

# 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

CITY OF DECATUR, GEORGIA





5	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
9	<b>PROGRESS MADE</b> Summary of previous plans & implementation
21	<b>ROUND TABLES PROCESS</b> Outreach process Themes
31	<b>COMMUNITY ACADEMIES</b> Going mobile Decatur for life The new main street Getting the love we want
47	<b>THE PLAN</b> The distilling process Vision, principles, goals, tasks
63	<b>MOVING FORWARD</b> Implementation partners Schedule
73	<b>APPENDIX A: CONCEPTUAL GROWTH PLANS</b>
81	<b>APPENDIX B: MARKET &amp; FISCAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS</b>
121	<b>APPENDIX C: LIST OF FACILITATORS &amp; PARTICIPANTS</b>
135	<b>APPENDIX D: ROUND TABLES &amp; PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTS</b>



## CITY COMMISSION

**MAYOR BILL FLOYD**

**MAYOR PRO TEM JIM BASKETT**

**COMMISSIONER FRED BOYKIN**

**COMMISSIONER KECIA CUNNINGHAM**

**COMMISSIONER PATTI GARRETT**



## STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE TEAM

**CITIZENS OF DECATUR**

**JON ABERCROMBIE, COMMON FOCUS**

**CALEB RACICOT, TSW**

**WOODY GILES, TSW**

**TOM WALSH, TSW**

**SCOTT DOYON, PLACEMAKERS**

**BEN BROWN, PLACEMAKERS**

**LAKEY BOYD, MARKET + MAIN**

**CONTENTE TERRY, CONTENTE CONSULTING**

**STAFF**

**PEGGY MERRISS, CITY MANAGER**

**HUGH SAXON, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER**

**LYN MENNE, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER**

**AMANDA THOMPSON, PLANNING DIRECTOR**

**LINDA HARRIS, ASST. DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & ECON. DEVELOPMENT**

**CASSONDRA BREEDLOVE, PROJECT MANAGER**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past ten years, the City of Decatur has been guided by its 2000 Strategic Plan, which has proved to be a living guide for policy, funding, and programming decisions. Many of the benefits for which Decatur is known—urban living, an active community life, vibrant restaurants, great recreation facilities, clear communication between government and citizens—are the result of specific improvements recommended by the 2000 Plan.

Ten years later, citizens still love many of the same things about Decatur and share many of the same dreams for its future, but much has been accomplished and some priorities need to be updated. This 2010 Strategic Plan preserves the vision and many of the themes of the 2000 Plan, but puts forth new goals and strategies to continue to assure a high quality of life.

## PROGRESS MADE

Detailed plans have already been prepared for the future of transportation, greenways, redevelopment, affordable housing, cultural facilities, and other aspects of life in Decatur. This plan lists together, for the first time, all major relevant recommendations of previous plans. This catalog shows the significant progress made toward the realization of each plan through dozens of efforts completed or under way.

How do the recommendations of these other plans relate to this Strategic Plan? Many of them are more specific than is appropriate for a strategic plan and do not need to be duplicated here, but most previous recommendations fall under one of the goals or tasks presented here.

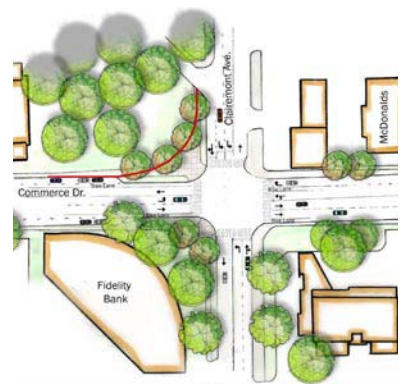
This 2010 Strategic Plan is intended to be a broader guide for the City of Decatur that assists in prioritizing and implementing the recommendations of previous plans. While these previous plans are invaluable because of the detailed analysis and public opinions they reflect, they should be considered specific tools for implementing the broader tasks in this plan.

## OUTREACH

The Strategic Plan update process is the largest public outreach process in Decatur's history. During the 12-month process, more than 1,500 individuals participated in hundreds of individual meetings (many of them



*The 2000 Strategic Plan has helped enhance the quality of life in Decatur over the past decade*



*Recommendations of existing plans are reinforced by the principles of this Strategic Plan*



*Volunteer facilitators helped lead the biggest public involvement process in Decatur's history*



*This Wordle reflects the most frequently mentioned comments during the Round Tables process*



Community Academies allowed citizens to inform themselves and move toward consensus on several issues

led by one of the 51 volunteer facilitators) and shared thousands of ideas to shape the direction of the Strategic Plan.

The process began with a series of Round Tables in which participants talked about what they liked about Decatur and where the city should improve. Five themes emerged from this discussion: the diverse community, the involved community, the complete community, the alternative transportation community, and the responsive and cooperative community.

While there was much agreement on the five themes, there was a lack of consensus in other areas. In the fall of 2010, a series of Community Academies was convened to educate the public about the tradeoffs related to issues over which compromise was needed.

### THE PLAN

Based on the ideas received during the Round Tables and the more detailed discussions at the Community Academies, a set of draft Strategic Plan principles was prepared. These, along with the vision (which was preserved verbatim from the 2000 Strategic Plan) and a series of conceptual growth plans for areas identified during the Academies, were presented to the public at a series of Open Houses.

The final principles, goals, and tasks are the most important part of this plan. Every effort was made to incorporate all public comments into the plan and to ensure a transparent and inclusive process. Some ideas were combined or were removed where they were outside the City’s control, inconsistent with existing plans, or not legally or financially feasible.

### IMPLEMENTATION

No plans can be implemented overnight or without the cooperation of the whole community. The specific tasks in this plan are proposed to be addressed according to the implementation schedule, but are not the sole responsibility of the City. In fact, significant effort on the part of a number of citizen boards, non-profit organizations, and individuals will be necessary over the next decade in order to help Decatur achieve its vision.



Implementation will require hard work on the part of many groups and individuals (photo courtesy ILRI)

**VISION: THE CITY OF DECATUR WILL ASSURE A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ITS RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AND VISITORS BOTH TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE**

**PRINCIPLE A: MANAGE GROWTH WHILE RETAINING CHARACTER**

**PRINCIPLE B: ENCOURAGE A DIVERSE AND ENGAGED COMMUNITY**

**PRINCIPLE C: SERVE AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

**PRINCIPLE D: SUPPORT A SAFE, HEALTHY, LIFELONG COMMUNITY**



Progress Made



## PROGRESS MADE

At least a dozen plans or studies of various natures have been prepared for Decatur over the past thirty years. The breadth and quantity of recommendations put forth in these plans can seem overwhelming, but the truth is that enormous progress has been made toward refining and implementing the vision for Decatur's future.

This 2010 Strategic Plan is the latest in this series of plans. The following summaries of each previous plan are provided in order to avoid duplicating recommendations, to document the progress made to date, and to identify areas where work still needs to be done.

Following each plan is a table that details specific recommendations and whether or not they have been accomplished. A number of the items identified as "not yet" are incorporated as recommendations in this current plan. Others of a less general nature are not included and are assumed to be under the purview of the plan that identified them.

### RAPID TRANSIT IMPACT GROWTH STRATEGY (1973)

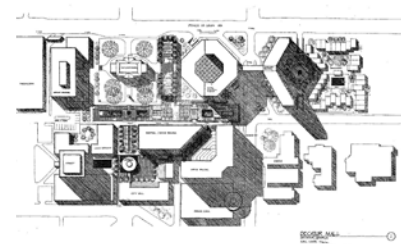
On the eve of the arrival of MARTA rail service, this plan was prepared for Downtown Decatur and the areas surrounding the East Lake, Avondale, and proposed North Decatur stations. The plan focuses on urban design and sociological issues, and identified aspirations that still ring true with Decaturites, including neighborhood preservation, downtown redevelopment, more retail to meet basic needs, scale of new development, lower taxes, and improvements that benefit people from all walks of life.

This plan anticipated substantial new amounts of office space with the inauguration of rail service. While demand for new downtown residences, hotel space, and retail space has been achieved, the demand for office space did not materialize in the quantities originally expected. This may be for the best, as the plan for downtown included razing a number of historic buildings and closing streets to create a district that would have been much less pleasant than the Square that Decatur residents love today.

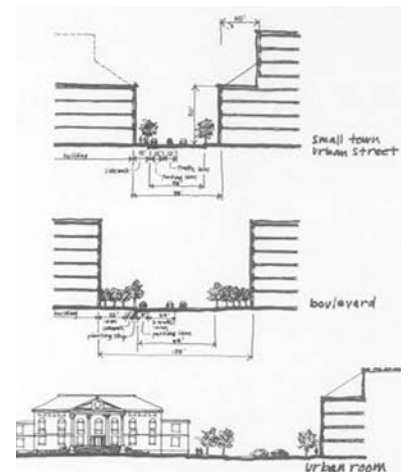
### TOWN CENTER PLAN (1982)

A seventeen-member Task Force was appointed by the Decatur City Commission in February of 1980. This group was charged to be responsible for major redevelopment proposals and to implement a citizen hearing process. The overall goal was to achieve the image of a traditional and intimate small-town center while encouraging development of modern high-rise offices, a new hotel, a new residential area, and new commercial facilities. The Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Task Force, the City of Decatur, the business community, and city residents participated in a two-year process, finalizing the plan in 1982. Prior to its completion, no comprehensive plan existed for Decatur's downtown.

The task force worked with residents to identify ten goals relating to the main overall goal for how the downtown area should be redeveloped. One of the most significant outcomes of the plan was the Urban Design Development Plan, which recommended a transformation of Downtown Decatur and the historic Courthouse Square into a special place as the heart of the city. The



*The 1973 plan envisioned downtown as a series of office towers*



*Appropriate scale of new development was an important contribution of the 1982 plan*



*Downtown streetscapes were recommended by the Town Center Study and now include mature trees*

design encouraged an increase in walkable developments as they became situated closer to the heart of the city and the Square. Ten policies resulted from this plan to achieve this goal.

Town Center Plan Recommendation	Implemented?
Adopt guidelines for integration with small-town scale	Yes
Make the Candler Hotel block a demonstration	Yes
Make a demonstration development for new housing	Yes
Design the ring road (Commerce Dr.) for through traffic	Yes
Develop a coherent traffic and parking system	Under way
Implement streetscapes	Ongoing
Decatur MARTA station plaza redesign	Yes

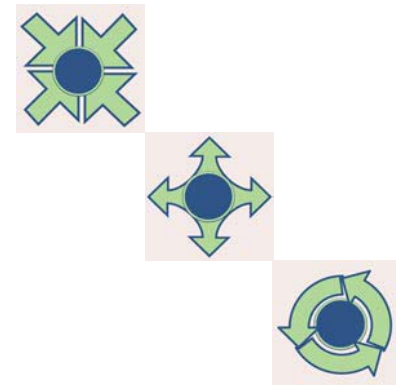
### STRATEGIC PLAN (2000)

The City of Decatur requested a Strategic Plan that would include physical and economic planning while incorporating social goals. The vision, principles, goals, and projects were developed through a collaboration of residents, government, business owners, and institutional leaders. Three principles guided this plan: 1) Manage growth while retaining character, 2) Encourage community interaction, and 3) Provide quality services within fiscal limits. The Strategic Plan developed ten goals that addressed these principles and listed several specific projects under each goal. Also included in the plan was a monitoring plan for tracking implementation.

Recommendations from this plan were focused in three main areas: Economics, Transportation, and Housing. Economic recommendations included promoting commercial and multifamily development on targeted sites, charging impact fees, and exploring annexation opportunities. Transportation recommendations included installation of traffic calming and control devices, increased use of alternative transportation modes, improvements to sidewalks, and the expansion of bicycle lanes and paths. Housing recommendations include tax relief programs for older adults; dedication of economically diverse housing options for people working in Decatur; diversification of the city’s population; and improved condition and availability of rental housing.

2000 Strategic Plan Recommendation	Implemented?
Identify tax relief and other programs to aid elderly	Yes
Provide housing for people working in the city	Yes
Develop programs to attract minority residents	Not completed
Develop programs to improve rental housing	Not completed
Address concerns regarding school taxes	Yes
Improve linkages between greenspaces	Yes
Preserve and expand greenspace, wetlands, & trees	Yes
Study air and water quality problems	Yes
Address concerns regarding general taxes	Yes
Address concerns regarding quality of services	Yes
Improve quality of buildings, parks, & rec. facilities	Yes
Refine standards for downtown	Yes

Develop and adopt standards for neighborhood commercial districts	Yes
Adopt standards for East College Avenue	Yes
Diversify the office tenant base	Yes
Encourage owner-occupied retail	Yes
Adopt standards for new residential buildings	Yes
Consider guidelines for residential renovations	Yes
Diversify attendance at public events	Yes
Support and expand volunteer activities	Yes
Expand distribution of and personalize community publications	Yes
Support Decatur Neighborhood Alliance or similar organization	Yes
Improve communication between residents, city, and schools	Yes



The goals and strategies of the 2000 Strategic Plan serve as a basis for this current plan

### AVONDALE MARTA STATION LCI STUDY (2002)

This Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study centers on the MARTA Avondale station. The City of Decatur used this chance to further define the quality and character of its community while creating a new neighborhood centered on access to premium transit service. Similar to the Decatur Town Center Study, this plan encouraged a “sense of place,” something that has long been missing from the current study area site. P.L.A.C.E. (which stood for Pleasant, Location, Accessible, Cohesive, Engaging) is a set of guiding principles that provided strong direction to the work that needed to be completed for new developments.

College Avenue is the primary thoroughfare through the area. It is recommended that this road receive an emphasized streetscape treatment on the south side, with wide sidewalks and a street furniture zone with street trees to serve as a buffer for the large volume of high-speed traffic. The second most vital street to the area is a proposed Main Street, a primary retail area and heart of the village center. On-street parking, wide sidewalks, and street trees are needed here. Lastly, new neighborhood streets must incorporate significant traffic calming measures for cars going through Columbia Park neighborhood.

