

ANNUAL BOARD RETREAT REPORT

February 9, 2024
8:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Legacy Park
500 S. Columbia Drive

AGENDA

8:00 – 8:40 AM	Breakfast Call to Order/Welcome Overall Goals/Agreements Team Building Icebreaker
8:40 – 9:00 AM	Big Picture Review
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Review of Accomplishments
9:30 – 9:50 AM	Review Board-Suggested Discussion Topics Key Topic Identification
9:50 – 10:00 AM	Break
10:00 – 11:40 AM	Key Topic Discussion – Top 3 Goals, Opportunities and Challenges
11:40 AM – 12:00 PM	Closing/Adjournment

BIG PICTURE REVIEW

DDA Executive Director Angela Threadgill set the stage with a big picture review that included an overview of the economic growth goals in the City Strategic Plan, a review of the Town Center Plan 2.0 with an emphasis on re-envisioning the Decatur Square in time for the 2026 World Cup Soccer matches scheduled to be hosted in Atlanta, and a summary of the City work plan developed by the City Commission at their retreat in January 2024.

REVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Prior to the retreat, each DDA board member submitted their top three projects or initiatives of which they were most proud. The following is the full list of responses.

- Mobile Food Cart Program
- Commercial Buildout Improvement Grant Program (CBIG)
- Small Business Support (grants, training)
- Consistent Review of Projects by DDA
- Pandemic Small Business Emergency Grants
- Marketing and Digital Connectivity Grant Program
- Commercial Facade Improvement Grant Program (CFIG)
- 303 East Howard/Kimball House lease & sale
- Decatur Retail Incubator Program (DRIP)
- Oak Cottage Court

The Board then looked at a list of the 2023 accomplishments and placed sticky notes on What Went Well, What Went OK, and What Could've Been Better. The Board then focused on the What Could've been better to discuss what lessons were learned. The Board noted the following:

1. The DRIP Program

- No business that participated in the program stayed in Decatur.
- There needs to be a bigger space and more established time to work with business participants.
- Better mentorship
 - i. There was little to no committed mentorship.
 - ii. Low Participation from participants and mentors.
- Suggestion to bring in professional business educator.
- The DRIP location had low foot traffic due to location.
- There needs to be a strategy for business recruitment outside of the DRIP program.

2. Oak Cottage Court

- ANDP made a difference in jump-starting the project.
- Needed clearer communication re: who project was for, workforce vs. affordable housing for Decatur local government agency employees.
- The pilot project allowed us to learn more about Decatur's current zoning code.
- Future affordable housing projects need heavy subsidizing.
- The project allowed the Commission and other entities to learn from what the DDA has done and find other creative ways for employees to have a way to work/live in Decatur.

3. Mobile Vendor Cart Program

- Change the name of the program?
- Find different ways to promote it.
 - i. Food trucks are applying and that is not the target for this program.
- Low interest/participation
- Food cart vendors can be successful and can be more active with Decatur's festivals.
- So far only one successful applicant out of a pool of three last year.
- Currently there are only three applicants with one being a food truck which is not allowed.

BOARD SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS

The Discussion Topics were compiled from DDA Board member survey responses and represented possible topics to be discussed during the retreat. The Board spent time looking at the list, voting on the top three to discuss in depth during the retreat.

- Affordable Housing Efforts
- Business Retention Efforts
- Business Recruitment Efforts
- City Commission Priorities
- Decatur Town Center Plan 2.0 (DDA's role in implementation)
- Downtown Grocery
- Downtown Parking (availability, aesthetics, and access)
- Downtown Security
- Grant Programs
- Promoting Decatur Ambiance
- Proper Use of DDA Funding
- Redevelopment Opportunities
- Supporting Retail Businesses
- Supporting Restaurants
- 10-Year Review of DDA Accomplishments

Top ranked discussion topics were: 1) Downtown Parking; 2) Decatur Town Center Plan; and tied 3) Redevelopment Opportunities and Supporting Retail Businesses. The Board delved into the topics including goals, opportunities and challenges. Discussion centered around what is important, what success looks like, appropriate role(s) of the board, potential partners, who will take the lead, and measures of success.

