



Decatur Round Tables

Session Three Report

From June 1 to June 5, the City of Decatur held the third and final session of its Decatur Round Table discussions, an important step in its 2010 Strategic Plan Update. There were 11 separate meetings in this session, held in different places and different times. 741 citizens attended Session One and the vast majority (78 percent) attended both Sessions Two and Three. In Session Two, participants offered 2,981 ideas and images (in addition to the 2,815 in Session One).

Session Three was focused on two big questions: How can the city strengthen connections between the city government and citizens and among the citizens themselves; and what roles should citizens, organizations and institutions play in improving Decatur? Several of the themes that emerged in earlier sessions reemerged in this one. The most prominent was the desire for more information, delivered in different ways. Another theme was similar: the desire of citizens to be more involved in the city's life as volunteers, informed voters and/or appointees to city boards. Bolstering both of these themes (the desire for more information and greater involvement) was the advice that the city engage new groups in making a stronger city, from obvious ones like the school board and neighborhood associations to less obvious ones, like refugee groups and churches.

There were eight major questions asked in Session Three. Summaries of the citizens' comments for each question are presented on pages 3-6. The complete list of the 2,098 ideas from Session Three begins on page 7.

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 dealt with connections and community roles.

As in Sessions One and Two, the meetings of Session Three 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.

In Session Three, citizens were asked (after introductions) 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?

Major Themes

Here were the major themes that came from discussions on the eight questions.

Desire for more information, delivered in different ways

This desire was made clear throughout Session Three discussions, in answer to most of the questions. 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 suggestions dealt with how to involve others in Decatur's public life. Among them:

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, and publications like Decatur Focus, along with information that might be provided by church bulletins and neighborhood associations, was valuable as well. Here are some specific suggestions:

- Mayor needs to update blog more frequently.
- Try YouTube videos similar to the ones used for the Strategic meetings.
- Can a citywide listserv be developed and moderated by the city with areas of specific interest?
- Create a localized conference call – done on a neighborhood level (based upon address information).
- Church bulletins are another possible way to reach community members who are not currently active (elderly).
- Electronic billboard on city hall and posters in local businesses about upcoming meetings and events.
- Online meetings where people can submit questions.
- It's not good enough for the city to say "information available;" the city should chase us with information.

There were also many suggestions about how citizens could learn through different kinds of meetings and events. Among the ideas:

- Decatur 101: (create an) overview, have more than once a year, (create a) mini version for younger people.

- Have a city volunteer appreciation day with an expo or fair.
- City management can meet more frequently with community groups.
- May need town hall meetings, good way to get face-to-face resolution on difficult topics; hold open meeting 1-2 times a year with open agenda, less structure than City Commission meetings.
- City booths at community block parties with handouts 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.

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 Round Table 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.

Here are some of the ideas that groups offered:

- Work with churches and schools to reach elderly and students, work with senior living centers as well.
- Do speed dating, but for volunteers. (This would be a forum where potential volunteers could learn about and sign up for volunteer opportunities in a rapid-fire process.)
- Welcome wagon: Coordinate with agents and management companies to identify newcomers. (Provide a newcomers kit of information.
- (Offer a) booth at city festivals with info (about the city).
- Offer child care (at city boards and meetings) so more people can participate.
- Commission meetings need to be physically more casual. More open conversation type meetings so the commissioners have more opportunities to LISTEN to citizens.
- City could encourage “block captains” to involve individual streets, neighborhoods that then plug into larger groups/neighborhood associations.
- Maybe create a web site or print item that says, “If you are interested in ‘X’ ... here is your organization.”

- 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.
- Citizen police force.
- 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.
- Citizen-to-citizen communication might be improved if the city produced more information about particular issues. Access to facts helps reduce rumors.
- How about a network of community bulletin boards?

Desire for more and different groups to be involved and effective

This was a theme that came up in the earlier questions in Session Three but surfaced most obviously in the final two questions – about organizational and institutional change. Citizens made two general points. The first was that 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 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. Here are some of the ideas:

- Leverage non-profits that serve those in the community that are least involved (refugee groups) to communicate community events/opportunities for involvement.
- The city should act as a conduit for (existing) 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.
- Do volunteering “as” community – as a group working on a project together rather than solo volunteer opportunities – build community through volunteering together.
- Community groups (should be) taking responsibility for driving issues, implementing solutions, focusing specific city departments on issues.
- 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.
- Facilitate communication between organizations – way for them to come together.

- Each neighborhood group should compile a listing of groups within their neighborhood and submit to the city.
- Need a council of churches, a council of non-profits.

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 listserv 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, signup for secondary phone service for various meetings, etc
- Decatur 101 more than once/year, Decatur 101 in a day, have volunteers so all doesn't have to be run by the city
- Community involvement position to determine creative ways of spreading info
- Missing voices in housing developments, survey/focus groups in neighborhoods, go to those communities to maximize inputs
- Religious organizations, effective ways of reaching out, feedback and volunteer. Eg Decatur Minority Coop
- Concerned about getting seniors involved
- Getting new residents involved early
- welcome packet- come to city hall to get welcome packet, instructions on how to get involved
- get realtors involved
- Info about recycling program in Decatur focus 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 [NPUs] 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 likely 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 indecaturl.com 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
- indentify 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 son 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 through trade association or public/private partnerships
- Look for gaps: there is already a lot of collaboration between organizations like neighborhood associations, Decatur Business Association, Bike Decatur, Parent Teacher Association, cross-church organizations, Keenagers, Decatur Education Foundation, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Oakhurst Community Garden, Farm to School Task Force, D.E.A.M, etc.
- 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.