Avondale Station LCI Study Recommendation	Implemented?
Allow density bonuses for new residential developments with affordable units	Yes
Require all residential development to have sidewalk-oriented buildings with streetscapes	Ongoing
Adopt new zoning provisions that allow residential buildings up to 5 stories tall	Yes
Promote a balanced mix of owner and renter occupied homes	Ongoing
Implement standards to encourage reduced or shared parking	Not yet
Modify City Land Use Plan to reflect the plan	Not yet



Mixed-use vision for redevelopment of the area near Avondale MARTA station

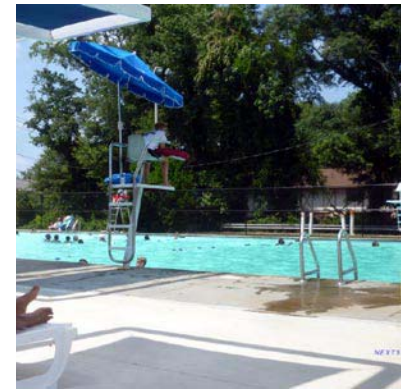
Coordinate with county to adopt land use, zoning, and design standards for county portion of the district	Modified
Work with Methodist Children’s Home to incorporate YMCA athletic fields into their plan	Modified
Facilitate relocation of existing industrial uses to other sites within the city or county	Not yet
Recruit neighborhood businesses for the district	Yes
Adopt a new zoning district for the area	Yes
Institute economic incentives for implementing the recommendations of this plan	Under way
Work with Agnes Scott and Downtown Decatur to promote awareness and accessibility to the area	Yes
Conduct a gateway design competition	Not completed
Prepare design guidelines for new development in overlay district	Yes
Construct new Main Street through MARTA Avondale station parking lot	Not yet
College Ave. streetscape from Columbia to Arcadia	Not yet
Columbia Drive sidewalks and bike lanes from College Avenue to Katie Kerr Drive	Modified
Derrydown Way sidewalk and traffic calming	Not completed
Katie Kerr Drive sidewalks	Not yet
Katie Kerr Drive/Methodist Children’s Home trail	Not yet
Columbia Drive to Avondale MARTA station southern entrance	Not yet
Avondale MARTA station parking deck	Not yet

### ATHLETIC FACILITY PLAN (2002)

Seven local organizations formed a partnership to develop a citywide athletic facility master plan. The seven organizations within this partnership were the City of Decatur, City Schools of Decatur, Decatur-DeKalb YMCA, Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club, Columbia Theological Seminary, United Methodist Children’s Home, and Agnes Scott College. This plan identified opportunities for partnerships and collaborative efforts to assist in meeting Decatur’s recreation needs.

Beginning in 2001, the master plan included interviews, facility assessments, public meetings, and a steering committee workshop to gather current and future needs. The public input process identified critical needs in the community that included improved athletic facilities, indoor and outdoor swim facilities, trails and sidewalks, a skate park, dog parks, and an outdoor track. The recommendations included dedicating parks for specific purposes, encouraging shared use of facilities, replacing and/or improving existing facilities, building new parks, or changing the use of certain recreational areas. These recommendations totaled \$17.7 million.

Athletic Facility Plan Recommendation	Implemented?
Softball field at Oakhurst Park	Yes
Baseball field at McKoy Park	Yes
Replace McKoy Park pool with interactive water feature	Modified
New community park on United Methodist Children's Home property	Not yet
Shared use of existing indoor pool at Boys & Girls Club	Under way
Shared use of existing track at Agnes Scott College	Not yet
Shared use of existing indoor pool at YMCA	Not yet
Skate park at McKoy Park	Yes
Shared use of existing soccer field at Ebster Park	Yes
Recreation Center improvements	Under way
Swimming pool reconstruction at Glenlake Park	Yes
Multipurpose room additions at each elementary school	Modified
Dog parks at Adair, Oakhurst, and Glenlake Parks	Yes
Creation of a park maintenance crew	Reconsidered
Establish citywide turf maintenance contract	Yes
Develop consistent park amenity and sign look	Under way
Allocate funding for regular replacement of elements such as playgrounds, tables, benches, and pavilions	Yes
Adopt a park program	Not yet



*Glenlake pool improvements were a recommendation of the Athletic Facility Plan*

### **GREENWAY PLAN (2004)**

This plan is the result of one of the goals identified in the 2000 Strategic Plan to “continue the commitment to environmental quality.” As a result, the Decatur City Commission established a citizen-based Greenspace Task Force. Their March 2002 report included the recommendation to establish a physical connection between Decatur’s north and south sections and to join the city’s rich historical elements with the preservation of greenspace. The north-south corridor would link four major resources: The Woodlands, Decatur Cemetery, Oakhurst Community Gardens, and Dearborn Park.

Due to community input, several modifications were made to the original project and scope. In addition to greenspace access, residents wanted improved pedestrian accessibility to the city’s primary commercial areas, so two additional sites, Decatur Square and the Oakhurst Business District, were added to the priority list for connectivity. Residents also expressed a strong desire for a citywide approach. The result is a study that recommends connectivity throughout Decatur. This proposed network includes neighborhood gateways, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, links to most major civic/park spaces and historic landmarks, and identification of potential preservation sites.





*The Greenway Plan recommended a series of trails that are currently being implemented*

<b>Greenway Plan Recommendation</b>	<b>Implemented?</b>
Multiuse trail from Third Avenue to East Lake Drive	Not yet
Multiuse trail from Adair Street to Lansdowne Avenue	Yes
Multiuse trail from Adair Street to West Trinity Place	Not yet
Multiuse trail along Westchester Drive	Under way
Multiuse trail along Lucerne Street	Not completed
Multiuse trail along Fairview Street	Modified
Multiuse trail from Poplar Circle north to Hilldale Drive and south to Inman Drive	Not yet
Multiuse trail from South McDonough St. to McKoy St.	Not yet
Multiuse trail along Scott Boulevard before Westchester Drive and past Clairemont Avenue	Modified
Multiuse trail along Midway Road from South Candler Street to Deerwood Drive	Under way
Shared bike lanes on various streets	Under way
Bike lane on Oakview Road from West Hill Street to South McDonough Street	Not yet
Bike lane on South McDonough Street from Oakview Road to Trinity Place	Modified
Bike lane on West Trinity Place from South McDonough Street to West Ponce de Leon Avenue	Yes
Bike lane on West Ponce de Leon Avenue from West Trinity Place to western city limits	Yes
Bike lane on Commerce Drive from West Trinity Place to East Ponce de Leon Avenue	Not yet
Bike lane on Sycamore Drive from East Ponce de Leon Avenue to Forkner Drive	Not yet

### **DOWNTOWN DECATUR LCI FIVE-YEAR UPDATE (2006)**

This was an update of the Town Center Plan, which was grandfathered as a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study. The Town Center Plan provided the vision needed to keep the downtown development program on track but was flexible enough to meet changing market demands that brought office construction in the 1980s, the restaurant/retail explosion of the 1990s, and the influx of downtown residential projects after 2001. This LCI update outlines accomplishments in transportation, housing, and development. For 2007-2011, Decatur developed a revised short-term work program based on the Town Center Plan goals and specific objectives identified in the 2000 Strategic Plan. The strategic plan was also later refined in the Comprehensive Plan Update and incorporated into the LCI study.

The Decatur Downtown Development Authority has been charged with the leading role in implementing this five year work program in partnership with the City of Decatur and the Decatur Business Association. The primary focus of the transportation component is on completing the downtown streetscape and bicycle network. The LCI study identified six key projects to be implemented by 2011. The housing component of the LCI study emphasized the completion of the Affordable Housing Study, which was accomplished in 2008.



<b>Downtown Decatur LCI Update Recommendation</b>	<b>Implemented?</b>
Town Square condominium	Yes
Renovate the old Peco Camper store	Yes
Renovate old gas station (Tacqueria del Sol)	Yes
Clairemont condominium	Yes
Decatur Renaissance condominium	Yes
Retail building at southeast corner of Ponce and Commerce	Yes
Implement density bonus for affordable housing downtown	Yes
Adopt density bonus provisions with rezoning for housing that includes affordable units	Yes
Downtown demonstration project with affordable housing density bonus	Yes
Renovate 340 West Ponce	Yes
Artisan phase I	Yes
Secure restaurant tenant for Depot	Yes
Package and sell the Trinity triangle parcel for redevelopment	Yes
Reach a compromise agreement for condo development adjacent to residential	Yes
Redevelop surface parking lots downtown with a mix of uses	Ongoing
Redevelop existing parking decks to add retail activity at street level	Not yet
Coordinate with county to redevelop county property as mixed use	Not yet
Work with county Community Development Dept. to develop affordable retail space	Not yet
Assure a good mix of locally owned retail and restaurants with a blend of national retail	Ongoing
Phases II and III downtown streetscapes	Yes
Phase IV downtown streetscapes	Under way
Phase V downtown streetscapes	Under way
Dedicated bike trail along southern edge of downtown	Yes
Expand CCTMA shuttle in downtown	Yes
Bike lanes on West Trinity/West Ponce	Yes
Bike lanes along Church Street	Under way
Intersection improvements at Commerce/Church St.	Under way
Intersection improvements at Commerce & Clairemont	Under way
Trinity & McDonough railroad crossing improvements	Under way
Traffic signal study for downtown	Under way
Downtown pedestrian safety measures	Yes
Wayfinding system for commercial districts	Yes
Downtown parking study	Under way



*A number of downtown developments were recommended by the LCI update*



*The Community Transportation Plan addresses the needs of all forms of transportation*

## COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2007)

At the heart of the Decatur Community Transportation Plan is the creation and support of a healthy and active community. For Decatur, that means the establishment of a safe, integrated, transportation system that promotes bicycling and walking as a viable alternative to automobile travel. It also means increased connectivity between neighborhoods and destinations as well as equity for users of all ages and abilities. Four guiding principles shaped the creation of the Decatur Community Transportation Plan: the promotion of Health, Choice, Community, and Connectivity. The City chose to pursue transportation facilities that support the health of individuals in the community by promoting active living.

The plan began with a public kick-off meeting and continued with a series of workshops and focus groups. The recommendations for the transportation network included Complete Streets improvements to intersections and along corridors, such as reducing the number of automobile travel lanes, widening sidewalks, improving crosswalks and enhancing pedestrian signals. The plan identified important pedestrian routes and recommended improving the existing sidewalk network by filling the gaps within the system, especially along streets within the Safe Routes to School program. Recommended bicycle facilities included wide outside lanes, striped bike lanes, signed routes, multi-use paths, and more bicycle parking facilities. Transit recommendations included upgrading bus stops and implementing accessibility for bicyclists at rail stations and along transit routes.

Community Transportation Plan Recommendation	Implemented?
Restripe South Candler Street for bike lanes	Not yet
Streetscape, road diet, and bike lanes on Church St.	Partially
Enhanced transit along Clairemont Avenue	Not yet
College Avenue sidewalk safety improvements and signal modifications	Partially
Multiuse path along Columbia Drive	Modified
Commerce Drive road diet and bike lanes	Not yet
Howard Avenue road diet and bike lanes	Not yet
McDonough Street improvements	Under way
Ponce de Leon Avenue improvements (Trinity Place east to city limit)	Under way
Widen sidewalk on west side of Scott Boulevard	Not yet
Bike lanes on West Trinity Place and West Ponce de Leon Avenue	Partially
Intersection improvements at Commerce Drive and Clairemont Avenue	Under way
Intersection improvements at Commerce Dr. and Church St.	Under way
Intersection improvements at Candler St. and College Ave.	Under way
Intersection improvements at McDonough St. and College Ave.	Under way
Intersection improvements at College Avenue, Howard Avenue, and Atlanta Avenue	Not yet
Traffic calming on neighborhood conservation streets and citywide	Under way

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY (2008)

Decatur enjoys a strong reputation as a small scale traditional community with a high quality of life for its current residents. Over the last decade, positive economic momentum drove up property values, prices, and demand. As a result, Decatur risked losing its established diversity because of rising housing costs that negatively impacted many minority residents. This study acknowledged the lack of affordability within the current housing options and set parameters for approaching this concern.

The strategy addressed four main issues: the potential population affected, the potential types of affordable housing products, the availability of affordable-type housing, and types of programs and policies most appropriate for addressing the challenge. There were four suggested key public policy areas recommended to solve these challenges:

1. Economic Development Strategy: A long-term employment/wage increase strategy
2. Rehabilitation/Preservation/New Development of Mixed income Rental Housing: A long-term mixed income rental housing strategy
3. Workforce Affordable Home Ownership: Funding, public education, and business partnerships needed
4. Determine Appropriate Density: Review of current zoning and land use policies to achieve goals



*A number of strategies have been put forth to encourage new affordable housing*

Affordable Housing Study Recommendation	Implemented?
Increase awareness and expand/recruit business operations	Under way
Living wage legislation	Not yet
Annexation	On hold
Employer assisted housing program	In place for public safety employees
Leverage grant opportunities	Not yet
Public funding loan pool	Not yet
Increase awareness about senior programs	Not yet
Alternative private funding sources	Housing trust fund established
Dedicated public funding stream	Not yet
Home ownership rehabilitation program	Not yet
Community land trust	Not yet
New product types	Not yet
Infill opportunities	Not yet
Design guidelines	Not yet
Inclusionary zoning	Not yet



*The Historic Resource Survey identified and documented historic buildings*

### **HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY (2009)**

The purpose of this survey was to identify and document historic properties in Decatur and determine potential eligibility for designation as an historic district at the local, state, and national levels. It serves as a “living” catalog of the city’s historic resources and has become an effective planning tool. The survey also encourages residents to more fully understand and appreciate the unique character of the city and its neighborhoods. Furthermore, the survey offers a range of financial incentives for the preservation and rehabilitation of both residential and commercial historic properties.

The information stored in this survey is continually updated and is stored in electronic formats that enable a variety of diverse outputs that can then be made available to a broad array of users. This survey lists seven neighborhoods that are currently designated as historic districts and identifies thirteen neighborhoods to be proposed for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

### **PARKING INVENTORY AND POLICY STUDY (2009)**

While not an official city study, this Masters’ thesis by a student at the Georgia Institute of Technology addresses parking in the downtown area. Four surveys were conducted to analyze existing parking facilities, conditions, needs, and habits. The purpose of this inventory was to provide current parking demand data to measure the effects of policy adjustments and travel behavior over time.

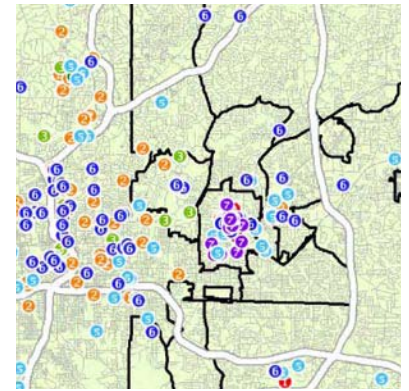
The inventory notes that the City of Decatur operates and maintains over 300 on-street metered parking spaces and 8,885 parking spaces within 70 parking lots in the downtown area. At least 41 parking lots (containing 3,412 spaces) are customer, employee, and/or resident restricted, as indicated by on-site signage or card-access gates. This study put forth a number of recommendations consistent with the previously adopted Community Transportation Plan.

