community-oriented brochures and newsletters of all kinds
- City facilitate citizens to find information
- City as ombudsman, as concierge, provide outreach
- Community outreach coordinator, United Way 'family connection' program,
- Religious institutes partner with the City
- City Church partnership

- For affordable afterschool and other programs
- Social forum with church
- Partnership with communication
- Church as a community center
- Facilitate individuals or groups to post information - bulletin boards both electronic and physical
- Focus groups
- Adults - singles
- Non school age family groups
- Provide Income vs tax relief
- Senior income level
- Annexation - expanding the city's physical boundaries, to increase business tax base
- City and school board partnership
- Parks & recreation, greenways connection between them, look at conservation easement behind residential lots
- 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.)
- 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
- 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

- 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"
- Leverage the strength of larger institutions like Agnes Scott; Eddie and Agnes is a good example; students are a great resource to tap and are a voice for gender equity
- 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
- Continue Partnerships and look for new ones
- Utilize high school auditorium but it is very expensive
- City Schools of Decatur
- Do many of the same things that organizations can do.
- It seems that the schools could work on improving communications. They can also communicate to school families about city issues beyond what is immediately relevant to the schools.
- Be proactive about offering space for use by the broader community (e.g., the new auditorium at DHS).
- Colleges/Universities
- Agnes Scott already does a lot to participate in public life in Decatur.
- Could the Art Institute be more engaged with children and families in the city.
- Could DeVry host a career academy for children and youth?
- It would be great to have closer ties with Emory's cultural arts programs.
- Could Emory bring cultural programming to sites in Decatur? Programs in the performing arts, public health, business, education.
- How could Decatur be a regular partner in Emory's broad range of research? The city could be a site for projects and studies. Perhaps a site for business incubation projects by Goizueta.
- Religious Organizations
- The group recognizes that churches in Decatur already make great contributions to public life.

- [chyrches]Offer their spaces to outside groups.
- Publicize opportunities to be involved in civic issues to their members.
- Have a staff person or member serve as a liaison to the city.
- Choose one thing that they can do to make a difference in their neighborhood or the city as a whole.
- Play an active part in conversations about downtown parking (downtown churches, specifically).
- Create a community garden.
- Provide services that support civic events and initiatives - e.g., parking, childcare.
- Churches can do many of the things named under "Organizations."
- Host "open to the public" events - e.g., First Baptist hosts the electronics recycling days and offers parents' night out periodically.
- 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 [education] in the Focus that is required not sent in on a random basis.
- The annual insert [education] is nice, but it would be better to have a column from central office as a regular part of the Focus
- Agnes Scott 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
- 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
- Institutionalize communication between school, city, and community.
- Provide education on complex issues
- Form partnership with organizations and constituencies
- Apply for and use grants when available

- Promote intergovernmental cooperation
- Allow the use of facilities
- 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
- 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
- Encourage gatherings like movie screenings
- Create city- wide green initiatives- can be small like bring your own dish/non-disposable day/no trash day. Create "ways of being" akin to bring your own bag to the grocery. Create a culture where certain behaviors are expected. (Facilitator note: the participants asked me to underline the previous sentence in red because it had so much support) Ceramic mugs could be common. Real spoons.
- Oakhurst tennis courts should be unlocked (too inconvenient, or have access code)
- City wide coop to encourage green sharing- supplies and equipment (for example REI loans camping equipment) share lawn equipment, utensils for large parties. How can we make sharing easy?
- City parks could have a grown up to organize games and help supervise and facilitate games. Retired volunteers?
- 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
- Clairmont Oaks, Inc.--participation in Tour of Homes and integrate senior living community and through activities on The Square such as concerts, etc.
- Clairmont Elementary Holiday Marketplace
- High School Recycling Day
- Walk and Roll to School
- Agnes Scott--facilities shared with high school and venue for various Decatur activities
- Emory Cliff Bus--free
- DEAM (Decatur Emergency Action Ministry)
- DCM (Decatur Cooperative Ministry)
- 25+ Churches
- Our House
- Hagar House
- Mary Gay House
- DeKalb History Center
- Solarium
- MARTA

- Local and national banks serve as good corporate citizens providing financial sponsorship and staffing for various activities and festivals around town
- DHS sport scores posted in Focus
- Tutoring from Agnes Scott to CSD
- Agnes Scott baby sitters
- Breakdown walls between institutions, citizens, and 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.

Website Ideas

A number of citizens offered ideas and comments on the Decatur Next website. Here are their ideas and comments, from Feb. 18 to July 26.

Ili Nilsson says:

February 18, 2010 at 2:40 pm

I am so excited that this forum will be happening again...although I can't believe it has already been 10 years! My husband's office was part of the 2000 consulting team that helped the city develop its last plan and it was then that we became aware of Decatur and made the decision to move here.

