



Decatur City Commission Retreat
March 6-7, 2015
Brasstown Valley

The retreat began with responses to two questions:

1) What are the things we do not want to lose in our city that make us proud of Decatur.

- Community of engaged people
- Diversity in age, race, income, family structure, sexual orientation
- Elected/appointed officials who look at the broad community
- Institutional knowledge
- People-oriented or personal nature of our community
- Professional governance
- Public looks at community as a whole
- Real civic engagement
- Schools
- Services with a personal touch
- Walkable destinations

2) What are the characteristics or culture of Decatur that make us want to live, govern and work there?

- Ability to make hard decisions
- City that deliberately invests in things that create engagement
- Elected officials who trust the staff
- Ethical
- Flexibility
- Fun
- Governing organization that understands and respects the financial components
- Respects the form of government
- Responsive
- Smart decisions on how to spend the public money
- Trust

Major Issues for the upcoming year:

GO Bond Referendum

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- The group recognized that having high quality schools in the City of Decatur is a good thing and something they continue to support. They must, however, look at the community as a whole and find a solution where the schools maintain their levels of quality and the taxpayers do not bear an unreasonable tax burden.

Questions to pose before a joint meeting of Mayor and Commission and the Board of Education:

1. What have been the results of the polling of the citizens?
2. What are the ramifications, good and bad, long and short term for the community as a whole?
3. How is the BOE getting the message out to the community as a whole?
4. What other specific options have been explored besides the bond and what is Plan B?

Annexation

- Develop a clear message for the referenda for areas to be annexed
- Identify community leaders and neighborhood leaders to assist
- Ask the school board to help with the campaign
- Reach out to businesses and business leaders to gain their support

Affordable Housing

- Explore a variety of housing including housing for senior living such as condo ownership or up scale non-ownership or communal housing
- Expand conversations with the Housing Authority to increase their involvement
- Explore offering financial incentives
- Elected Officials will have to support all kinds of housing options and be willing to entertain ideas that might require different types of investment

Planned Response to a Changing Decatur

- Community Action Plan to get more public engagement launches this year
- Strategic plan for the Police Department

How to Maintain a Diverse Community

- Develop sessions with real estate agents and reach out to new agents who specifically work with diverse clients
- Work with developers to illustrate diversity on all their media materials
- Support Welcoming America
- Create targeted media for living in Decatur

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- Use the Decatur Focus to show what Decatur offers its aging citizens
 - Inform the community about what it means to be part of an engaged community. Educate new citizens who move into Decatur
 - Develop a Welcome tri-fold for new residents and businesses
 - Prepare a tab with a video that helps new residents understand how to get engaged in the community

How to prepare for future staff changes

Staff identified the values and culture that should continue after key staff retire:

- Values: innovation, responsiveness, focus on the citizen, performance measurement, ethics, honesty, collaboration, team work
- Culture: bring in new and different people, professional development, civic engagement and community building and organizational and institutional knowledge