### **CULTURAL ARTS MASTER PLAN (2010)**

The Cultural Arts Master Plan was a collaborative effort between the City of Decatur, Agnes Scott College, the Decatur Business Association, the Decatur Downtown Development Authority, City Schools of Decatur, and the Decatur Arts Alliance. The plan launched a ten-year process to ensure the sustainability and vitality of the cultural sector. The planning process examined the current strengths and future possibilities of Decatur’s cultural offerings. Recommendations included the following:

1. A true community arts center
2. A flexible, high quality 300-seat performance facility
3. Shared administrative, production, and/or storage space
4. The improvement or establishment of a guaranteed level of access for groups outside the school system or Agnes Scott College
5. The establishment of resources that support the use of unconventional or public space
6. A public art strategy that includes increasing the outdoor collection size of public art and widening the radius of public art display

Cultural Arts Master Plan Recommendation	Implemented?
Confirm mission, membership of Partnership	Not yet
Establish governance, relationship with Decatur Arts Alliance (DAA), and objectives for Partnership	Not yet
Determine specific goals annually	Not yet
Confirm meeting schedule	Not yet
Launch a strategic plan for the Decatur Arts Alliance	Under way
Secure initial additional funding (above existing DAA budget)	Not yet
Expand director role from part-time to full-time	Not yet
Launch website	Not yet
Secure physical space and move in	Under way
Hire remaining staff	Not yet
Launch membership campaign, marketing campaign, fundraising campaign	Not yet
Assess specific space needs of cultural sector	Not yet
Hire space brokerage manager	Not yet
Establish master list of space availability: parameters, available uses, calendar year availability, etc.	Not yet
Establish guidelines, terms of agreement, fee structure for usage	Not yet
Market service to cultural sector	Not yet
Complete cultural tourism plan including market analysis, regional scan, marketing strategy	Not yet
Work with DAA to identify the aspects of the city's cultural landscape to market to cultural tourists	Under way
Identify and partner with other cities in the region that may be a similar attractor for cultural tourists	Not yet
Address infrastructure associated with increased visitors (overnight space, traffic studies)	Not yet
Launch cultural tourism initiative	Under way
Assess roles of City, DAA, other stakeholders in achieving objectives	Not yet
Develop forum for continual engagement with citizens on cultural matters	Not yet
Determine method and means of conducting economic/social impact study of the arts	Not yet
Launch cultural marketing campaign	Not yet



*Cultural facilities in the Decatur area, as identified in the Cultural Arts Master Plan*





*The regional transportation plan recommends pedestrian improvements along Scott Boulevard*

### ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION ENVISION6 TRANSPORTATION PLAN

While not conducted by the City of Decatur, this regional transportation plan includes several recommendations for transportation improvements within Decatur, shown as follows.

Envision6 Recommendation	Implemented?
Candler Road at Shoal Creek: replace culvert, add turn lane, and remove pedestrian bridge	Under way
Scott Blvd: sidewalks along both sides and crosswalks	Partially
Clifton Corridor Alternatives Analysis	Under way

# Round Tables





## OUTREACH PROCESS

From April 27 to June 5, 2010, the City of Decatur held its Round Table discussions, an important step in its 2010 Strategic Plan Update. There were three Round Table sessions. Each session was comprised of 11 separate meetings held at different times and places around the city. The first session involved 741 citizens, the vast majority of whom (78 percent) returned for the second and third sessions.

All together, participants offered 7,894 ideas and images about Decatur's current situation, possible future, and issues facing the city. These ideas are reproduced in Appendix C and summarized graphically in the Wordle on the following page.

As mentioned above, the Round Tables were 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 ten years.

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

For each session, the meetings were held at different times and places around Decatur. In each meeting, participants were seated in small groups of ten 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.



*The Strategic Plan Update outreach process reached people from all areas of Decatur*



*The Round Tables were facilitated by a dedicated group of citizen volunteers*





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



*Decaturites are connected to and involved in the life of their city*

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



*One meaning of the Complete Community is that more daily needs are met within walking distance*

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Decatur has come to expect and desire responsive community institutions, particularly the government*

## ROUND TABLES SESSION TWO THEMES

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

### SUSTAINING AND PRESERVING DECATUR



*Increased housing costs could lead to a lack of diversity*

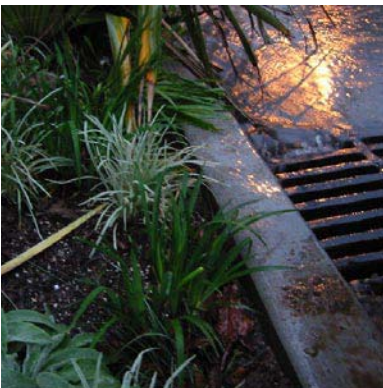
What worried citizens most was a potential loss of diversity, which refers to the mix of ethnic, income and age groups that distinguishes Decatur. Underlying this concern were two fears: that housing prices would escalate, pushing less affluent people from the city; and that taxes would become onerous,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

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

### TENDING TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Four themes emerged from the discussion on the environment:

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



*Environmental concerns, such as storm water, were frequently mentioned*

### PRESENT AND FUTURE MOBILITY

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

There was almost uniform support for new forms of transit, including the idea of starting a local trolley system. Group after group suggested trolleys, connecting downtown and Oakhurst, Emory University, and Agnes Scott College, or the DeKalb Farmers Market. Not everyone thought in terms of

a trolley, though. Other groups suggested electric buses, an expansion of Emory's Cliff bus system, or a "small, alternative-fuel circulator system" similar to Chattanooga's.

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

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

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

### LIFE IN DECATUR

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

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

### FUTURE OF HOUSING

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

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



*Suggestions were given for making Decatur a better place to walk and bicycle*



*Pride in Decatur's festivals and events is part of the city's identity*





Additional support for community gardens could provide healthy food

## HEALTHY LIVING

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

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

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

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

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

## ROUND TABLES SESSION THREE THEMES

### DESIRE FOR MORE INFORMATION, DELIVERED IN DIFFERENT WAYS

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

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



### Decatur Garden Tour Celebrates 100th Anniversary of Oakhurst

The Decatur Garden Tour is Saturday, Sept. 25, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 26, noon to 5 p.m. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of the original township of Oakhurst, many of the featured gardens are located in that area. These areas include the Chatham Community Garden Project (CCGP), a national model for successful community gardens; the residential garden of Stephanie Van Poyck, OCCP advisory director; and the famed “garden woman” of designer and author Ruth Cousins.

Other gardens on the tour feature creative design, historic displays, water-pedal plant combinations and specimens, unique landscaping and 40-foot cascading living spaces, water features and/or sustainable gardening techniques. Several gardens will be open Sunday evening to be enjoyed with wine and music.

#### In This Issue

Focus on Downtown Development	2
Join Team Decatur for 40 Challenges	2
What's Up with Cycling in Decatur?	6
Restaurants and Retail News	7
September Concert Lineup	8
Outdoor Area and Market Feet Old	9-11
Garden of Color Moves to the	13

#### Take A Walk, Decatur! Car-Free Day Sept. 22

Wednesday, Sept. 22, is Car-Free Day in Decatur and the community is invited to gather at the Community Standstill during the Blue Sky Concert (from 1-3 p.m.) for a special celebration. Decatur Active Living will issue Car-Free Day stickers to those who wish. Please go to [www.decaturga.gov](http://www.decaturga.gov) for more information.

If you would like to participate, make a commitment to reduce your automobile use on Sept. 22. That might mean riding a bike to work, walking to the store, walking to the Blue Sky Concert, sharing a ride with friends, neighbors or coworkers or riding the bus.

Car-Free Day aims to reduce excessive automobile use for one day out of the year and remind the community that the car is not the only or best way to make many kinds of trips. Most trips people take are less than three miles. Walking saves gas and contributes to your health.

## **DESIRE FOR MORE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT, VOLUNTEERISM, AND CONNECTION**

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

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

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

## **DESIRE FOR MORE & DIFFERENT GROUPS TO BE INVOLVED & EFFECTIVE**

Citizens brought up these themes in two ways. The first was in pointing out there were many organizations or groups in or near Decatur that were uninvolved in its public life, from institutions like churches and colleges to refugee organizations and neighborhood associations.

The second was in saying that working through groups was more effective than acting as individuals and had the additional benefit of building connections and a sense of community. For these reasons, many thought the city should concentrate on partnering with groups that exist, helping groups work more effectively with other groups, and encouraging new groups to form.



*Involving more organizations and groups of people in Decatur's public life is important*



“Uncle Stephen Wants You!”  
An example of outreach conducted on the web site

## DECATUR NEXT WEBSITE

Throughout the Round Tables and Strategic Plan Update process, an interactive website at [www.decaturnext.com](http://www.decaturnext.com) provided information and discussion space. Postings and a calendar provided information on upcoming meetings, which were also advertised by e-mail. A wealth of other information was available, including comments from the Round Tables, presentation slides from the Community Academies, information about the project team, video interviews with stakeholders, and details from each public meeting. These posts after each meeting allowed those not in attendance to learn what happened and share their thoughts. More than 19,700 visits to the website were recorded during the process.

**Where To Next?** ■ 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE ■ CITY OF DECATUR, GEORGIA

HOME | PROJECT TEAM | PARTICIPATE | SCHEDULE | RESOURCES | CONTACT | powered by Charrette

**“Right On!”: Decaturites Give Thumbs Up to Draft Plan**

At the Drop-By Open House on Monday, January 31, residents got a good look at the latest steps towards an update of the City’s 10-year Strategic Plan. The process is fast approaching finalization, thanks to a record-level of community participation over the last year.

Next up: A final report that will represent a refinement of the draft content presented on the **Open House display boards**, integrating comments and addressing questions from citizens Monday night...  
[cont.]

February 1st, 2011 at 12:26 pm No Comments | Read More

**Where do we go from here? The answer is up to you.**

Start here

Welcome to **Where To Next?**. Decatur’s 2010 update to our Strategic Plan. The process—and the conversation—begin here.

Over the past ten years a lot has changed around Decatur, including our residents. We’ve seen an internet savvy generation come of age, looking for—and expecting to find—online ways to participate in city government. So in response, we’re using this **2010 Strategic Plan Update** to try out something new: a dedicated and interactive project website. Now, in addition to the rigorous series of in-person Round Tables that will characterize the larger effort (more on that below), we’ll also be posting information here, as it happens, for your review and discussion.

Your first question is probably “What’s this got to do with me?” The answer: Plenty. Ten years ago, nearly 500 Decatur residents came together to set the course for 2000’s first decade, and the resulting **Strategic Plan** laid out the roadmap for

**GETTING DOWN TO DETAILS & DOLLARS**

At our January 31 meeting we presented our draft list of specific projects that will constitute Decatur’s updated Strategic Plan. Take a look with this download.

**PROJECT CALENDAR**

« Jan Mar »  
**February 2011**

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

FOLLOW [Social Media Icons]

SEARCH THIS SITE  GO

SEARCH BY CATEGORY  
Community Academy  
Discussion Issues



Community Academies



## OVERVIEW

In order to further explore those themes from the Round Tables process over which there was a lack of consensus or that needed further discussion, a series of Community Academies was convened. Each academy featured an expert speaker who addressed a theme or group of related themes. Attendees then participated in a discussion exercise based on the knowledge presented, with the goal of discussion trade-offs, moving toward consensus, and generating more focused comments to help create and refine the draft Strategic Plan Principles, Goals, and Tasks.



*Each Community Academy began with an expert lecture to inform discussion*

## GOING MOBILE

While Decatur completed its Community Transportation Plan in 2007, transportation was among the most talked about topics during the Round Tables process. The “Going Mobile” Community Academy was convened with the goal of digging deeper on the specific issues of connectivity, streets for people, transit, and parking. DeWayne Carver, AICP of Hall Planning & Engineering, Inc. gave the introductory presentation.

### CONNECTIVITY

While a grid of connected streets exists in many of Decatur’s pre-War neighborhoods, some areas of the city still lack connectivity. Decatur compares favorably to many suburban communities, but is not as well served by a street grid as many peer walkable communities.

A stronger network of streets and bicycle or pedestrian connections increases the number of possible routes to each destination, avoids concentrating traffic on fewer wide roads, can slow traffic and promote a sense of place, and serves public health goals by promoting walking and cycling. Maps at the academy highlighted Decatur’s existing grid of streets, sidewalks, bike lanes and paths, and public transit.



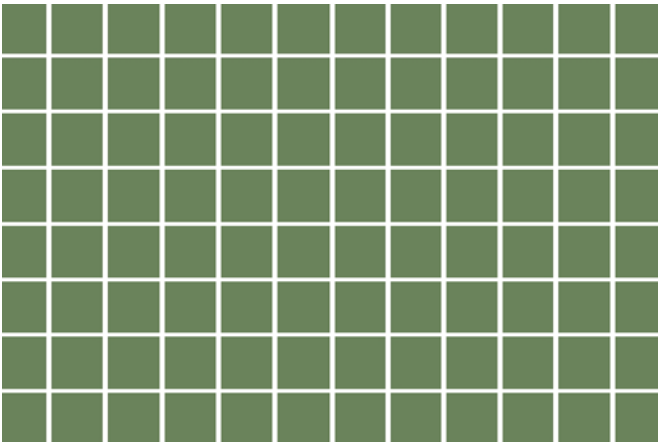
*An interconnected street system makes a city more walkable and contributes to a sense of place*



**Suwanee, Georgia: ≈60 intersections per mile**



**Decatur, Georgia: ≈80 intersections per mile**



**LEED ND Standard: 150 intersections per mile**



**Charleston, South Carolina: ≈200 intersections per mile**



*Higher speed roads can be a psychological barrier to walking, even where crosswalks are provided*

Discussion centered on the benefits and drawbacks of connectivity. Participants expressed a desire to focus on the citywide benefits of connectivity over the impacts to a particular street, but in ways that respect existing neighborhoods. In addition, psychological barriers to connectivity, such as dangerous state routes or railroad crossings, were identified.

Street design is a crucial tool for increasing connectivity, because it can make streets that are more pleasant for walking or biking, that reflect the character of adjacent property (urban vs. suburban or residential vs. commercial), and that lower driving speeds.