As a resident, active member of the community and local business owner contributing to the housing market through my work, I am looking forward to having a voice in the continued growth of our wonderful city!

Thank you for the opportunity!

Patricia Enloe says:

April 8, 2010 at 8:19 am

As a family that has been in Decatur since 1913, we understand the transitions that Decatur has gone through. We also understand that as we reach retirement age, the City taxes are a challenging part of our retirement planning.

We certainly understand the plight of all tax based supported entities at this point. In our plan to go forward, I think it is time to go back and look at what the city charter, bylaws, ie the founding document of the City require, and look at going forward under some guidelines.

Time for wish list and give me programs have to be evaluated. Many, many of our citizens have seen major changes in their financial inputs and are making drastic changes. It is time to go forward looking at our opportunities and challenges from a different perspective.

Sara Yurman says:

April 14, 2010 at 3:46 pm

I'd really like to talk about bicycle transportation. Just a few of the items in the transportation plan would make a huge difference in livability. We need it. That lane that's supposed to go around Commerce. That would be just lovely.

Jane Stebbins says:

May 7, 2010 at 9:41 am

I am delighted Decatur is focusing on transportation issues. While I do drive, I prefer to bike, and considering how much less space bicycles and other forms of non-automated transportation take up, I think encouraging biking and skating is a good way to minimize congestion and parking issues. Providing bikers (and skaters) safe and recognized places to ride, including designated lanes and racks, can only improve the overall community.

Neil Norton says: May 7, 2010 at 9:36 pm

Distances I travel in Decatur are typically between 1-3 miles, perfect for biking, but sometimes too much for a walk. I also like the idea of electric shuttles (large golf carts) and/or pedicabs on weekends to and from parking areas and up and down Ponce and between Downtown and Oakhurst to help the elderly, people with kids, and just plain ole tired. Parking requirements are tricky, but definitely need to be looked at in the downtown area, on one hand they crowd out green space and innovative design but on the other protect neighborhoods from parking overflow. Perhaps we can look at other comparable downtown areas that have successfully addressed this issue and list the solutions.

Rick Hewatt says: May 12, 2010 at 3:06 pm

Decatur needs to take a look at its taxicab ordinances. It is out of date and does not allow taxicab companies outside of Decatur to try and compete for service. Its restrictive nature does not allow the citizens of Decatur to get the transportation service they deserve. The insurance requirements are also out of date and could lead to public safety problems. It's time for Decatur to get in to the 21st century and not prevent healthy competition. The city now will not let you operate a taxi operation unless you have a location in the city limits of Decatur. We regularly get calls for Decatur, so there must be a need. Wake up Decatur! Change your taxicab ordinance!

Mike Gerke says: May 15, 2010 at 6:25 pm

All modes of transportation can coexist, but it seems to me that all modes of transportation need to be RE-educated. I am a cyclist. There, I said it. I do walk 25% of the time. I have a driver license, own a motor vehicle, insure and drive it once or twice a month...maybe. By the things I hear shout at me while cycling, and the way some drive when they encounter, e, many drivers do not know the actual Georgia / USA laws. Many cyclists do not follow ANY rules, some just break some rules? Pedestrians Jay walk, stand on corners without the intention of crossing, and walk when NO WALK is on. We ALL need to know what is legal, expected, and the civil way to coexist.

Michelle Page-Rivera says: May 18, 2010 at 8:24 pm

Several neighbors had a discussion the other day of the need for expanded bike lanes and introducing the use of pedestrian electric carts (similar to golf carts) as replacement to vehicles. Most of us prefer to do our grocery and retail shopping, dining out and engaging in recreational activities within the Decatur city limits but find ourselves behind the wheel of a car to get there. It would be great if we could encourage families to leave the car at home and make use of alternative and creative forms of public transit (bike, walk, electric vehicles, shuttle). I would like to see Decatur become known as a "green" city and serve as a model for other similar cities in the country. This would be one step toward getting us there.

Robert F. says: May 19, 2010 at 2:56 pm

I've noticed a fair number of round table suggestions to close off Ponce downtown to cars, between Commerce east and Commerce west. I have no doubt that these are well intentioned suggestions that reflect our residents' commitment to and enjoyment of walking as a form of transportation, but I urge the city to avoid this approach.

All across America right now are cities paying solid tax money to rip out failed downtown pedestrian malls and return them to through-traffic use. Pedestrian malls cut off or limit diversity of access,

slowly starving retail until it can no longer operate and then, as businesses close, removing the very reason downtowns are active and exciting to begin with.

Think what happened to Sycamore once MARTA closed it off. It went from being a nicely active retail street to a ghost town, and has only partially recovered through some fairly expensive enhancements by the city and a good mix of destination restaurants — something you can't count on to last forever. Without these, it would still be suffering.