TOPIC #1 – DOWNTOWN PARKING

- Most consistently heard are parking issues - Where is it? How much does it cost?
- There is ample parking but we don't control pricing in private decks and lots.
- The Town Center Plan contains action items around parking (p. 140) based on community input.
- Downtown wayfinding signage to public parking - need better and consistent signage.

- Develop a comprehensive signage parking package.
- Make sure parking deck managers have clear, concise information on what is expected and allowed.
- Educate community residents.
- Update the comprehensive map of parking in the city and work with businesses to link to off-street parking options.
- DeKalb County Parking Deck has capacity in the evening hours - make an investment to enhance the County's current renovations, including an exterior mural and entryway into downtown from county deck - Conor will connect with County Commissioner Ted Terry to discuss.
- Put money in the budget for consistent parking wayfinding signage within right of way.
- Hire a design consultant for parking signage.
- Consider a bicycle valet and dedicated parking for bikes.
- EV parking is important - dedicate space on N. McDonough.
- Angela will give update at April meeting on a list of parking management tasks, which tasks are achievable under the current contract with SP+, and which tasks require another outside consultant.

TOPIC #2 – TOWN CENTER PLAN 2.0

The City Commission has identified tasks and goals for its capital improvement budget of the Decatur Square, which include the removal of the bandstand, a stage, a hillside slide and climb, and modifications to hardscapes to provide more open space. The DDA stands as a ready partner when needed.

TOPIC #3.1 – SUPPORTING RETAIL BUSINESSES

- Partnership with Decatur Business Association (DBA)
- Quarterly retail/restaurant meetings hosted by Shirley - continue
- Tourism - will continue to promote events on the Square that spillover to businesses.
- Leasing rates are an issue - commercial property owners - some listen, some don't
- Host a job fair; connect DHS work program students and Agnes Scott students with local businesses.
- Promote Decatur for outside businesses to expand or relocate to Decatur.
- Create a packet to help new business owners promote their businesses to the community.
- Share recent marketing materials; partner with downtown businesses.
- There is a perception of increased crimes against retailers, vandalism and theft.
- There is a perception of decreased safety due to the increase in the unhoused population, leading to less visitors and patrons, and decreased sales. Businesses are greatly effected by the behaviors, trash and other issues of the unhoused population in downtown Decatur.
- The DDA believes that an ambassador program will help address some the business needs.

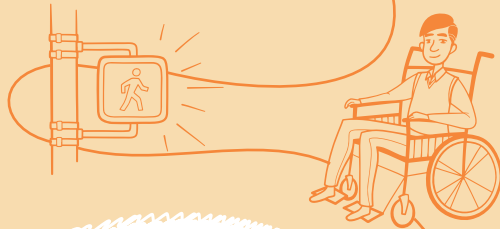
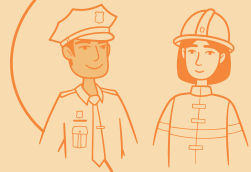
TOPIC #3.2 – REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Town Center Plan 2.0 focused on three opportunity sites in downtown Decatur: former Kroger/Housing Authority properties; DeKalb County Maloof Complex surface lot; and the USPS property.
- The Board also mentioned opportunities at the Selig-owned properties at the corner of Church Street and Commerce Drive and surface lots adjacent to McDonald's.

- The Board noted the newly approved hotel on Swanton Way that will change the dynamic in this corner of downtown Decatur and has the potential to be a catalyst for better streetscapes near the MARTA entrance that lead to the Square.
- The Board noted that there needs to be a framework for development incentives to influence outcomes of good design and land uses, one of which is a small-scale downtown grocery.
- Staff noted that initial studies had commenced for a Downtown Tax Allocation District, though additional consulting work is needed. The Board expressed moving forward on the study to see if it would be worthwhile for future development and investments in downtown Decatur.
- The DDA noted that it owns 252 S. Columbia Drive and that there should be a plan for redevelopment. Staff stated that architectural design services for a small-scale mixed-use development are under consideration for the site. The plan is to use the outcomes of the design services to seek a development partner. A market study would also be helpful to define the land uses, whether it be commercial ground floor, 2nd floor office suites or housing.
- The DDA noted the need for more multi-family housing in downtown Decatur to support the existing retailers and recruit new retailers desired by the community.