### **TRAFFIC**

A major continuing concern that was reiterated during the Round Tables was the issue of vehicular traffic. Decatur has already achieved some success in this area, because between 1992 and 2004, traffic counts remained relatively unchanged downtown, even with significant new development.

Many of the specific suggestions provided during the discussion, such as the desire to redesign major streets as complete streets, are already reflected in the Community Transportation Plan, but new ideas were explored regarding how to improve existing streets to calm traffic and make better use of width (for parking, landscaping, bike lanes, pedestrian space, etc.). The benefits and drawbacks of existing traffic calming measures, such as those on Church Street at Glenlake Park, were also debated.



## TRANSIT

Decatur remains one of the most transit-rich areas in Georgia. MARTA's blue line serves Decatur and connects it with Atlanta and the regional transit system. Decatur's three stations total more than 11,000 boardings on an average weekday. Plans are underway to expand transit service between Decatur, Emory University, and Lindbergh Center, but the final alternatives have not yet been determined or funded.

Before the 2010 restructuring of the MARTA bus system, routes that served Decatur totaled more than 24,000 boardings on an average weekday (more recent counts are not available). Decatur's ten MARTA bus routes connect to destinations throughout Dekalb County and Atlanta. In addition, buses from the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association (CCTMA) carry more than 1,600 passengers to and through Decatur on an average weekday.

The very popular idea for a circulator shuttle, already included in the Community Transportation Plan, was fleshed out at this academy. Examples from other communities were presented; those that served high-density areas and supported existing transit service were most successful. The average cost per trip among case studies was \$2.18, but could be higher or lower in Decatur.



*A circulator shuttle could build on existing transit service and connect centers*

## CIRCULATOR SHUTTLES IN BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

City	Pop. Density	Median HH Income	Owner HH w/o car	Renter HH w/o car	Fare	Hours of Service	Pass. per Hour	Connecting Routes
Dania Beach	3,272	\$32,043	5.4%	20%	Free	M-F, 9-5	7.1	7
Cooper City	3,317	\$69,995	2.1%	8.3%	Free	M-S 8-4	5.5	4
Coral Springs	5,548	\$52,946	3.9%	12%	Free	M-F 8-6	12	6
Lauderdale Manors	6,542	\$29,417	8.0%	33%	Free	M-F 6-6	16	2
Margate	5,773	\$45,697	8.0%	13%	25¢	M-S 7-7	12	9
Plantation	4,920	\$45,272	7.0%	12%	Free	M-F 7-4	6.5	13
Miramar	4,434	\$44,786	6.8%	12%	25¢	M-F 7-7	7.2	8
Lauderhill	8,179	\$32,070	15%	20%	Free	M-F 7-7	22	13

*Adapted from* Identifying the Characteristics of Successful Local Transit Circulator Systems in Residential Areas of Southeast FL

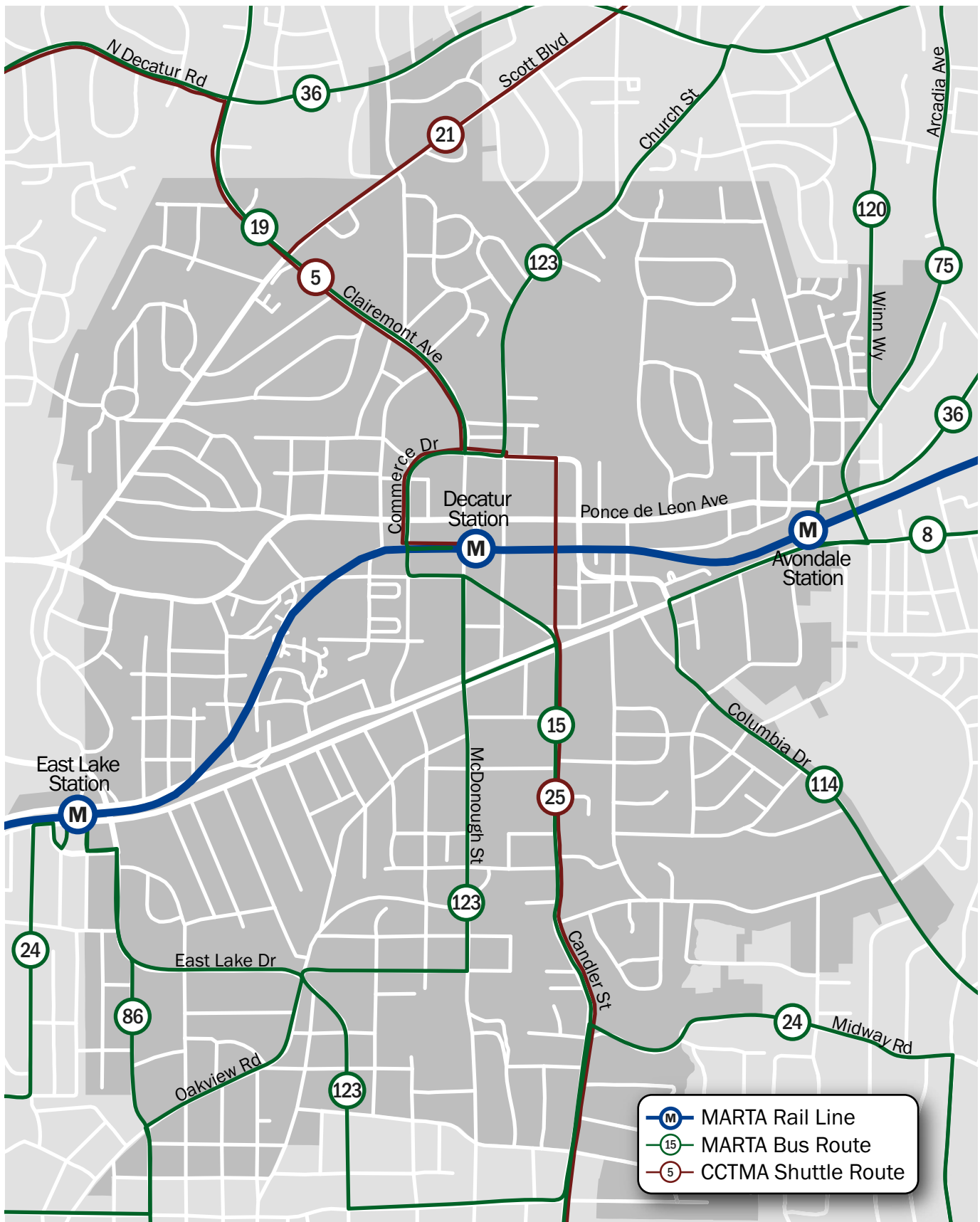
## PARKING

The availability of parking also came up frequently during the Round Tables, but there was some disagreement over how to manage the existing supply and how to balance the desire for parking with goals of walking, bicycling, and more efficient land use.

Maximizing the use of existing public parking facilities and promoting shared parking in existing lots and future developments was a key discussion idea. Existing parking requirements were examined, and participants recommended ways to amend existing zoning to promote a more efficient supply of parking.



# EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



Decatur is one of the most transit-rich cities in Georgia, with a rapid rail line, 13 bus routes, and tens of thousands of daily riders

# DECATUR FOR LIFE

The second Community Academy focused on issues of aging, affordability, and diversity—key topics that emerged during the Round Tables process. These issues built on the information presented at the first Academy, because walkability, affordable transportation, and connected neighborhoods are key to making Decatur a place for all kinds of people.

## INFO STATIONS

A series of detailed informational boards greeted attendees of the Academy, who were given a chance to absorb the information before a brief presentation began.

Of the variety of housing types currently offered in the region, from accessory dwellings and cottages to four-plexes and townhouses, only a few are represented in Decatur, and several are prohibited. Allowing more types of housing could help attract people from a diversity of age, race, and income groups, with a variety of family types. New housing types could also allow existing residents to remain in Decatur and still have access to the services they need. Affordable housing is key. Encouraging new rental housing and mother-in-law suites, or amending zoning to allow or promote more affordable options, could help meet goals of diversity and inclusiveness.

Having access to basic needs at all stages of life is not only about transportation options. It includes the need for basic services, such as groceries, pharmacies, and places to gather within reach, even without an automobile. As Decatur continues to age, this access will be crucial to reduce isolation and continue to allow a strong community.

Community bonds can also be enhanced by less tangible efforts. Civic participation and volunteerism, programming, and special events can and do help promote a vibrant public life in Decatur. Discussions centered on ways to actively encourage all groups to have access to and be able to participate in Decatur’s shared life.

## PRESENTATION

Ben Brown of PlaceMakers gave a brief presentation of demographic and economic trends, along with related challenges and opportunities. The number of Americans over age 65 is increasing rapidly, and Decatur is no exception. Between 2007 and 2012, the number of Decatur residents between 60 and 64 years of age increased by 39 percent. Aging Decaturites, like many Americans, may no longer be content with conventional nursing homes and are exploring other retirement options.

One of the most significant barriers to aging in place and sustainable diversity in Decatur is housing affordability. In 2007, nearly 94 percent of Decatur jobs paid less than \$50,000 annually. This salary equates to a qualified mortgage of only \$125,000, yet the average Decatur home price in the same year was \$384,715. A shortage of housing exists for the lower income brackets.



Informational boards provided detailed information on relevant topics before discussion began



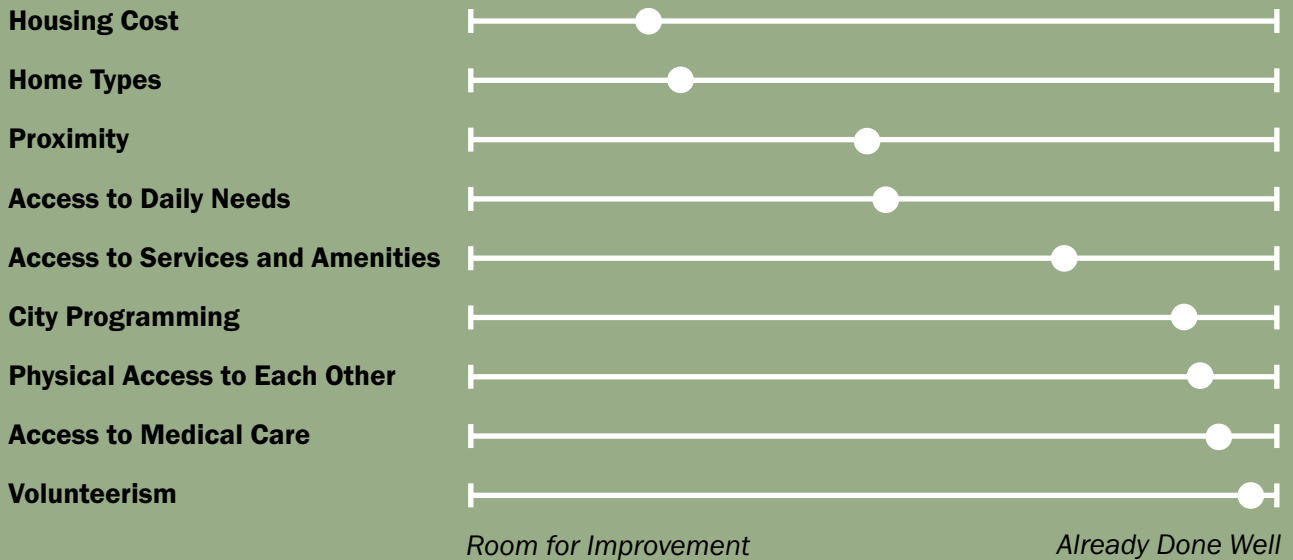
In 1950, the average American house was 983 square feet; today in Decatur, that standard is not allowed



Small groups discussed Decatur’s success in various areas related to aging in place and diversity

## RESULTS OF DECATUR FOR LIFE PRIORITIES EXERCISE

Participants used index cards to rank Decatur's performance in the following nine areas that affect the ability of residents to age in place and encourage affordability and diversity. The cost of housing and the lack of diverse housing types were identified as key areas for improvement, along with the proximity of and access to daily needs and services.



Housing cost was identified as the highest priority in this Academy

A national trend toward smaller house sizes and new housing types is not yet reflected in Decatur's zoning code. Very small cottages or mother-in-law suites could provide more affordable housing for the aging and others, but other factors besides home size are also important in affordability and aging in place. These include transportation and energy costs, access to daily needs, and quality of life.

### DISCUSSION

Following the presentation, participants worked in small groups on an exercise to rank Decatur on its effectiveness at various factors related to affordability and aging in place. Discussion centered on regulatory barriers and incentives for more affordable housing types, the appropriateness of housing types for different neighborhoods, addressing the broader issues of affordability, education to builders and residents about housing trends, and residential property taxes. A ranking exercise allowed each table to discuss and prioritize the issues. Results are summarized above, based on average rankings over all tables.

## THE NEW MAIN STREET

Discussions in the previous Community Academy inevitably led from housing and affordability to taxes, so "The New Main Street" allowed an opportunity for education and discussion about not only taxes, but retail space, jobs, and fiscal sustainability in the changing economy. Lakey Boyd of Market +

# 85/15?

Main provided the economic background that began the discussion. More details on the following analysis can be found in Appendix B.

Of Decatur's property tax, which constitutes more than half of the general fund, approximately 85 percent of revenues come from residential properties, while only 15 percent come from commercial and other non-residential properties. In many communities, this split is closer to 60/40.

Residences add significant benefits to commercial or mixed-use areas. These include making areas feel lived in and creating a lively street life, especially on nights and weekends, allowing car-free living where services are present, and meeting affordable housing goals. Such housing may also provide options for some buyers not otherwise served by Decatur.

Infill housing in Decatur's commercial and mixed-use districts appeals to young singles and downsizing seniors, so it poses minimal and predictable impact on school enrollments. Most importantly from a fiscal perspective, it produces residents who typically pay more in taxes than they take out in city services.

Challenges for integrating new residences include potential conflicts with evening retail and restaurant uses if not planned for properly. Infill buildings must also be designed to fit comfortably in the surrounding context rather than existing as stand-alone, isolated developments.

## RETAIL

One primary type of non-residential property is retail, a topic that surfaced frequently during the Round Tables. Many Decatur residents requested an additional place to buy groceries within the city. Grocers and other retailers look at the number of people within a certain radius of a particular location and their demographics. Lack of desired demographics, population density, and available space may keep larger retailers from Decatur, but many consumer preferences are already reflected in the area, despite comments that some residents feel underserved. One key way to expand retail options is to increase the residential population.

