



DECATUR 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Comments from the “The New Main Street” Community Academy
November 4, 2010

Summary of Ideas

The following key themes emerged from public comments:

- The current split of 85 percent of Decatur’s property tax revenue coming from residential property and only 15 percent from commercial property is not sustainable and has a negative impact on the community’s affordability.
- The portion of city revenue coming from commercial property tax must be increased. Options for doing this may include a combination of:
 - Expanding commercial and mixed-use development in Decatur’s existing commercial districts, including Downtown, Oakhurst, East Decatur Station, and the East Lake MARTA Station area.
 - Annexing nearby commercial districts.
 - Creating incentives and/or removing barriers to encourage business growth.
- Economic growth should be compatible with Decatur’s values and quality of life.
- Local retailers and restaurants are encouraged, but some regional or national companies could complement this mix if designed properly.
- Decatur should build on its economic development strengths and target companies that can capitalize on them. These include the proximity to Emory and the CDC, the arts community, medical resources and needs, higher educational facilities, the courthouse, and a difficult-to-define, but immediately understood “Decatur lifestyle.”

85/15?

Participants began with a number of general comments on the existing tax balance and how to improve it. All tables agreed that the existing mix of 85% of property tax contributed by residential property and 15% of property tax contributed by commercial property was not desirable.

- Too much burden on residents
- Taxes too high
- Average wages of work force in Decatur not aligned with home values in Decatur
- Removing tax burden could enable people to buy more home
- Fix with incentives for certain businesses?
- Consider annexation?
- A 70/30 split would reduce pressure on fixed income
- Target 72/25 in the future
- Advantages of more office/professional users: higher wages, less parking/commuting, retail users
- Opportunities for office/professional users: economies of scale, many things centrally located, collaborations with other businesses/people

Development Percentage Exercise

Participants were asked to look at four redevelopment areas within Decatur and discuss the appropriate mix for new development within each using percentages. For example, if they only wanted new retail/restaurants uses in an area, they would have entered 100 percent next to that category and 0 percent next to the residential and office/professional. The table below shows the average desired mixes by area. In general, this shows a support for new mixed-use development in all areas.

Area	Use	Average Desired Mix
Downtown	Residential	45%
	Retail/Restaurant	28%
	Office/Professional	30%
East Decatur	Residential	38%
	Retail/Restaurant	23%
	Office/Professional	40%
East Lake Station	Residential	58%
	Retail/Restaurant	27%
	Office/Professional	15%
Oakhurst	Residential	59%
	Retail/Restaurant	29%
	Office/Professional	12%

Comments on Specific Areas:

Participants provided the following comments related to the four areas with regard to the character or quantity of infill development.

Downtown

- Lower parking requirements, allow shared parking (also near other MARTA stations)
- Affordable housing including rental housing, but not low-income housing
- Business to residential is reversed, maybe apartments?
- Consider some live/work
- Outer downtown: low-moderate income housing, expand size of the Kroger?

East Decatur

- Interior design/architect/modeling agency type offices
- Florist, pet shop
- Densification
- Former Devry campus should be mixed-use live/work space
- Live/work

East Lake Station

- There is little opportunity for density
- If no grocery store in Oakhurst, put one in East Lake
- Low-moderate income housing

Oakhurst

- Shuttle/trolley to connect with other nodes and Edgewood
- More retail, convenience shopping
- News kiosk
- Kirkwood is a good model for retail
- Mixed-use
- Grocery store, retail
- Senior housing and apartments
- Office, live/work space

Desired Services and Businesses

Participants then brainstormed more of the specific services or business offerings they would like to see more of in any part of Decatur.

- Music store
- Zabar's or D'Agostino special grocers (like in New York)
- Publix
- World Market
- Pier One
- Z Gallery
- Animal hospital
- Pet store
- Florist
- Health food store
- Shoe store
- Upscale gym
- Proportionally "older"
- (~20%) residents, so identify niche retail that caters to "retirees"
- Grocery
- Bowling alley
- Movie theater
- Vietnamese restaurant
- Clothing stores with sizes that fit adults, potential discount with large selection
- Boutique niche retail, more of homemade beer microbrew
- Specialty grocer
- Family attraction (i.e. ice or roller skating, mini golf, movie)
- Small general/variety store
- Museum (folk art?, women's rights, literary, Southern history, sculpture garden)
- Healthcare (doc in a box)
- Convenience store (i.e. Quick Trip style with newspapers/magazines, breakfast)
- Men's clothing store
- Electronics store

Best Office/Professional Users

Participants then brainstormed specific types of businesses that would be best for office space in any part of Decatur.

- State office building (provides better wages)
- Legal/accounting offices
- Medical offices
- Junior college or nursing school
- Art museum, theater, or movie theater
- Accountants, PR firms, financial services (heavy on retail)
- Identify specific business niche for Decatur: businesses looking for quality of life culture (examples: Kaiser Permanente), businesses that create unique work experiences
- Doctors
- Accountants and architects
- Technology (Google)
- Bio-technical
- Office suite?
- Financial firms
- Educational-related
- Medical research/office space, create demand from Emory/CDC
- Leverage Emory University base, satellite campus, i.e. Art Institute/Devry
- Financial services (higher incomes \$\$)
- Medical services (physicians + research + ancillary), income and service to community
- Education—Devry and Art Institute (foot traffic, retail support)
- Entrepreneurs—fits culture and diversity, live/work, high growth field