ACTION GOALS

- Seek services for a redevelopment plan, including site and architectural designs, with land use market study for 252 S. Columbia
- Conduct Downtown TAD Feasibility Study
- Produce a Downtown Parking Management Implementation Plan, including analysis of the creation of a Parking Benefits District
- Continue to support businesses through the three grant programs



CONVERSATIONS
ON DECATUR'S
NEXT DECADE.

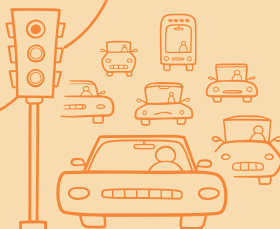


DESTINATION:

2030

2020 STRATEGIC PLAN | DECATUR, GEORGIA

Adopted October 18, 2021



Decatur 2030

Economic Growth



What's good for quality of life for everyone is good for business

Keeping Decatur's unique vibe

BUILDING ON WHAT'S WORKING



EG.01 **Consider annexations strategically.** Future land annexations should be contemplated with regard to their impact on diversity, affordable housing, the tax base, schools and City services, and how they advance the Strategic Plan.

EG.02 **Expand lodging options.** Attract a boutique hotel and a bed & breakfast. Encourage the appropriate use of accessory short-term rentals.

EG.03 **Foster a robust ecosystem of gathering spaces.** Places beyond home and work attract the creative class and allow for an exchange of ideas that builds social and economic capital.





How can we leverage Decatur's unique identity and amenities to grow not just jobs, but social and economic opportunity for everyone? Every step toward broadening opportunity serves other goals as well—our ambitions for expanding affordability, equity, and diversity in particular. It starts with understanding what's already working, what we can do to help existing businesses thrive, and how to improve the support system for new launches. In a time when companies are thinking more about employees' quality of life, Decatur has a compelling story to tell to businesses considering relocation.

Decatur's Unique Economic Vibe

Our economy has thrived, not on Fortune 500 companies, but because of our unique quality of life—great neighborhoods, quality schools, and a vibrant downtown. As we think about growing Decatur's economy and making it more inclusive, we want to build on what's unique—and what's best—about our city.



Equity & Racial Justice



Affordable Housing



Climate Action



Mobility



Civic Trust



Economic Growth

It's all connected!

These icons show how each policy and action item meets the vision and mission statements, and connects with the other topics.

Keeping Decatur's unique vibe

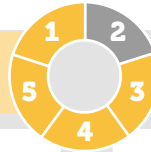
BUILDING ON WHAT'S WORKING



EG.04 **Enhance high speed internet access.** Encourage the expansion of the fiber optic network to increase upload speeds and competition among providers. Expand the free WiFi service area to increase citizen and visitor access and accommodate smart city technology.



GROWING LOCAL BUSINESSES



EG.05 **Support existing businesses.** Encourage business retention through marketing and promotions. Help businesses to thrive and expand their offerings.



EG.06 **Encourage affordable retail space.** New businesses can thrive on their own if provided affordable opportunities such as tiny retail spaces in new developments, food carts, or a bazaar.



EG.07 **Start a business incubator.** Open an incubator to grow the next generation of local businesses.



EG.08 **Create a Decatur rewards program.** This program should include joint marketing, branded gift cards for participating businesses, City employee discounts, and rewards points to support local businesses.



Fostering stewardship and a sense of place

ALIGNING POLICIES



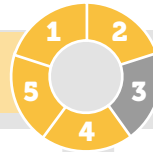
EG.09 **Diversify the tax base.** Reduce the tax burden on homeowners by encouraging the redevelopment of commercially-zoned land and attracting visitors to increase sales and hotel tax revenues.