The benefits of more retail or restaurant space in Decatur include increased shopping and dining convenience for locals. Such space could also support local entrepreneurs and keep dollars in the community.



*Decatur's restaurants and shops bring visitors and tax dollars into the community*



*Decatur's demographics are not a perfect fit for every retailer, but new residents can help attract retail (photo courtesy K. Kendall)*



*Decatur: A City of Homes, Schools, Places of Worship . . . and Businesses?*





Decatur may be well positioned to attract office tenants that value quality of life over highway access (photo courtesy dominiekh)

Businesses such as corner stores, bars, and cafes—also known as third places—can form the social centers for neighborhoods or the community. Restaurants also serve as anchors that draw visitors to Decatur and generate customer traffic for nearby businesses. Disadvantages of new retail include the fact that Decatur is not ideally situated for retail growth. The market may already be saturated, and restaurants are the largest generator of car trips per building area.

### OFFICE

Offices are among the more difficult uses to attract to a community. Location and access are key decisions in where to locate, and while Decatur has excellent transit access and a central location, it does not have the highway connections of many Atlanta area communities. It also lacks a significant inventory of modern office space.



Potential growth areas could accommodate non-residential or mixed-use development that could provide jobs, services, and tax dollars



Nevertheless, many companies are attracted to places with a high quality of life and communities that share their values and provide places for their employees to live and play. Decatur may be able to market to this niche, but is unlikely to become a major regional office center, and its office market today is largely static, with the county courthouse as the market driver.

New offices could bring significant benefits to Decatur. They offer the largest tax contribution potential per acre and provide lunchtime customers for local restaurants and shops. Improving the jobs-housing balance could reduce commute times for Decatur residents and support alternative transportation, as well as generating new local jobs. In addition, due to operating hours, offices are good candidates for shared parking with retail and restaurants.

### **ECONOMIC BASE**

Of Decatur's employment base, 80 percent is concentrated in two sectors: public administration and services. These are not among the highest paying job sectors, which make up only five percent of Decatur's employment. This creates a gap between those who work in Decatur and can't afford to live here, and those who work elsewhere so they can afford to live here. Discussion centered on ways to provide both more affordable housing and more higher paying jobs to narrow this gap.

### **BUSINESS STRUCTURE**

More than 90 percent of American businesses have less than nine employees, and nearly three-fourths of jobs are in businesses with fewer than 100 employees. While Decatur may not be well suited for major employers, a number of smaller businesses have found and can find a place here. Decatur could market its unique identity and high quality of life in contrast to other major employment centers in the region to attract smaller entrepreneurs and creative businesses.

### **CONSENSUS**

Every table at this third Community Academy agreed that the existing 85/15 residential/non-residential mix of Decatur's property tax base was not sustainable and has a negative impact on diversity and housing affordability. Options to expand the commercial share include attracting new businesses or annexing commercial areas, but the most significant alternative may be through infill development in existing centers and potential growth areas.

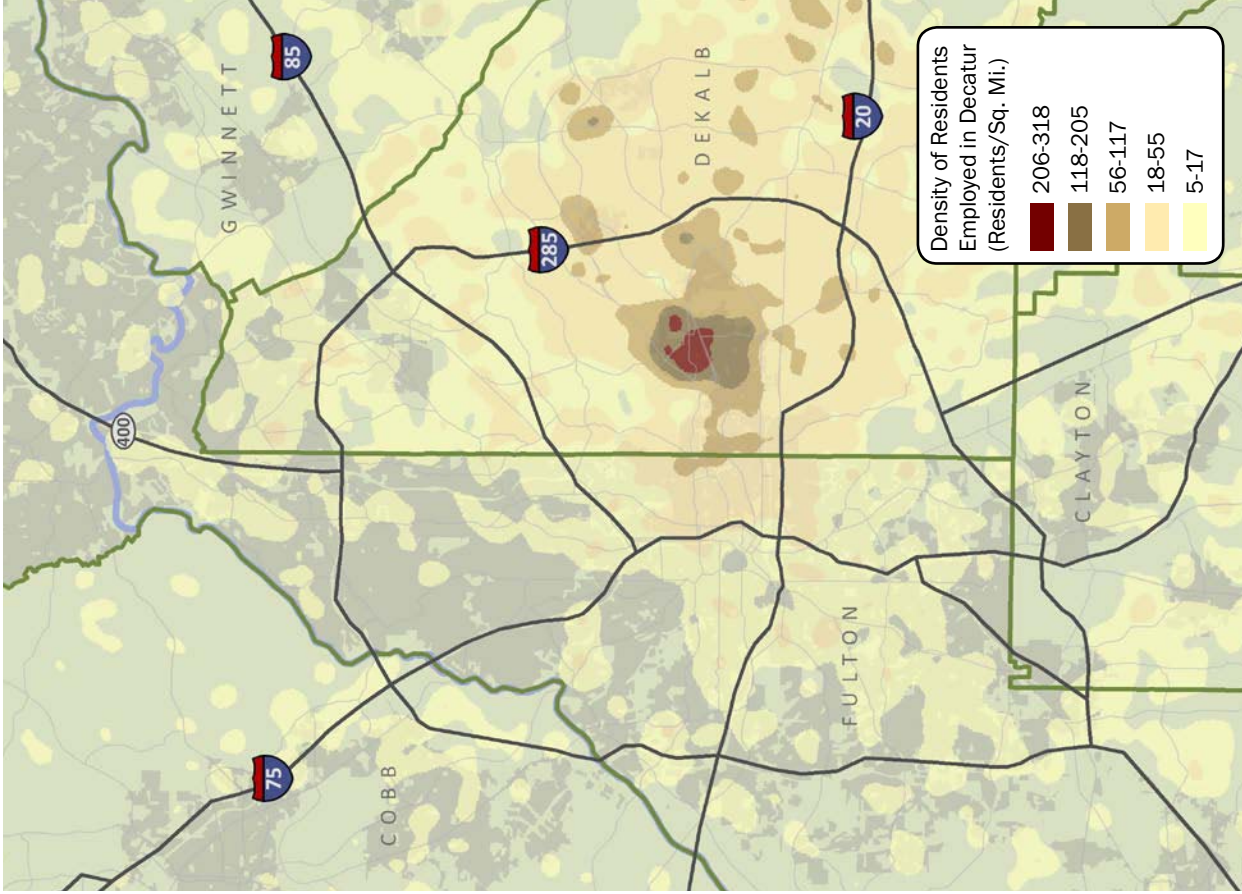
Participants discussed four nodes where significant potential for growth exists: Downtown, Oakhurst, the East Decatur/Avondale MARTA Station area, and the East Lake MARTA station area. The desired mix of residential, commercial, and office at each of these three nodes would expand the commercial base and lessen the residential tax burden.

Another significant focus of discussion was the nature of desired businesses. Many specific business types or chains were mentioned, but most comments centered on places to buy groceries or other daily needs, or on creative businesses or office tenants, such as architects and marketing or technology firms.



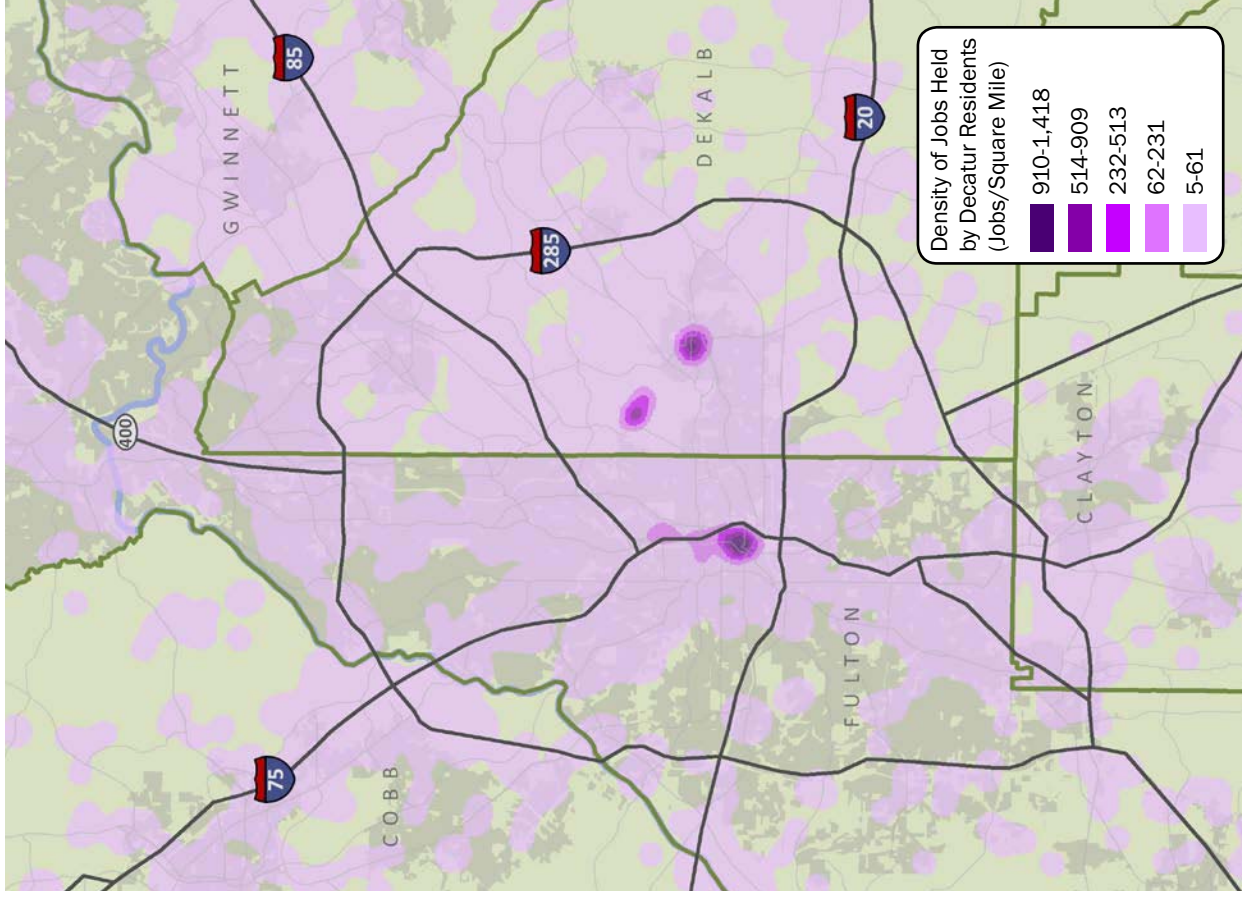
*Administration & service jobs make up the majority of Decatur employment, but often don't pay enough for employees to afford Decatur homes*

## WHERE DECATUR EMPLOYEES LIVE



Many of those employed in Decatur live near where they work, but many more live outside the city, likely because they cannot afford Decatur home prices

## WHERE DECATUR RESIDENTS WORK



Some Decatur residents work in Decatur or nearby, but many work in downtown Atlanta and elsewhere in the region, perhaps to find wages higher than those in Decatur



## GETTING THE LOVE WE WANT

Many of the comments received and topics discussed during the first three Community Academies centered on providing additional services to increase the quality of life in Decatur. Better transit, more small businesses, sustainable practices, more places to walk, new housing options, and other improvements were suggested, but no tax increases were desired to provide these.

One of the simplest solutions to providing additional services and density without raising taxes is to expand the tax base through infill development. There are currently 165 underdeveloped acres within the city limits, as shown in the map on page 40. Of this land, 46 acres already have approved redevelopment projects. Much of this land is Downtown or near MARTA stations, and can accommodate additional development to provide more tax revenue, allow more public services, and attract private investment.

### DENSITY AND DESIGN

A number of previous plans have proposed increased density in Decatur, but many higher density buildings, particularly in Downtown, have not been well designed. Some of these buildings have uninteresting architecture, dwarf adjacent buildings, and front the sidewalk with parking garages or loading areas. These developments have reinforced the belief that density is negative, car-focused, and inappropriate for Decatur.

Well-designed urban communities are compact, connected, and complex. They have quality sidewalks and other places to walk, with street trees and furnishings complemented by street-oriented buildings with porches or stoops, storefronts, and outdoor dining. Active uses of every building's ground floor contribute to sidewalk life and keep parking hidden. While Decatur already has excellent examples of successful urbanism, these principles must be kept in mind with infill development.

Getting the love we want in Decatur is about understanding good urban design techniques and desired amenities to work with developers to get projects that benefit the community. Much land in Decatur is already zoned for significant redevelopment, but taking advantage of the economic downturn could allow improved education and standards to make the most of growth when it returns.

### COSTS OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

New development contributes to the tax base but also requires services that use tax dollars. According to the Center for Urban Policy Research, for each dollar contributed by residential properties, between \$1.15 and \$1.50 is used in services, which is a net loss. Commercial properties only require \$0.35 to \$0.65 in services for each dollar they contribute, which is a net gain.

The costs to a developer of providing community amenities also need to be considered. Public parks or plazas, sidewalk retail, street trees, environmental features, affordable housing, quality architecture, new street connections, and other improvements that benefit the community are important, but increase the cost of development and may make it less feasible.



*Infill development is a significant tool to provide the private and public amenities Decatur desires*



*1960s-era buildings in Decatur have a suburban, automobile-oriented design that is not appropriate*

## FINANCIAL RISK/RETURN COMPARISON

The photographs below show the four properties at the corner of West Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce Drive in Downtown Decatur. At first glance it may seem that the parking lot and lower density buildings are prime redevelopment sites, but from an economic perspective each of the four properties is successful for its owner.

The difference is that sites requiring low risk and investment, such as parking lots, produce low returns, while properties that produce high returns require significant investment and risk. A desire to minimize risk may prevent some properties from developing with more intense uses, but high returns also equate to higher property taxes for the city, and often additional community amenities like restaurants, pocket parks, or other third spaces.



*Medium risk, medium return on investment  
Property value: \$1.3M*



*High risk, high return on investment  
Property value: \$44.5M*



*Low risk, low to medium return on investment  
Property value: \$230k*



*Medium risk, medium return on investment  
Property value: \$2.8M*

## SCALE AND TRANSITIONS

While absolute restrictions on height can be appropriate for preventing overly tall buildings, scale is best understood in terms of proportions. Taller buildings are more appropriate along wider streets, where they create an effective sense of enclosure but do not appear to overwhelm the width of the street (as measured between building façades).

