



## Decatur City Commission Retreat 2008

Smithgall Woods  
February 1-2, 2008

The retreat focused on strategies outlined in two texts: *Good to Great* by Jim Collins and *A Whole New Mind* by Daniel Pink.

The early part of the session was led by Bob O'Neal, Executive Director of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). He presented the brutal facts about the future of local government. He related the concepts outlined in *Good to Great* to local governments and he challenged the group to think in ways outlined by Daniel Pink. In essence, O'Neal gave a very logical and clear picture of how a municipality can move from good to greatness.

The group took away the following from what Bob O'Neal presented:

- The importance of sustainability. And that sustainability happens at the intersection of four sectors economic, environmental, institutional and social equity.
- Courage. With Level 5 leadership comes not just will and humility but courage to do what is necessary to move from good to great.
- The need to define sustainability for Decatur
- The need to communicate the vision (the Hedgehog Concept).
- Decatur's vision includes a healthy, active lifestyle built upon a foundation of sustainability.
- We need to figure out what we must do to sustain.
- We must focus on our goal and never let up
- Collins states that current success is the best predictor of future failure. Decatur, although successful, must never let up--the city must continue to move forward.
- It's important to get the right people on the bus

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We revisited the visions created last year. These fit nicely into the concepts presented in *Good to Great* and *A Whole New Mind*. The clear vision is the direction for the future. To get there requires the slow deliberate turn of the "flywheel."

**Vision Statement created in 2007**

To create a Decatur that is a vibrant, 24-hour city that is clean, green, active and attractive.

**Decatur 2012 (created in 2007)**

A regional destination with design oriented development, attractive, clean, and environmentally sound. There will be public art, a diversity of people in age, and activity, including a diversity of mobility. The sidewalks will be clean and attractive. Everyone will have a feeling of safety.

Decatur of 2012 will be larger and have five connected activity centers, including the Square, East Decatur, North Decatur/Clairemont, Suburban and Oakhurst. Each activity center will be distinguished by a unique character but will share in common the sense of community and the visual character of Decatur. Each will be connected by walking, cycling, and bus routes.

Using the leadership skills for the Conceptual Age as described in Pink's book, the group examined several challenges to the future and through a "why not" exercise proposed some potential solutions:

<u>Challenge</u>	<u>Creative Solution</u>
1. Resource restraints, money, economy, time, people	Annexation
2. Collect the facts, get all the right and current information	Increase resources for evaluation activities (surveys, etc.)
3. Communication/consensus building in the community	Develop and implement a strategy for the new media (Bright Idea: Decatur Daily)
4. The changing direction of democracy	Expand Decatur 101 and add a Civics 101--Town meetings over issues with technology
5. The tyranny of the minority	Discipline, courage and communication

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| 6. Vulnerability to other government agencies                                    | Work for a municipal sales tax; promote law to limit state's ability to interfere with cities                      |
| 7. Resistance to change and the natural lack of trust that change will be better | Visionary process that results in a "Virtual" Decatur for the future   |
| 8. Partnership with the School Board   | Let the School Board know we want to work together; they want great schools and we want a great city.              |
| 9. Aging population--diversity of ages   | Create an ad campaign that puts a "face" on Decatur. Change the infrastructure to accommodate the aging population |
| 10. Shrinking time between concept and completion                                | Re-design the process to take advantage of technological changes. Keep down costs!                                 |

Finally, there was discussion around the possibility of investigating the blogosphere. It was suggested that the group study what blogs are out there and perhaps read the book: *The Corporate Blogging Book: Absolutely Everything You need to Know to Get it Right* by Debbie Weil.