EG.10 **Continue to tie budgeting to the Strategic Plan.** Budget items should be evaluated based on how well they implement the policies and action items of this plan. Each item should be indexed to these policies and action items.



PLACEMAKING



EG.11 **Replicate successful public spaces.** Learn from the best of what's already working in public and semi-public spaces and apply these lessons to new gathering spaces.



EG.12 **Update the sign ordinance.** Consider flexible regulations for electronic signs, historic storefronts, and more in the context of legal limitations.

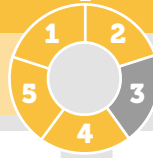


EG.13 **Adopt healthy building design guidelines.** This advisory document should help architects and developers create buildings that encourage physical activity and use natural light and ventilation.



Fostering stewardship & a sense of place

PLACEMAKING



EG.14 Follow human-centered design techniques.

Ensure that new development and public spaces or facilities are designed to be welcoming, interesting, and enduring, while also creating beauty and positive spaces for mental and physical health.



EG.15 Fill in the gaps. Maximize the community benefit of vacant properties, parking lots, empty buildings, and underused ground-floor space with incremental additions of retail, living space, food production, and gathering spaces.



EG.16 Start a façade improvement program. Allow property owners to apply for grants to assist with exterior improvements.

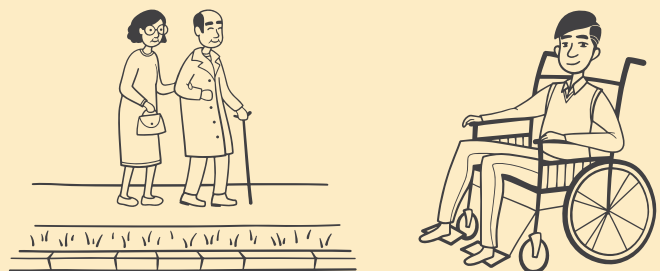


EG.17 Prepare a new Downtown Master Plan. This plan should recommend a comprehensive vision that includes public space improvements, historic preservation, new green space, economic growth strategies, shared street designations, and more.



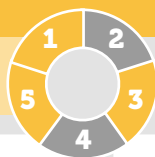
What is human-centered design?

Buildings and outdoor spaces should take into account the unique needs of the people that use them. This means making sure they are based on a realistic understanding of the diversity of potential users, and their habits, desires, and behaviors.



Finding new customers and businesses

BUILDING ON SHARED VALUES



EG.18 **Focus on place- and people-based economics.** Grow the economy in a way that builds on Decatur's unique sense of place and emphasizes people above simple economic trends.



EG.19 **Market and enhance Decatur's authentic brand.** Our unique culture, architecture, and offerings should be the centerpiece of efforts to attract visitors and businesses that will grow and diversify what is best about Decatur.



EG.20 **Recruit employers that fit Decatur's personality.** Focus on high-paying jobs, large employers, and companies that will support MARTA and local businesses. Potential job sectors include health, IT, professional or government offices, and the film industry.



EG.21 **Look for opportunities for national retailers.** A general merchandise store in an urban format and appropriate context would attract shoppers that would also spend at local businesses.



EG.22 **Focus marketing on conferences and conference attendees.** More small conferences in Decatur, and better marketing to Atlanta conventioners, will promote Decatur as an authentic retail and restaurant destination and increase spending at local businesses.



EG.23 **Market to event attendees.** Encourage the full range of community event attendees to become Decatur "return customers."