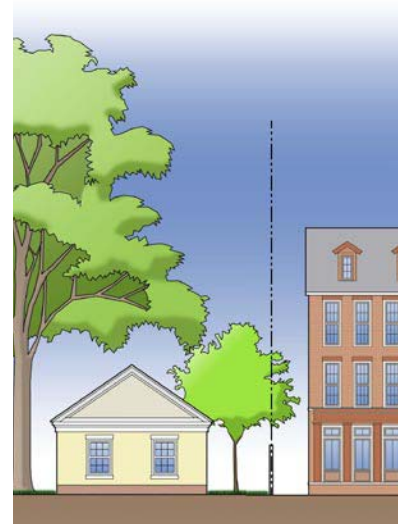
Transitions between new development and existing neighborhoods are also key. Discussion centered on the best types of transitions and how to use

them to protect existing neighborhoods from the negative aspects of new development, while also allowing them to benefit. A number of specific tools were mentioned to encourage appropriate infill in appropriate areas, and ways to move beyond negative perceptions of growth were discussed.

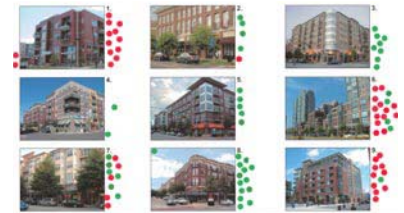
In general, the consensus was that dense infill development has an important place in Decatur's next decade, particularly in the growth areas shown on page 40. With appropriate regulation, new development could provide many of the benefits the community desires.



*Decatur's existing height regulating plane could be supplemented by other transitional techniques to encourage more contextual infill development*



*Transitional uses and alleys are traditional urban means of handling transitions*



*Academy participants rated mixed-use buildings on their appropriateness for Decatur, to begin the conversation about building form & scale*



## COMMUNITY ACADEMIES SUMMARY

	<b>What Did We Learn?</b>	<b>How Did This Shape The Plan?</b>
<b>Going Mobile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A connected transportation system is important</li> <li>• Vehicular traffic is an ongoing concern</li> <li>• A circulator shuttle could build on existing transit</li> <li>• Parking is expensive to build and can sit unused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New street and other connections could benefit Decatur and future growth</li> <li>• Appropriate design can slow cars in a neighborhood-sensitive way</li> <li>• Circulator viability study incorporated into recommended tasks</li> <li>• Guided discussion toward ways to maximize use of existing parking</li> </ul>
<b>Decatur for Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decatur is aging and becoming less diverse</li> <li>• Affordable and accessible housing types are limited</li> <li>• Proximity and access to daily needs is crucial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity, housing, and affordability efforts will be key</li> <li>• Code changes can help promote more variety and affordability</li> <li>• Infill growth can help provide services near each resident</li> </ul>
<b>The New Main Street</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property taxes fall disproportionately on residences</li> <li>• Retail needs more population to be viable</li> <li>• Quality of life can attract a niche of employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infill development, annexation, and business recruitment may add balance</li> <li>• Residential infill may help attract desired services</li> <li>• Offices and non-traditional employers could be targeted to enhance the tax base</li> </ul>
<b>Getting The Love We Want</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial development including high density residential projects pays taxes but uses few services</li> <li>• Community amenities can drive up development costs</li> <li>• Design and transitions can allow appropriate infill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commercial and mixed-use residential developments may be targeted to increase the tax base</li> <li>• Community desires should be balanced with development economics</li> <li>• Standards could help ensure better context-sensitive infill development</li> </ul>

The Plan



## THE DISTILLING PROCESS

During the Strategic Plan process, many participants asked, “How will our ideas translate into a plan?” From the beginning, the City’s goal was to ensure a transparent and inclusive process. For this reason, all of the public comments were documented and made available for review.

### ROUND TABLES

During the Round Tables, volunteer facilitators captured the conversation and ideas generated by participants. Facilitators were trained by civic engagement specialist Jon Abercrombie of Common Focus, who also developed discussion guides to help structure conversations so that everyone was encouraged to participate and consider the same questions and issues. Civic Strategies partnered with Common Focus to review all of the input and summarize the major themes that emerged from the discussion. This effort resulted in the identification of five major and three minor themes, as outlined on pages 24-25.

### COMMUNITY ACADEMIES

The themes from the Round Tables shaped the next phase of the process and lead to the Community Academies. It was clear that in some theme areas the community input showed a great deal of agreement (for example, encouraging the arts and maintaining diversity), but in other areas there were more mixed opinions.

The Community Academies were designed to help participants understand the choices and tradeoffs associated with different decisions and to address topics from the Round Tables on which there was a lack of consensus.

For example, in the “Decatur for Life” Academy, participants acknowledged that allowing more places in Decatur to build mother-in-law suites could help offset the cost of homeownership and provide more housing choices. However, participants also agreed that the City should be careful to minimize the impacts of those dwellings on adjoining homeowners.

At the end of each session, the consultant team and City staff determined if consensus had emerged around a particular issue or goal, based on preference exercises and written comments.

### DRAFT PLAN OPEN HOUSES

After reviewing the input from the Round Tables and the Community Academies, it was clear that Decatur still held many of the same aspirations from the 2000 Strategic Plan. The vision statement from the 2000 Plan was retained, the three principles were slightly updated to reflect community input, and Principle D was proposed to capture the commitment to creating a lifelong community that serves people of all ages.

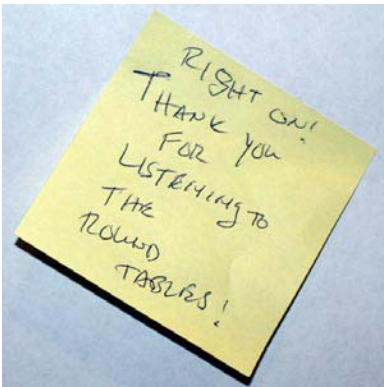
The community was asked to review and provide additional input on the proposed Vision, Principles, and Goals at three open houses. Based on preference exercises, there was overwhelming support. Fewer than 20 percent of participants left a comment suggesting changes, and many of these comments were incorporated into the plan in some way.



*Facilitators help present a summary of community comments to the public*



Vacant storefront space allowed citizens to drop in and comment on the draft plan



Public feedback received on the final draft plan was largely positive

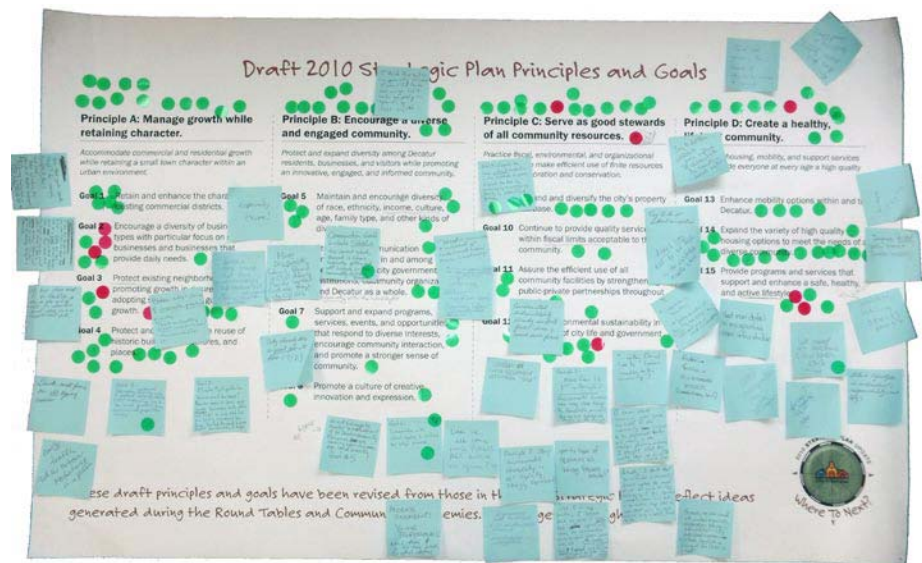
## SELECTION OF GOALS AND TASKS

The Goals and Tasks on the following pages have been drawn directly from public input provided at the Round Tables, Community Academies, and Open Houses. The consultant team and city staff reviewed all comments and created a list of all suggested tasks. The following filters were then used to shorten the list from 8,976 ideas to the 89 Tasks in this plan.

- Similar ideas were combined into one task.
- Projects already under way or those outside the City of Decatur’s control were removed.
- Consistency with recently adopted plans like the Community Transportation Plan and the Community Arts Master Plan was ensured.
- Selected projects were reviewed to make sure they were legally and financially possible within the next ten years.
- Each goal and task had to have a direct connection back to input received during the planning process.

It was also important that tasks and goals did not conflict with each other, and that (as often as possible) each task met multiple goals. For example, being recognized as a bicycle friendly community increases mobility options, fosters environmental sustainability, encourages active living, and supports a lifelong community.

Every task has been captured and recorded. Those tasks that were more relevant to another agency or organization should be forwarded to that agency or organization for implementation or will be placed on a community project list that neighborhood groups, community organizations, and local institutions can review to identify projects that they can adopt.



Extensive opportunities for comments on the draft Principles, Goals, and Visions were provided, and significant positive feedback was received



The process reflects the City's commitment to supporting an open, transparent process that invited and provided everyone in the community with the opportunity to participate and assured that every suggestion and idea was considered. This plan came from Decatur's constituents. Its successful implementation over the next decade depends on the community's continued commitment to this process.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN VISION**

The Strategic Plan Vision is preserved verbatim from the 2000 Strategic Plan. It was confirmed during the visioning process as relevant and appropriate, and it provides a succinct and overarching summary of the principles, goals, and tasks described on the following pages.

**THE CITY OF DECATUR  
WILL ASSURE  
A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE  
FOR ITS RESIDENTS,  
BUSINESSES, AND  
VISITORS BOTH TODAY  
AND IN THE FUTURE.**



## PRINCIPLE A: MANAGE GROWTH WHILE RETAINING CHARACTER

*Accommodate commercial and residential growth while retaining Decatur's unique sense of place within an urban environment.*

The preservation of Decatur's strong sense of community and unique character are important issues for residents, business owners, and visitors. This is also central to ensuring sustainable development, since market trends increasingly value local identity, sense of place, and quality of life as economic assets. Land is a finite resource. The City will encourage quality development that maximizes the economic value of existing commercial districts and meets the community's expressed desire for housing, commercial, and retail options. This means continuing to enhance the city's built environment so that Decatur remains a desirable place to live, work, and play.



*The walkability and human scale of Decatur must be preserved*



*Commercial design standards will ensure more compatible buildings*

### GOAL 1: RETAIN AND ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS AND EXPAND IT TO NEW DISTRICTS

Walkable, human-scaled commercial districts in Downtown and Oakhurst are a hallmark of Decatur today. In the coming decade, as these areas grow and evolve, and as new commercial areas emerge, they must do so in a manner that supports the vision of the community. This means ensuring that development occurs in a way that reinforces and expands the lively, pedestrian-friendly development patterns that make these places special, while respecting their context.

**Task 1A** Refine citywide commercial design standards.

Design standards should be refined to support quality commercial and mixed-use growth. These should recognize the unique character and scale of Decatur's neighborhoods and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. Updated standards for utility burial, architectural design, and parking should be explored as part of these refinements.

**Task 1B** Adopt new sign ordinance requirements to encourage more compatible signage in commercial districts.

**Task 1C** Update the Downtown Decatur Special Pedestrian Area guidelines and expand the downtown streetscape program.

Existing guidelines have promoted a high quality of development on key streets downtown, but updates are now needed. Among the suggested changes are enhanced standards for the protection of historic storefronts, requirements for inter-parcel connectivity, and an expanded area. In addition, the downtown streetscape network should continue to be expanded.

**Task 1D** Improve the appearance of Decatur's commercial districts in ways that reinforce their roles as community focal points.

Upgrades could include public facilities, street furniture, bicycle racks, trees, public spaces, or interactive kiosks with maps, visitor information, event schedules, and community information.

**Task 1E** Improve the landscaping and physical appearance of the Square.

**Task 1F** Install new waste and recycling bins that are more clearly distinct from each other and more aesthetically pleasing.

**GOAL 2: ENCOURAGE A DIVERSITY OF BUSINESS TYPES WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON SMALL BUSINESSES AND BUSINESSES THAT PROVIDE DAILY NEEDS**

Decatur is known throughout the region for its lively mix of stores and restaurants, especially in and around the Square, but needs to expand retail options to provide more variety and price points. Current employment opportunities within the city are limited. To remedy this, Decatur should focus on attracting office and employment uses that are compatible with the community's vision.

**Task 2A** Develop a recruitment strategy that targets retail businesses and restaurants that meet identified community needs or new service businesses that respond to specific requests like a downtown boutique hotel. Extend this recruitment effort to attract new office tenants that expand employment options.

**Task 2B** Continue to focus marketing and advertising efforts designed to support and enhance the "Decatur brand," to attract quality new business that meet the community's vision, and to assure the success of existing businesses.

**Task 2C** Identify available areas for light manufacturing and market them to potential businesses.

While Decatur is poorly suited for conventional manufacturing, niche industries could include artisanal food processing, artist studios, clean technology, and the production of high-value consumer goods.

**Task 2D** Explore amending vending and food cart regulations to permit them in commercial districts and parks.

These could provide convenient meals and allow more people to open businesses without significant startup costs, but could also negatively impact existing businesses if not carefully implemented.

**Task 2E** Explore partnership opportunities to create a business incubator or provide other incentives that support business start-ups in the areas of technology, artisanal manufacturing, media content production services, and similar creative business types.



*Restaurants have been pivotal in Decatur's commercial renaissance*



*Artisanal manufacturing could expand the market for locally produced goods*



The last decade saw a major increase in Downtown housing



The Concept Plans in Appendix A show examples of how long-term development might occur

### GOAL 3: PROTECT EXISTING NEIGHBORHOODS WHILE PROMOTING GROWTH IN DESIRED AREAS AND ADOPTING STANDARDS THAT GUIDE FUTURE GROWTH

Decatur’s neighborhoods are the foundation for the high quality of life that the city enjoys today, and must be preserved and protected. However, if the city is to adequately respond to changing demographics, it must accommodate new housing and retail options. The community expressed the desire to accommodate new growth and protect existing neighborhoods by continued emphasis on appropriately scaled and designed development within existing commercial districts and continued consideration of appropriately scaled new construction in existing neighborhoods.

**Task 3A** Adopt new transitional design standards to integrate commercial, mixed-use, and residential districts.

In recent decades, Decatur has used buffers and height limits to transition between existing single-family neighborhoods and new developments in existing commercial and mixed-use zoning districts. These have focused on separating such areas, rather than unifying them. As an alternative, new design techniques should be explored to provide appropriate connection between new development and existing neighborhoods, such as improved architectural design, scale and massing, and landscaping.

