



# DECATUR 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Comments from the “Getting the Love We Want” Community Academy

November 17, 2010

## Summary of Ideas

The following key themes emerged from public comments:

- The decision of where and how to grow should consider the impacts of growth on the greater Decatur community.
- Higher density development can benefit Decatur if properly planned and designed. Potential ways to do this may include incorporating:
  - A mix of uses, including sidewalk-oriented retail and offices
  - A mix of quality rental types
  - Landscaping in streetscapes, rooftop gardens, or open spaces
  - “Green” technologies
  - Progressive parking strategies
  - Scaling building height to context
- In addition new, higher density development that is adjacent to existing residential areas must provide an appropriate transition to such uses.
- Explore incentives to encourage growth that is consistent with the vision emerging from the Strategic Plan, including:
  - Marketing incentives (e.g. site promotion and marketing, selling the Decatur “brand”)
  - Financial incentives
  - Zoning or density incentives
  - Procedural incentives (i.e. predictable entitlement process)
  - Transportation incentives (e.g. shared parking, transit access, etc.)
  - Infrastructure incentives (e.g. water, sewer, telecommunications, information-sharing)
  - Acquisition incentives (e.g. land assembly)
- There is a perception among some of a tension between residents of single-family houses and those of condominiums, townhouses, and apartments. This “us” versus “them” mentality is not constructive; everyone living in Decatur should have an equal say in the city’s future.

## What can we do to encourage or attract the type of development we want?

- Encourage because of desire to diversify tax base
- Need housing with retail/commercial first floor
- Shared parking
- Business tax, incentives to relocate to city
- Adjust zoning ordinance to encourage mixed use to move forward
- East Lake rezoning to allow mixed use, especially residential
- Oakhurst: market, retail with residential above it \*need it
- Current competitive edge
  - MARTA
  - Spend \$ here
  - Walkable
  - Quality of life
  - Green, low pollution
  - Easy access
  - School system, parks, public amenities
  - Responsive public safety
  - Festivals, events
- Future competitive edge
  - Museum, movie theater
  - Performing arts complex, centralized area
  - Special holiday events
  - Iconic draw
  - “We understand your business so move here” (i.e. wine festival, road races, bike rides)
  - Commercial—standard prices
  - Staples stores—hardware
  - Bike shop, grocery, bike rentals
- What type of development do we want?
- Selling the Decatur environment: determine the type of companies that would be interested and actively market
- Potential to encourage or exploit the music industry, build on Eddie’s Attic, potential music studios and other music industry development
- Need to address the transportation in and out of the city, potential for centralized parking and shuttles, better ways to leverage public transport
- By encouraging higher density family units this will potentially drive an increased demand for attracting businesses
- Develop development guidelines, fencing in
- Better incentives for business, incent lower priced housing for some employees
- Shared parking needs to be explored

- Provide incentives for businesses, i.e. tax breaks
- Advertise and promote benefits of the City – communication is key
- Use jumbo-tron to announce what’s going on – better way to promote businesses to visitors
- Hold conventions to bring businesses and development to the City
- City shop sites for relocation
- City can provide the right environment to businesses so they are willing to take risk
  - Zoning
  - Cheaper to do businesses
  - Federal programs
  - Green incentives, green friendly and branded green ordinance (i.e. incentives for green)
- Residential to commercial transition – detached single-family to dense single family to commercial
- Attract development in light of economic requirements
- We get it, we need to compromise
- Provide for shared use parking
- Allow for stepped height but do not go above 8 stories
- Allow for good quality rental
- Tap into market niche of “downsize dwellers”
- Maximize rental by encouraging mainstream rental mix
- Allow for balanced mix of rental types
- More centrally located common green area
- Tax incentive from the City to bring the type of developer(s) we want (property tax, homestead?)
- Higher density/zoning variance
- Change/update parking requirements – Decatur has more parking than we need (unbundle parking), so consider shared parking options
  - Renaissance has residential & office parking with excess spaces – utilize excess parking
- Marketing reputable developers
- “Cake and eat it too” attitude in Decatur
  - More difficult to drive here
  - Local residents cannot support our economy along – need outside people’s support
  - Traffic calming is needed – lack of stop light sequences discourage visiting Decatur
- Market existing parking decks with rotating reduced price or free parking
- Look at niche market. Attract 21st century offices – promote technical infrastructure to allow “virtual meetings” and other
- Allow office spaces as part of ground floor retail spaces
- Allow increased density

- Educate the residents about the benefits of higher density development
- Selling Decatur
  - Good transportation
  - Walkability
  - Diverse population
  - Schools
  - Good Amenities
  - Safety
  - Trendy
  - Hub of government activities
- Costs – incentives
  - Small business breaks
  - Public/private partnerships
- Tax/financial incentives
- “Citizen Jury” comprised of residents from throughout the City that would provide opinions on selecting development
- “Quality of life” marketing program (Benefits of transportation, Walkability, Schools, Stability, etc)
- Maintain and improve the quality of schools
- Review zoning to provide a clear framework for urbanism, i.e. parking maximums and minimums
- Grow infrastructure to accommodate urban density

What are things that could be done to lessen the negative impacts and maximize the positive impacts of new development?

