



## Decatur City Commission Retreat 2011

Smithgall Woods  
February 11-12, 2011

The retreat focused on strategies for getting to specific projects over the next year with some emphasis on the strategic plan.

Looking first at the surprises from the year, the group acknowledged the following highlights:

- Large surplus in the fund balance
- Completion of the bond process
- A new and exciting collaborative relationship with the School Board
- The excellent citizen involvement in the strategic planning process
- Sixty-percent of the people involved in the strategic planning process had been to Decatur 101

### Strategic Plan/Decatur Tomorrow

The group focused on looking at two components in relation to the Strategic Plan: 1) What was omitted or needed to be changed; and, 2) What needed to be added.

#### **Items to Omit or Change:**

- ❖ Change the icons that introduce each principle.
- ❖ Goal 1: Retain and enhance the character of existing commercial districts and expand it to new districts
  - 1B: Regarding the sign ordinance wording, reword this more carefully
  - 1G: Omit
- ❖ Goal 6: Strengthen communication and involvement in and among neighborhoods.
  - 6B: Omit the words “Reorganize city staff assignments to” and begin the task with “Provide focused support to improve interaction between neighborhood and community groups. . .”

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- ❖ Goal 7: Support, expand, and develop programs, services, events and opportunities that respond to diverse interests. . .
    - 7D: Omit the wording, “using public funds” and change the wording to, “Consider creating a neighborhood mini-grant program that encourages grass roots community improvement projects. . .”
  - ❖ Goal 13: Protect and restore natural resources, support environmental health and increase ecological awareness
    - 13H: Omit wording, “new development and public.”
  - ❖ Goal 16: Provide programs and services that support and enhance a safe, healthy, and active lifestyle.
    - 16B: Omit this task and add it to 16C.

**Items to Add:**

- ❖ Goal 1: Retain and enhance the character of existing commercial districts and expand it to new districts
  - Change the wording in the description of this goal to include other districts and not to be so specific.
  - 1F: Add wording that says that the waste and recycling bins will be “next to each other.”
- ❖ Goal 5: Maintain and encourage diversity of race, ethnicity, income, culture, age, family type and other kinds of diversity.
  - Add a task that helps create more diversity of race, use Beacon Hill to stimulate this discussion.
  - 5C: Rewrite this task with stronger wording to show more proactive work toward reaching diversity. Possibly add a task for some round tables.
- ❖ Goal 12: Foster environmental, social and economic sustainability in all aspects of city life and government practice.
  - 12G: Reword to include more than electrically operated vehicles, but be sure to list pay-to-charge electric car charging as an example.
- ❖ Goal 15: Add the word “economically” in the description of this goal to read: “Expand the variety of high quality housing options to meet the needs of an *economically* diverse community.”

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- ❖ Goal 16: Provide programs and services that support and enhance a safe, healthy and active lifestyle

- 16C: Rerword to include biking as well as walking.

### Specific Project Goals

- ❖ Annexation

At the time of the retreat, the city is not looking to annex but as the year progresses, it will focus its attention toward annexation given the following conditions:

- Some commercial component should be included;
- There's the potential to increase the value of the commercial digest in the future through redevelopment;
- There's an opportunity to enhance the gateways into the City; and/or,
- In response to a specific community need.

- ❖ Memo of Understanding

- Give the School Board a heads up regarding some worry among citizens that there will not be a public playground in their neighborhood.

- ❖ United Methodist Children's Home Garden

- Look for financial partners
  - Refugee Family Services
  - DeKalb County Board of Health
- Explore starting using the front entrance.
- Examine the zoning issues

- ❖ Priorities for Zoning Ordinance Updates

- Commercial adjacent to residential
- Commercial restrictions
- Sustainable Development Practices
- Begin with Unified land Development Ordinance and Zoning Ordinances at the same time.
- Parking Ordinance with a comprehensive re-writing of the zoning ordinance
- Stand Alone Ordinances will be updated later
- Prepare a Time Line for Commission review

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❖ East Decatur Pond

- Hire a consultant to create a master plan
- Look for financing sources including TADs, CIDs and regional retention

❖ Railroad Improvement

- Signal upgrades will drive the process
- Coordinating with CSX

❖ Youth Advisory Board as suggested in the Strategic Plan

- Explore and coordinate with the School Board

Other Projects Updated and Clarified

- ❖ Conference Center
- ❖ Beacon Hill (probably no immediate action this year)
- ❖ Callaway
- ❖ Complete Streets (Timetable of tasks will come out of Strategic Plan)