**Task 3B** Continue to encourage mixed-use development in existing commercial and mixed-use zoning districts, including retail, restaurant, office, and residential uses, to increase opportunities for pedestrian connectivity.

Commercial districts are ideally suited to accommodate the housing types needed to serve Decatur’s future. Development here should provide multifamily units for sale or rent, townhouses, live-work units, senior housing, and other options.

**Task 3C** Adopt long-term build-out visions for remaining underutilized commercial areas.

Please see the Concept Plans in Appendix A for examples of how new development in these areas might occur.



There are many ways to transition between new development and existing houses, including the existing requirement for upper story setbacks



**Task 3D** Study if live-work housing can be implemented in existing neighborhoods without a negative impact on nearby homes.

As technology and employment continue to evolve, more Decatur residents are running small businesses from their homes. Although current zoning regulates the types of home businesses that can occur, these may need to be reviewed or modified periodically to ensure their relevance.

**Task 3E** Improve the predictability and efficiency of the process for new development approval by establishing development standards and requirements that are consistent with the goals of the strategic plan.

**GOAL 4: PROTECT AND ENCOURAGE THE CREATIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS, STRUCTURES, AND PLACES**

The preservation of Decatur’s historic buildings, structures, and places is essential to retaining its identity as the community grows and changes. Significant progress has been made in the past decade in understanding how fortunate Decatur is in regard to such resources, but more remains to be done to encourage the preservation of neighborhoods and appropriate reuse of historic structures.

**Task 4A** Reexamine historic design standards and restrictions against historic home demolition.

The preservation of neighborhood character is as much about protecting historic homes as it is ensuring compatible new construction. While new construction is now regulated by zoning, retaining the historic character of existing homes is also critical. An update of the existing historic preservation ordinance should be undertaken and regulatory changes made, if appropriate.

**Task 4B** Pursue efforts to educate and involve neighborhood residents in determining the best methods for preserving the historic character of neighborhoods while accommodating appropriate new construction. Consider revisiting the infill housing guidelines on a regular basis as a way of accomplishing this task.

**Task 4C** Educate commercial property owners about historic preservation tax credits and the Georgia Cities Foundation loan program. Encourage expanded use of these tools.

**Task 4D** Place all eligible buildings and districts on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Task 4E** Increase public awareness of historic buildings and places and provide appropriate staff support to accomplish the historic preservation goals of the community.

**Task 4F** Develop regulations regarding demolition of significant commercial structures that are outside the scope of local historic districts.



*Some communities have amended their zoning to permit small home businesses on single-family lots*



*The protection of existing historic buildings is essential to preserving Decatur’s identity*





## PRINCIPLE B: ENCOURAGE A DIVERSE AND ENGAGED COMMUNITY

*Protect and expand diversity among Decatur residents, businesses, and visitors while promoting an innovative, engaged, and informed community.*

A truly sustainable community is one that can adapt to a changing world by drawing on the passion, energy, and knowledge of its citizens. For these efforts to be most successful, the community should reflect the diversity found in society as a whole. It is equally important for citizens to feel that they have a stake in the future of their community and that they play an active, engaged role in making it a reality.



*Naturally occurring retirement communities allow people to grow old around friends and family, in a familiar environment*



*Decatur should strive to be a place that is accessible and visitable for people with disabilities*

### GOAL 5: MAINTAIN AND ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY OF RACE, ETHNICITY, INCOME, CULTURE, AGE, FAMILY TYPE, AND OTHER KINDS OF DIVERSITY

- Task 5A** Promote Decatur as a lifelong community that is welcoming to people of all ages and supports programs that allow older residents to stay in their homes, stay in the community, and age in place. Explore options like Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) or Senior Village Support Networks that address this task.
- Task 5B** Continue to encourage the participation of artists and performers that represent a broad range of cultures at festivals and special events. Expand outreach efforts to encourage diverse audience attendance and find methods to measure the results.
- Task 5C** Develop an outreach plan targeting diverse population groups, including expanded marketing efforts and media outlets, to encourage diverse cultures to live, work, and play in Decatur.
- Task 5D** Support efforts to expand diversity in community leadership roles.
- Task 5E** Support programs that help elderly, low-income residents remain in the community.
- Task 5F** Adopt universal design guidelines to allow new commercial buildings, businesses, and homes to be visitable by those with mobility impairments.

Even the most able-bodied members of society will one day reach periods in their life where their mobility is impaired. Creating housing that is accessible or visitable to a wide range of citizens would benefit both current and future residents, and make the city resilient in the face of demographic changes.

### GOAL 6: STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN AND AMONG NEIGHBORHOODS, CITY GOVERNMENT, VOLUNTEER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, AND DECATUR AS A WHOLE

- Task 6A** Provide communication in a variety of formats to reach a broad audience. Expand the use of social media and electronic tools such as Open City Hall to encourage citizen participation.

**Task 6B** Provide focused support to improve interaction between neighborhood and community groups, and focus on developing a community that supports aging in place.

**GOAL 7: SUPPORT, EXPAND, AND DEVELOP PROGRAMS, SERVICES, EVENTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT RESPOND TO DIVERSE INTERESTS, ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY INTERACTION, AND PROMOTE A STRONGER SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

**Task 7A** Continue to provide volunteer support services and maintain programs like the MLK Day service project, Season of Giving, and special event support.

**Task 7B** Explore the opportunity for an event that educates citizens about their community and connects them with community, institutional, and nonprofit organizations to promote community pride, volunteerism, neighborhood interaction, and communication with the public.

**Task 7C** Expand the Decatur 101 program to reach as many citizens as possible.

**Task 7D** Consider creating a neighborhood mini-grant program that encourages grass roots community improvement projects such as neighborhood kiosks, public art, tree plantings, neighborhood signs, and park improvements, and builds a stronger partnership between city government and neighborhood organizations.

**Task 7E** Partner with City Schools of Decatur to establish a Decatur Youth Council to advise on Strategic Plan implementation and how the city government can best meet the needs of local youth.

**GOAL 8: PROMOTE A CULTURE OF CREATIVE INNOVATION AND EXPRESSION**

**Task 8A** Support the implementation of the Cultural Arts Master Plan.

**Task 8B** Support the development of the Arts Partnership identified in the Cultural Arts Master Plan to bring collective, institutional support for the Decatur Arts Alliance and better coordination of cultural arts facilities.

**Task 8C** Integrate art into public facilities, such as sidewalks or new buildings, in partnership with local schools, the Arts Alliance and local artists.

**Task 8D** Create a Decatur smart phone application to serve as a visitor and resident guide for local businesses, as well as a source of event and other information.



*Mini-grants could fund neighborhood tree plantings and similar efforts*



*A Decatur smart phone application could benefit both residents and visitors*



## PRINCIPLE C: SERVE AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

*Practice fiscal, environmental, and organizational stewardship to make efficient use of finite resources through collaboration and conservation.*

Decatur is known throughout the Southeast for being a progressive community, and for providing excellent public services. The City should continue to practice fiscal, environmental and organizational stewardship as a way of ensuring its long-term viability and quality of life.



*Redevelopment opportunities can help expand the property tax base*



*Redevelopment can add employees and residents, and increase local retail sales*

### GOAL 9: EXPAND AND DIVERSIFY THE CITY'S REVENUE BASE

- Task 9A** Find opportunities to redevelop existing commercially zoned properties to their highest and best use.
- Task 9B** Explore annexation options in partnership with the City Schools of Decatur that expand the property tax base and enhance school operations.
- Task 9C** Support the redevelopment of surface parking lots and underperforming properties in the Downtown and Oakhurst commercial districts, and the development of the former Devry University property and East Decatur Station area with a mix of uses that meet community needs and help accomplish the community's vision.
- Task 9D** Promote other revenue sources in addition to property taxes, such as increased sales tax revenues.

### GOAL 10: CONTINUE TO PROVIDE QUALITY SERVICES WITHIN FISCAL LIMITS ACCEPTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY

- Task 10A** Pursue energy saving options and long-term sustainability policies to reduce the cost of providing services.
- Task 10B** Continue to access grant funding opportunities to pay for capital projects, support strategic goals, and improve quality of life.
- Task 10C** Use the budget process to assure the most cost effective use of city resources to implement the city's vision.
- Task 10D** Evaluate homestead exemptions, including their effect on residential tax burden and city's ability to provide services.

### GOAL 11: ASSURE THE EFFICIENT USE AND COORDINATION OF ALL COMMUNITY FACILITIES BY STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Task 11A** Create facility committees as needed to work with community institutions to identify opportunities for shared use of public facilities, to allow for more efficient use of these facilities, and to make certain that existing partnerships like the athletic facilities partnership meet regularly to accomplish this goal.



**Task 11B** Incorporate multi-use rooms into as many city-owned buildings as possible to provide for flexible community use opportunities.

**Task 11C** Convene an annual forum for non-profit, public, religious, and institutional organizations to share ideas, resources, and strategies to meet the strategic goals of the community.

**GOAL 12: FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IN ALL ASPECTS OF CITY LIFE AND GOVERNMENT PRACTICE**

**Task 12A** Develop a citywide sustainability plan with the assistance of the environmental sustainability board to address issues such as the creation of a climate action plan, initiatives such as an ordinance to limit motor vehicle idling, and roof color standards to reduce the heat island effect.

**Task 12B** Update and create a unified land development ordinance that requires sustainable building practices throughout the community.

**Task 12C** Support the expansion of urban gardening opportunities.

Urban gardening benefits the community by promoting physical activity, bringing neighbors together, improving food quality, and keeping dollars local. In addition, it begins to change society's relationship to food in a positive, sustainable way.

Efforts to expand urban gardening could include increased community garden sites, creation of a neighborhood tool bank, information sharing, removing regulatory barriers, material support, or expanded farmer's markets.

**Task 12D** When building public facilities, design them to achieve LEED or equivalent certification and to assure quality construction that will serve the community for 50 years.

**Task 12E** Complete energy conservation audits of city facilities.

**Task 12F** Expand the use of more sustainable lighting options on streets and within city parks and public areas.

**Task 12G** Support the installation of alternative fuel source stations in public or semi-public places.

**Task 12H** Purchase additional alternative fuel vehicles for city use.

**Task 12I** Support efforts to convert traffic signals to low-energy LEDs and implement a pilot program for LED street lights.

**Task 12J** Expand the existing recycling program to include commercial properties and address the need to dispose of unique and/or hazardous materials like paint, motor oil, and electronics.



*The arts enhance a quality of life and community identity*



*Community gardens bring people together and strengthen community bonds*



*Solar lighting can reduce local energy consumption*





*An urban forest plan could provide comprehensive guidance for the protection and expansion of Decatur's tree canopy*



*Invasive plant removal can start to restore native ecosystems, while strengthening community bonds*

### **GOAL 13: PROTECT AND RESTORE NATURAL RESOURCES, SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, AND INCREASE ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS**

- Task 13A** Create an urban forest management plan to assess Decatur's existing tree canopy, recommend strategies for protection, maintenance, and new tree plantings, and revise the city's tree ordinance.
- Task 13B** Create an updated storm water management plan. Continue to upgrade the storm water system and pursue opportunities for shared storm water detention systems as well as shared retention systems that can serve as public amenities.
- Task 13C** Support educational programs to encourage individual support of environmental sustainability programs such as the Kilowatt Crackdown.
- Task 13D** Adopt a long-range maintenance schedule for parks and greenspace to assure that facilities and fields are maintained and repaired, and that greenspace areas and trails are well managed.
- Task 13E** Acquire and expand greenspace holdings when opportunities and resources are available.
- Task 13F** Conduct stream bank restoration and naturalization of stream channels. Install signs along each creek to increase public awareness.
- Task 13G** Remove all invasive plant species from city property and ban the sale of invasive species on city property.
- Task 13H** Adopt light pollution guidelines to lessen the impact of light sources on the night sky.
- Task 13I** Install additional dog waste bag stations in public places and along streets to reduce the amount of dog waste that pollutes streams.



## PRINCIPLE D: SUPPORT A SAFE, HEALTHY, LIFELONG COMMUNITY

*Assure that housing, mobility, and support services exist to provide everyone at every age a high quality of life.*

Decatur must be an active community that supports healthy living at all points in a person's life. This means creating an environment that supports physical activity for people of all abilities and ages, providing housing and services for all citizens, and nurturing programs that reinforce these concepts, especially for underserved populations.

### GOAL 14: ENHANCE MOBILITY OPTIONS WITHIN AND TO DECATUR

**Task 14A** Implement the recommendations of the Community Transportation Plan.

This comprehensive plan includes a thoughtful range of transportation projects and policies. These include bicycle infrastructure improvements, an internal shuttle system, gateway intersection upgrades, and improved at-grade railroad crossings. Implementing the plan's recommendations will improve safety for all modes of transportation, improve quality of life, and serve the needs of an aging population.

**Task 14B** Continue to implement the Safe Routes to Schools program.

**Task 14C** Be recognized as a bicycle friendly community. Provide more bike racks, bike lockers at MARTA stations, and a bike station downtown featuring showers, secure storage, and repair.

**Task 14D** Review existing conditions to establish appropriate and consistent speed limits on all city streets to increase safety and make walking and biking more desirable.

**Task 14E** Strengthen partnerships between the City, the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association, and major Decatur employers to encourage alternative transportation.

**Task 14F** Encourage MARTA to improve maintenance and cleaning at Decatur Station, especially the bus bay.

**Task 14G** Continue to support other creative transportation options, like car sharing and scooters, through public education and by providing parking opportunities.

**Task 14H** Update parking standards to allow innovative parking strategies, such as shared or unbundled parking, that create pedestrian friendly, environmentally sustainable, and affordable developments.

**Task 14I** Promote more efficient use of parking with electronic signs, shared use of existing lots and decks, consolidated parking meters, more strict enforcement, higher parking fines, and similar techniques.



*A local shuttle service is a priority for Decatur residents*



*Electronic signs can show parking availability in the downtown area*



*Small cottage homes can expand the range of housing prices provided in Decatur, but are currently not allowed (Photo courtesy www.rosschapin.com)*

## **GOAL 15: EXPAND THE VARIETY OF HIGH QUALITY HOUSING OPTIONS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE COMMUNITY**

**Task 15A** Request that the Decatur Housing Authority Board and staff take the lead in implementing the goals of the Decatur Affordable Housing Study.