There are examples of pedestrian malls that have worked, but they require some very specific circumstances to do so: They need solid densities, typically in excess of what Decatur offers; they need far heavier tourist traffic than Decatur receives, that come here for reasons other than just a ped mall; and they have to offer additional commercial streets through town to absorb businesses that can't, or don't want to, survive on tourists and rollerbladers. Since we no longer have Sycamore as a commercial alternate, closing Ponce would essentially kill downtown commerce, while increasing traffic on our other streets.

Like I said, I think the suggestion is well intentioned and I'm a big supporter of making cars behave so downtown continues to thrive and attract peds, bicyclists and other non-motor users. But there are better ways to accomplish this than sticking it to local business.

The city should maintain its commitment to Complete Streets, road diets, etc., to increase livability.

Ava says: May 19, 2010 at 7:56 pm

Please, let's add some bike lanes on Church Street north up to Glenlake Park (and then elsewhere around the city as well). Decatur is simply not bike-friendly right now, despite the fact that we always hear about biking as an important way to get around.

I know bikers are supposed to take up a lane and follow traffic rules, but doing so is simply too dangerous on most streets leading to/from Decatur (Church, Clairmont, Ponce, and then Commerce). So, like many bikers I am faced with a choice between slowing traffic and endangering myself, or finding some sidewalk or parking lot or side roads or combination thereof to get where I'm going. Bike lanes would solve these problems, allowing traffic to flow and people like me to feel safe enough to ride to/from downtown rather than always drive my car the <1 mile into downtown.

Annie Archbold says: May 21, 2010 at 12:00 pm

This would work if we thought about eliminating cut-through traffic from non-Decatur residents on residential streets and placed bike paths, create environmental barriers (plants, trees, etc.), and logical walking trails within neighborhood arteries. The peripheral streets that are at the city's perimeter that are often ignored, but should serve as the environmental barriers to non-residential traffic giving Decatur a more community feel. This could enable a vigorous biking and walking design to the community and enable the city to model its work nationally. By not dealing with our periphery, we simply do not have a sustainable transportation model.

Nonie Ravenberg says: June 1, 2010 at 10:07 am

I've been surprised and pleased at how much citizen interest and support has been expressed in the round table process for biking as transportation (not just recreation) in Decatur.

I would like to see thoughtful focus on bike lanes planned around specific destinations that encourage biking as transportation, not just a focus on transportation to, from and through downtown. One example cited above is a bike lane from the south to Glenlake Park. I'd suggest also looking at the routes from Decatur to Your Dekalb Farmers Market and Intown Ace Hardware. There were many other suggested routes in the round table notes and I'd like to see a compilation of answers to the question, "Where do you want to go by bike?" even if the start or end point isn't in Decatur.

Terry Brocklehurst says: July 13, 2010 at 1:46 pm

1. Decatur government needs to make a serious, focused, money-where-your-mouth-is effort to get a major retailer downtown. Acquire the land if necessary to make it happen. It is the single biggest and best step the city could take to lift Decatur to the next level of livability and to seed positive growth and atmosphere. Face the reality of our times and economy and discard the failed notion of creating a viable city without chain stores.
2. City government needs to establish a committee to engage, even confront, the tax-exempt entities which take up so much of the city and cost it so much in lost revenue. Devise ways to enable these entities to help and support the community. Something like the "Earn Your Exemption" or "Deserve Your Exemption" or "Give Back" Committee. Begin discussions on an ecumenical center in conjunction with planning to acquire property for attraction of an anchor retailer for downtown.
3. Make it safe & convenient to bike in town.

jennifer katz says: July 15, 2010 at 9:00 am

I feel we should also focus on a billboard or two, highlighting a couple of our larger local businesses. Another idea is to make the free parking lots and times and the addresses of the lots and their costs more visible; it will encourage more people to come, if they know how they can save money and time by parking as they see fit.

Nancie Sill says: July 15, 2010 at 11:13 am

Thank you for the continued opportunity to comment and see others' comments. The City of Decatur transportation plan looks very thorough and very comprehensive particularly related to becoming even more pedestrian friendly at some of the major intersections. It is a lot to read and digest.

I know this will seem like a broken record, but the plan does not seem to alter based on resident feedback on this specific issue which is being driven by Emory University. The residents on Clairemont Avenue do not want a trolley car route established on Clairemont with the threat of widening the street and disrupting our historic district. There seem to be "citizen input" to their plans but I do not think they have included any of the residents that would actually be affected and I would suggest that they do that going forward. I would be happy to participate and so would a number of others.