Destination 2030 Community Work Program

#	Project Name	Responsible Parties	Estimated Cost	Funding Source	Year
MOBILITY					
MB.19	Continue to implement the Safe Routes to School program.	City, GDOT, CSD	Staff time, construction firm	General Fund	Ongoing
MB.20	Encourage more bike parking.	City	Staff time	General Fund	2023
MB.21	Continue implementing the Decatur PATH Plan.	City, PATH	\$11.6 million (10-year plan)	General Fund, LCI funding, PATH	2027
Transit (work with MARTA to):					
MB.23	Provide circulator bus service.	City, MARTA, third party	Estimated \$800,000 annually	MARTA	2026
Other Action Items					
MB.27	Conduct a parking and curb space utilization study.	City	Staff time, consultant fee	General Fund	2023
MB.28	Update regulations to prevent the construction of space exclusively for parking.	City	Staff time	General Fund	2023
ECONOMIC GROWTH					
EG.04	Enhance high speed internet access.	City, third party	Staff time	Third party	2026
EG.07	Start a business incubator.	City, DDA, DBA	Staff time	DDA	2022
EG.08	Create a Decatur rewards program.	City, DDA, DBA	Staff time	Tourism Bureau	2023
EG.12	Update the sign ordinance.	City, DDA, DBA	Staff time, consultant fee	General Fund, DDA	2026
EG.13	Adopt healthy building design guidelines.	City	Staff time, consultant fee	General Fund	2025
EG.16	Start a façade improvement program.	City	\$250,000 start-up costs, Staff time	General Fund, DDA	2023
EG.17	Prepare a new Downtown Master Plan.	City, DDA, DBA	Staff time, consultant fee	General Fund	2022

***Numbers are not sequential because only the action items with completion dates are listed in these charts. See Chapter 3 for all action items and policies.*

Decatur Town Center Plan 2.0

Adopted June 20, 2023



Key Takeaways

The plan’s engagement process helped refine the Project Goals, to better reflect the priorities, challenges, and opportunities expressed by Decaturites.

The hundreds of Decatur voices engaged through this process described a vibrant and walkable downtown, that despite some challenges, is cherished by the community. Those engaged in online surveys, at festivals or community events, and at community meetings agreed that for downtown to continue being a “40-year overnight success story,” it would need to adapt and undergo a refreshed vision.

The key takeaways summarized in the following page focus on three themes: strengths, challenges, and opportunities. They reflect a dichotomy about Downtown Decatur - though many things work well, some do so despite issues that impact downtown the most, such as a need for downtown amenities and retail to keep pace with a growing residential downtown neighborhood. Nonetheless, the energy and passion of the Decaturites engaged in this process focused on opportunities. The vision for downtown they described to the planning team was one in which the next ten years would see a greener, livelier, more walkable, and more welcoming Downtown Decatur.

Following the first phase of engagement, the planning team reflected on the feedback received thus far, and revised the seven plan Goals. The edited goals aligned with the priorities established by the community, and added a new goal entirely focused on resiliency, reflecting a community desire for a more environmentally sustainable downtown.

What Decaturites would like to see in downtown



1

Add a grocery store with affordable options and access to fresh produce.

2

Improve Decatur Square and make it safer and more comfortable for daily use.

3

Add more local, diverse, and unique retail to downtown beyond restaurants.

4

Improve access and wayfinding for parking so it is a more intuitive experience.

5

Create new and vibrant **green spaces** for downtown residents and visitors to enjoy.



Downtown's Strengths

Downtown's strengths are its restaurants and walkability: More than 95% of those engaged noted they utilize restaurants downtown, ranking it as the top thing to do.

The Square is the beating heart of downtown, but could use a refreshed vision: With 70% of those visiting downtown doing so for the Square, those who frequent this space would like to see more shade and greenery.

Festivals and special events bring people to downtown: 90% of respondents come downtown for festivals and special events, and many expressed a desire for more multicultural events.

Downtown's Challenges

The needs of the unhoused need to be addressed in a humane way: Though impacting downtown and The Square, issues around the unhoused population and regional and citywide.

Parking downtown is not intuitive and lacks signage, wayfinding, and clarity: Parking was one of the top 3 things people would change/improve about downtown, noting a lack of clarity on where to park.

Safety, beautification, and maintenance should be prioritized: Above all things, downtown needs to always feel clean, safe, and beautiful.