- Better use of parking areas, revamp courthouse parking to be more friendly, accessible, etc., no rockstar parking
- Actively market family high density development
- Transitional buffering guidelines
- Making sure architectural style matches the neighborhood
- Potential rezoning or changes in zoning to better manage or attract business, multifamily
- Consider greenspace with higher density
- Education of community/surrounding area: economic education, cost needed to improve/sustain city
- Partnership between businesses and the City – watch very carefully to avoid being taken advantage on
- Reduce parking costs, lower minimum parking price
- Educational process, i.e. parking education – excessive parking is a waste of space and revenues
- Minimize negative perception of affordable housing
- Apartments are ok – they can increase density so as to support businesses
- Maximize positive benefits:

- Ensure safety – add bike/foot patrol officers
- Parking garage
- Make sure infrastructure supports development
  - Lighting
  - Fountain
  - Focal point
  - Shade on plazas/squares/streets
  - More commercial
  - Attract and keep diversity
  - Playground
  - Chess/checkers board in downtown
- Rotate art gallery in un-leased commercial spaces that will move when spaces are filled up or leased
- Compromise among developers, citizens and the City
- Create a historic review board or committee to maintain architectural consistency with City's vision
- Increase community revenue by reconsidering annexation
- Increase mainstream "quality" retail
- Educate community on value of compromise in order to promote healthy growth
- Talk to residents first, but this has been done – example: Clairmont 3-acre site turned down by adjacent property owners
- Step up on the back of residential lots is good
- 1:1 ratio of building height to street width is the best
  - Allow greater heights and higher density with wider streets
- Utilize existing under-used/un-occupied buildings for future development
- Encourage assemblage of properties at these areas for development
  - Church Street corridor (could be higher building and density with wide street)
- Encourage compatible style and scale
- Better balance of commercial development
  - Office/retail
  - Live/work
- Traffic calming and management
- Circulator bus/transportation
- Force interconnected streets and restore/create street grids
- Reduce need for car in Decatur
- Clear zoning that reassures preservation of single family neighborhoods next to commercial areas
- Encourage diversity in terms of race, income and age




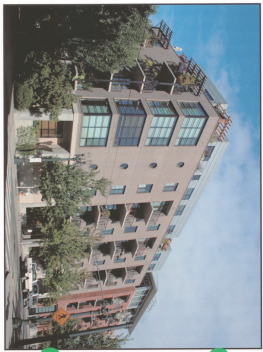
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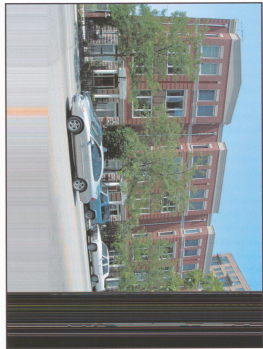
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3.   
*Look for car, bicycle, and pedestrian.*



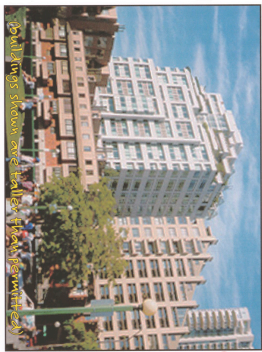
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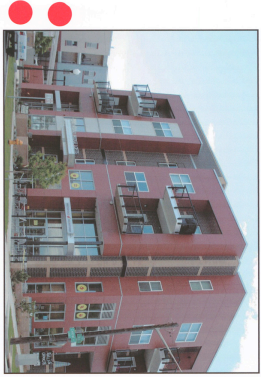
## Community Options: Multifamily

Prepared by:  
Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates  
November 17, 2010

Look at these images and consider their appropriateness for Decatur's core areas in the future. Please put a green dot on the image that you find the most appropriate and a red dot on the one that is least appropriate. Use two dots per poster, please.



## Mixed-Use Building Dot Exercise



1.   
 10 red dots, 2 green dots



4.   
 2 green dots



7.   
 8 red dots, 4 green dots



2.   
 5 green dots, 1 red dot



5.   
 6 green dots



8.   
 10 green dots



3.   
 6 green dots



6.   
 10 red dots, 3 green dots



9.   
 10 red dots, 1 green dot

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