If Emory would like a trolley route to the Decatur Marta station a more direct route would be through Druid Hills – Clifton perhaps, and up Ponce de Leon which is already much wider and less congested.

Mark Sorensen says: July 15, 2010 at 12:24 pm

If we don't even have curbs on Historic Clairemont to protect pedestrians, how are we even thinking of working towards these bigger goals. MAKE SURE WE GET CURBS BETWEEN DOWNTOWN AND N.DECATUR RD.

It is SO dangerous just south of the YMCA.

How much of the budget can that cost?

Allison Taylor says: July 15, 2010 at 12:52 pm

Please do not forget Church St. Initial improvements and narrowing have been helpful, but I think they not only need to be made permanent, but extended. The changes have not only made pedestrian/biking access safer for those traveling down church or towards the park, but have also slowed traffic turning onto Geneva and Lucerne, making the neighborhood less prone to cut through traffic as well as making things safer for all (especially on Lucerne and Geneva). I know there are concerns about traffic congestion, but as a neighbor that lives close to Church, the change has not appeared to create any unreasonable traffic, and has served to slow a serious speeding corridor.

In addition, if Church street were more pedestrian and bike friendly, I truly believe it would help us to grow businesses on the corridor extending on both sides of Commerce and into the downtown area—something that serves to not only to encourage neighbors to walk and bike, but will also to increase the tax base.

Church St. often seems to be a forgotten area in Decatur, and I think its potential is immeasurable. Improvements will most certainly bring more people and businesses into our city, and will help take pressure off of other highly traveled roads leading into Decatur. Church St. is of great concern to

many, and its improvement will serve to make it a great asset to Decatur.

Thank you for taking the initiative to hear from Decatur residents and the time to process their suggestions, questions, and concerns. I feel very thankful to live in a town that takes residence input so seriously.

Maeve Howett says: July 15, 2010 at 3:43 pm

I love this plan! Especially the idea of bike lanes and the trolley, though would worry about the parking so close to the bike lane on Church—would bikes be knocked by folk opening car doors?

A. Pauley says:

July 17, 2010 at 8:24 am

Almost 3 years ago we were told that the trolley on Clairemont would be removed and once again the new transportation plan includes something on rails for Clairemont. See page 6-23. I don't think anything has changed with regards to our neighborhood and the destruction of historic neighborhoods and all the trees on Clairemont. I can't imagine why you would want to destroy the beautiful and historic entrance to our city? I am sure you wouldn't want to endure years of construction in front of your house, loss of property value, noise, dirt etc.

Light rail will come at a heavy price. If you look really hard at both the cost in dollars – hundreds of millions of dollars per mile as well as the statistics about the number of people who are KILLED by these silent trains then we should look for better alternatives – such as low emission busses – that we can adjust the routes in a heartbeat without construction. Just see how pedestrians just walk out into the streets all over the Emory campus and Decatur and we can name many of the children on our street, mine included, who have been hit by cars on Clairemont and be very wary of such a system.

See the Wall Street Journal article: Light-Rail Addition Comes to Portland at a Heavy Price. Thursday, December 2, 1999.

Please understand that we know that most of the people who are leading this charge do NOT live in these neighborhoods. They drive in from other places. Unless you are willing to have this kind of solution in front of your house – you shouldn't be putting it in front of mine.

Adele Pauley

Delores Thompson says: July 19, 2010 at 7:09 am

The City of Decatur needs more beautification, especially downtown and south of the train track. More greenspaces, yes! But plenty of existing city public spaces (e.g., school grounds, train underpass, public street curbs) could use more landscaping or better tree and lawn maintenance.

City managers should look to towns like Charlottesville, VA, and others that have mastered the whole “Mayberry Meets City Living” concept.

A note to Terry: Not sure how well the chain stores are doing in this economy. It might be hard to attract them with a population of less than 20,000. Charlottesville has several trendy clothing store chains downtown. (There’s also a separate shopping district that feels more like Decatur.) But thanks to the University of Virginia, Charlottesville has a population of about 50,000, most of whom are students.

Also not sure if the majority of Decaturites want chain stores. Perhaps the City should focus on suggestions like Jennifer’s to help promote local business (better parking, better visibility).

Delores Thompson says: July 19, 2010 at 7:25 am

P.S. Beautification is often dismissed as a frivolous expense when resources are limited. This view is short-sighted, however. Beautification increases home values, attracts consumers for our businesses, and contributes to the overall well-being of our residents.

Patricia D. Wilson says: July 26, 2010 at 2:13 pm

Wanted to share two links to great ideas for Decatur’s future:

Here’s one about bikes for hire:<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/has-boris-started-a-cycling-revolution-2033454.html>

And one about banning bottled water and providing public drinking water

instead:<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/has-boris-started-a-cycling-revolution-2033454.html>