Downtown's Opportunities

Downtown needs more green space and plazas, including a downtown park: As downtown continues to add new housing and residents, there needs to be a thoughtful strategy to add more green space.

Downtown needs to improve its streets and sidewalks: There are pockets of downtown that are uninviting to pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. We need to fill these gaps and connect downtown.

Downtown needs more diverse and unique retail, including a grocery store: 61.4% of respondents come downtown for retail; though comments show a desire for diverse retail and a grocery store.

There is a need for housing, especially affordable housing options: Downtown needs to become more welcoming to people of all income brackets.



Improve the quality of the downtown experience.

“Downtown Decatur needs to address the homeless population. Of course, it is a difficult issue, but there should be a way that everyone’s needs can still be met without feeling vulnerable while shopping and dining.”

Destination 2030: Diversify events and festivals to bring together a broad cross section of people.

“Decatur needs to add more lighting especially a bit away from the square”

“Cleanliness. Set aside a budget to do more than just take out the trash.”

- Government
- Parking Lots/Decks
- Metered Parking
- City Landmarks
- Public Restrooms
- ATMs
- Service Stations
- Zipcar Locations

Throughout the Town Center Plan 2.0 process, the planning team has heard from residents, stakeholders and community members concerned about downtown safety, cleanliness, and usability. This includes issues related to the unhoused population, the lack of lighting, outdated wayfinding signage, and unclear parking information. To make downtown attractive to residents, businesses, employees, and visitors these basic needs must be met. Focusing on these baseline issues will support all users of public spaces to feel comfortable and welcome in Downtown Decatur.

The following **Objectives** emerged from this community-driven planning process:

- Focus on place management by maintaining existing infrastructure and sidewalks, addressing lighting, trash, and safety concerns, and beautifying downtown to be more welcoming and appealing.
- Make downtown parking more intuitive by providing clear information (hours, pricing, regulations), signage, and wayfinding.
- Continue to address the needs of the unhoused population by providing outreach and connections to service organizations.
- Ensure that all Decaturites feel welcome in downtown by providing a diversity of programming that meets the needs of a wide variety of local audiences.



To improve the quality of the downtown experience, the planning team recommends the following **Action Items**:

1. Update, upgrade, and expand downtown wayfinding signage.
2. Provide clear and concise parking information, rules, and pricing both on the ground and online.
3. Improve downtown public parking garages with creative lighting and placemaking that enhances wayfinding and visibility.
4. Reprice on-street and off-street parking based on its value and establish a Parking Benefits District to direct revenue toward local improvements.
5. Continue to connect and collaborate with unhoused programs and advocate organizations (including Frontline and other local providers) to create a Housing First program.
6. Create a downtown ambassador program to provide safety and information services.
7. Work with community members, arts organizations, and other groups to develop programming that reflects the community's composition and expand its relevancy to a variety of demographic groups.
8. Expand capacity of the DDA to include commercial district manager services for routine engagement with property owners, businesses, and the development community.

	Objectives	Timeline	Potential Partners
Improve the quality of the downtown experience.			
	Focus on place management by maintaining existing infrastructure and sidewalks, addressing lighting, trash, and safety concerns, and beautifying downtown to be more welcoming and appealing.		
	Make downtown parking more intuitive by providing clear information (hours, pricing, regulations), signage, and wayfinding.		
	Continue to address the needs of the unhoused population by providing outreach and connections to service organizations.		
	Ensure that all Decaturites feel welcome in downtown by providing a diversity of programming meets the needs of a wide variety of local audiences.		
1	Update, upgrade, and expand downtown wayfinding signage.	Short Term	City of Decatur, DDA
2	Provide clear and concise parking information, rules, and pricing both on the ground and online.	Short Term	City of Decatur, DDA
3	Improve downtown public parking garages with creative lighting and placemaking that enhances wayfinding and visibility.	Short Term	City of Decatur, DDA, Private Operators
4	Reprice on-street and off-street parking based on its value and establish a Parking Benefits District to direct revenue toward local improvements.	Short Term	City of Decatur, DDA
5	Continue to connect and collaborate with unhoused programs and advocate organizations (including Frontline and other local providers) to create a Housing First program	Ongoing	City of Decatur, DDA
6	Create a downtown ambassador program to provide safety and information services.	Immediate	City of Decatur, DDA, Decatur Tourism Bureau and Visitor's Center
7	Work with community members, arts organizations, and other groups to develop programming that reflects the community's composition and expand its relevancy to a variety of demographic groups.	Ongoing	City of Decatur, DDA, Decatur Tourism Bureau and Visitor's Center, Decatur Arts Alliance and similar cultural arts non-profits
8	Expand capacity of the DDA to include commercial district manager services for routine engagement with property owners, businesses, and the development community.	Immediate	City of Decatur, DDA