**Task 15B** Adopt ordinance changes that allow smaller homes, support accessory dwellings, and encourage other creative housing options that provide affordable housing in single family neighborhoods. Educate the public about their characteristics and benefits.

**Task 15C** Encourage the development of new apartment buildings in commercial districts, and encourage the renovation and preservation of existing apartment housing throughout the community to address our commitment to provide quality housing for all stages of life.

**Task 15D** Support the expansion of the Decatur housing trust fund by revising and expanding affordable housing incentives like the housing density bonus to encourage private developer funding.

**Task 15E** Support comprehensive efforts that go beyond the cost of rent and home price to keep Decatur affordable.

The true cost of housing should also consider factors such as transportation, utility, and maintenance costs. Strategies aimed at reducing car ownership and parking, increasing energy efficiency, and providing buildings that are built to last can lower the cost of living.

## **GOAL 16: PROVIDE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT SUPPORT AND ENHANCE A SAFE, HEALTHY, AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE**

**Task 16A** Expand the off-street path system throughout the community, especially by using vacant or unbuildable lots, utility corridors, or stream corridors to create mid-block passages.

**Task 16B** Expand program offerings such as a “walk there” campaign and bicycle training/education activities to encourage active, healthy lifestyles for all age groups.

**Task 16C** Continue to provide safe, healthy, and affordable after school and summer programming for Decatur’s children.

**Task 16D** Install active living facilities in parks and public spaces to promote physical activity and human interaction among all age groups.

**Task 16E** Pursue the redevelopment of the Beacon Hill complex to provide for improved police and court facilities that support the productivity and effectiveness of our police force.

**Task 16F** Develop internal city policies to promote and support physical activity and walking, such as additional police patrols on foot and/or bicycles and expanding car-free day activities.



*People of all ages can benefit from programs that encourage physical activity*

Moving Forward





## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

While this Strategic Plan is intended primarily to guide the work of city government over the next decade, many of its Goals and Tasks are best implemented in cooperation with citizen boards and community groups. These community partnerships allow for more efficient use of resources and leverage the strengths of existing boards. They also allow a myriad of ideas that surfaced during the planning process to be addressed, even when they are beyond the scope of city government.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

While broad environmental goals are pursued by the City, this board can help implement and staff a number of supporting initiatives. Many of these may ultimately be the result of a citywide sustainability plan. Such efforts may include:

- Identification of “green building” best practices that could be implemented without negatively impacting other Strategic Plan objectives, such as the desire to provide a range of housing types and prices.
- An urban gardening extension service could include a location or part-time staff providing information on garden supplies, maintenance, seeds, and start up.
- Citywide composting promotion. As part of this initiative, existing compost collection sites could be opened to the public and more broadly advertised, or curbside composting could be implemented. Restaurants and other businesses that do not already compost could be encouraged to do so.
- A set of water conservation best practices could address rain barrels, toilet replacement, low-flow faucets, shared retention facilities, and other measures, as well as potential financial incentives.
- An annual Sustainability Award could increase awareness by recognizing buildings, landscapes, businesses, and other activities that exemplify sustainable principles.
- Opportunities for local generation of energy should be pursued, including potential funding sources.
- Best practices to discourage the purchase of polystyrene food and beverage containers, water bottles, and disposable plastic bags could be identified and distributed to business and consumers.
- Techniques for improving the environmental performance of roofs, such as the installation of green roofs or the use of light colored materials.

### DECATUR HOUSING AUTHORITY

The provision of quality, affordable housing in Decatur is the responsibility of the Housing Authority of the City of Decatur. This organization offers many programs and services to meet Decatur’s needs and assist individuals and families at varying levels of income to afford to live in quality housing. This organization has successfully developed market rate and affordable



*There are several standards for “green buildings” that could be studied to determine appropriate practices in Decatur*



*Local energy production could take many forms*



*Affordable housing can be promoted with the help of the Housing Authority, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals*

housing options including single-family, townhouse, and multifamily products. In addition, they provide high quality public housing facilities and are currently upgrading the Allen Wilson Terrace public housing.

While the City of Decatur funded the development of an Affordable Housing Study in 2008, the implementation of this plan should be the responsibility of the Housing Authority. The major gap in the housing market identified by the Study was the need for quality, new apartments. The Housing Authority can take the lead in spearheading the development of new apartments that offer both market rate and affordable rental options.

In addition, the Strategic Plan offers a number of suggestions for creative options to expand affordable housing from smaller lot sizes to making it easier to build mother-in-law suites behind single-family homes. The Housing Authority should be a partner in identifying and implementing best practices from across the country that allow Decatur to remain affordable to residents at all stages of life. In addition, the Housing Authority should take the lead in identifying creative ways to use the City's density bonus option to generate developer funded mechanisms to purchase and maintain affordable housing options throughout the community.

A joint meeting of the City Commission and the board of the Housing Authority, along with appropriate staff, should be scheduled to review the Affordable Housing Study and the Strategic Plan. The purpose of the meeting would be to identify goals and opportunities for the Housing Authority to implement the recommendations related to housing issues identified in these documents and take the lead in achieving the community's vision for creating more housing options.

#### **DECATUR PLANNING COMMISSION AND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

A number of ordinance changes and policy issues are recommended in this Strategic Plan and are necessary to accomplish the goals and tasks identified. As the primary citizen board responsible for reviewing and recommending changes to the zoning ordinance, the Decatur Planning Commission should take the lead in formulating a plan to move forward with these changes.

This body should direct the work necessary to determine ordinances and issues that need to be addressed and the research necessary to identify options to be considered. They would also convene public input sessions throughout this process and ultimately make recommendations to the Decatur City Commission on any proposed changes to ordinances and policies. The relevant Strategic Plan Tasks that they will need to consider are Tasks 1A, 1C, 2C, 3A, 3D, 3E, 4F, 5F, 12C, 14H, 15B, and 15D.

#### **DECATUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

These two citizen boards are represented by the same board of directors. The Downtown Development Authority oversees development in the historic central business district and is responsible for the implementation of the Decatur Town Center Plan and the components of economic development outlined in the Downtown Livable Centers Initiative Study. The citywide development authority works with other commercial districts located

throughout the city such as the Oakhurst Business District, the historic commercial structures zoned C-1 (neighborhood commercial) along the College Avenue corridor, and the East Decatur Station area.

A development authority has the ability to buy, sell and lease property, borrow money, apply for grants and generally work to encourage quality growth and development in commercial districts. The development authority has purchased land to hold for several development projects in the past and can continue to serve in this capacity. In addition, the development authority works with developers to negotiate on issues related to design, site plans, as well as the mix of uses and the tenants in a project. Board members, while residents of Decatur, also represent various disciplines including architecture, engineering, law, and finance and bring their expertise to the table to attract quality development and appropriate businesses. They work in partnership with the City Commission and the Decatur Business Association to serve as advisors and advocates for quality growth and development.

### **DECATUR BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**

This private, non-profit membership organization is an important partner in the city's economic development program. While the City and the Development Authority take the lead in attracting new businesses and investors to the City, the DBA plays an important role in retaining these businesses by providing support that helps them succeed and grow.

They offer monthly meetings and e-news alerts that create networking opportunities for small businesses, sponsor special events that help market commercial districts, and assist with funding projects that improve the appearance and quality of life of the city's business districts. In addition, they produce a series of educational forums to provide useful information for small business owners on everything from marketing to finance.

### **ACTIVE LIVING BOARD**

The Active Living Board is a citizen board that provides advice and support to better manage and expand programs that encourage an active, healthy lifestyle for all citizens. The Board assists with existing programs like Safe Routes to School and helps design citywide health and fitness initiatives.

This board initiated the Team Decatur effort of the KP Challenge and expanded it to include the Grand Slam challenge. They are working on a "Walk There" Decatur initiative and are involved in expanding bicycling through the placement of bicycle racks and the development of bicycle maps. This board would primarily be responsible for the implementation of Goal 16.

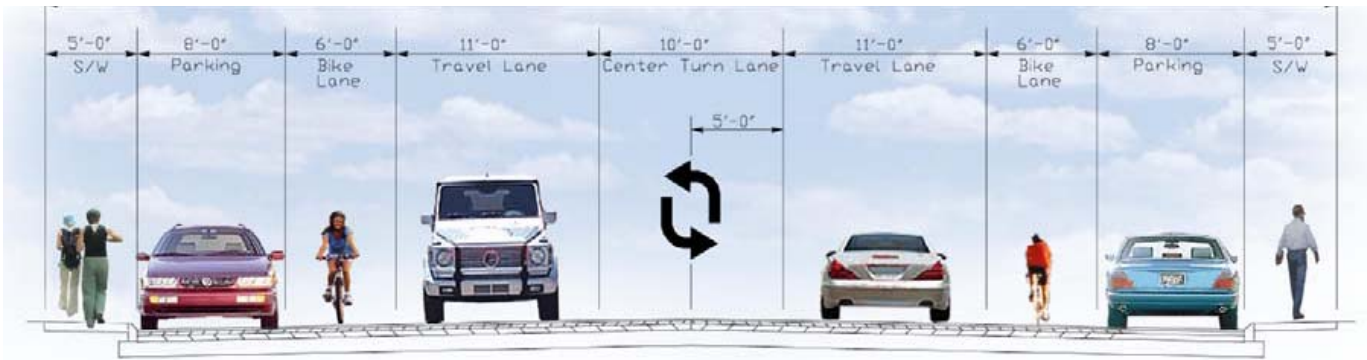
### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

The following tasks should be implemented with the assistance of the Historic Preservation Commission: 1A, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E, and 4F.



*The Decatur Business Association helps support and grow local businesses*





The Community Transportation Plan recommends creating complete streets along streets such as Commerce Drive



Enhanced mobility should benefit all modes of travel and people of all ages

## COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PLAN

While not a specific board or entity, the Community Transportation Plan will be a key guide to implementing the Strategic Plan. It identified a wide range of transportation projects and policies aimed at expanding transportation options within the City of Decatur. During the strategic planning process, several recommendations from the plan emerged as priorities, including:

- Improving pedestrian crossings along Scott Boulevard, which is a major barrier for residents living north of it desiring to walk to Downtown.
- Implementing road diets along College Avenue, Church Street, and Clairemont Avenue.
- Installing bicycle facilities throughout the community.
- Synchronizing traffic lights in a way that makes it advantageous to drive the speed limit.
- Installing pedestrian countdown signals, a responsibility of DeKalb County.
- Streetscape upgrades along Church Street from Ponce de Leon Avenue to Commerce Drive.
- Streetscape upgrades and a road diet along Commerce Drive.
- Completion of the Church Street traffic calming.
- Installing pedestrian-only signal phases in areas with high pedestrian traffic.
- Improving the intersection of Commerce Drive at Clairemont Avenue, South Candler Street at College Avenue, Atlanta Avenue at Howard Avenue, and College Avenue at Columbia Drive.
- Expanding Decatur's bicycle network.

## GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

Over the last year, the Decatur community has committed thousands of hours to create a vision for its future. The 2010 Strategic Plan is a living document that will serve as the road map. The community residents, businesses, and institutions are responsible for not only holding the City accountable for projects identified in the plan, but also participating in the implementation.

This community-volunteer-driven commitment to advocacy, sweat equity, and identifying resources to support a local cause, projects, programs and process are often referred to as grass roots organizing/movement. The following provides examples of grass roots efforts that can assist in the implementation of various projects identified in the City of Decatur Strategic Plan, with the assistance of the city's volunteer coordinator.

- Creating a community tool bank to promote tool sharing among residents and businesses.
- Restarting a shared bicycle program to promote bike riding by those who work downtown or ride transit, as well as local residents.
- Organizing neighborhood block parties to strengthen community bonds and promote cooperation.
- Establishing an Adopt an Elder program to connect volunteers with aging residents and help them with home repair, transportation, meals, and companionship.
- Organizing a Neighborhood Welcome Wagon program to be coordinated citywide, but implemented at the neighborhood level to provide community information, a gift basket, or other materials to new residents.



*An Adopt an Elder program could connect volunteers with aging residents*



Implementation will require hard work on the part of many groups and individuals (photo courtesy ILRI)

## IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

The implementation schedule on the following pages shows the proposed years over the next decade during which each task will be implemented. A filled circle indicates that implementation is occurring during that year, while an empty circle indicates that implementation is not occurring during that year.

This schedule is intended to serve as a guide to the City Commission, city staff, citizens, and other organizations involved in implementing the Strategic Plan vision. It should be reviewed annually to see if progress has been made on tasks identified for implementation in that year.

Most tasks will require more than one year to implement and so are shown as being implemented in multiple years. A few tasks are ongoing and are therefore shown as being implemented in all years of the coming decade. A few other tasks are intermittent because they are to be implemented gradually or require monitoring.

One important lesson of the implementation schedule is that the Strategic Plan will not be completed overnight. Rather, it is intended to serve as a guide over the next ten years for achieving the vision. It can also serve as a checklist for those tasks completed and pending in any given year over the next decade.

		Implementation Year									
Task		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
PRINCIPLE A	1A	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	1B	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	1C	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	1D	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	1E	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	1F	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	2A	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	2B	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	2C	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	2D	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	2E	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	3A	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	3B	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	3C	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
	3D	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	3E	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	4A	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	4B	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	●	○	○
	4C	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	4D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	4E	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	4F	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

● Implementation to occur in this year

○ Implementation not to occur in this year

		Implementation Year									
Task		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
PRINCIPLE B	5A	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	5B	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	5C	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	5D	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●
	5E	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	5F	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	6A	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	6B	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●
	7A	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	7B	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	7C	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	7D	○	○	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●
	7E	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	8A	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	8B	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	8C	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	8D	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	PRINCIPLE C	9A	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
9B		○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
9C		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
9D		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
10A		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
10B		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
10C		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
10D		○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●
11A		○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11B		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
11C		○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12A		●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12B		○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12C		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12D		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12E		○	○	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	○
12F		○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12G		○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12H		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
12I	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	
12J	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	
13A	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	
13B	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	
13C	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
13D	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	
13E	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
13F	○	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	
13G	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
13H	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	
13I	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	



		Implementation Year									
Task		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
PRINCIPLE D	14A	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14B	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14C	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14D	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	●
	14E	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14F	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	14G	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	14H	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	14I	○	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	●	○
	15A	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	15B	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	15C	○	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
	15D	○	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	15E	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	16A	○	○	●	○	●	○	●	○	●	○
	16B	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	16C	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
16D	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
16E	○	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	
16F	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	

● Implementation to occur in this year      ○ Implementation not to occur in this year