Action Item:

1. Update, upgrade, and expand downtown wayfinding signage.

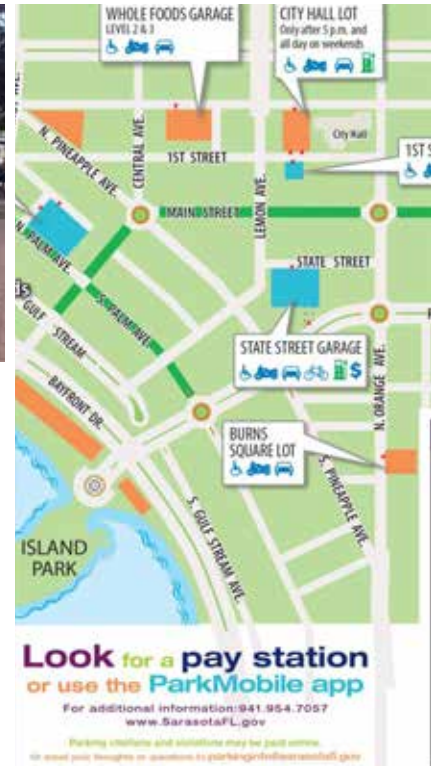
The existing wayfinding signage and information is in need of an update to improve the overall legibility and usability of Downtown Decatur. There are a multitude of ages and types of signs throughout downtown, none of which are easy to find or follow. Better, more clear information will help visitors better navigate downtown. A stronger wayfinding system is also an opportunity to highlight the Downtown Decatur brand and raise awareness about downtown businesses, attractions and destinations.



Action Item:

2. Provide clear and concise parking information, rules, and pricing both on the ground and online.

Despite access transit and being a walkable and bikeable downtown, many downtown visits start and end with a parking experience. There are more than 10,500 parking spaces in Downtown Decatur, with few lots or garages that reach full capacity (City of Decatur Parking Inventory Update, 2018). While parking supply is readily available, there is room for improvement regarding the usability of parking in downtown. Today there are several different types of parking signage for public parking areas. Some are new and easy to read, others are older, smaller and difficult to understand.



To make the parking experience user-friendly, the city should establish uniform signage requirements and wayfinding regardless of whether the parking lot or garage is public or private. This information should exist online so that people can plan their trips downtown, but it should also be readily evident on signage and wayfinding in and around downtown to direct people to parking and make the regulations clear. Making these improvements will also help people become aware of all of their parking options. Along with improved overall downtown wayfinding, this will enable people to park once downtown and access multiple destinations in one trip instead of driving between destinations.



Action Item:

3. Improve downtown public parking garages with creative lighting and placemaking that enhances wayfinding and visibility.

In addition to providing lighting in lots and garages that improves safety and usability, additional art and creative lighting will improve the overall parking experience. The 250 East Ponce de Leon parking garage is a perfect example of this, with a super graphic artistic treatment on the corner and clear signage and wayfinding. Standardizing signage and adding art and lighting would help to make the 17 parking decks in downtown more visible and usable.



Action Item:

4. Reprice on-street and off-street parking based on its value and establish a Parking Benefits District to direct revenue toward local improvements.

The City of Decatur should assess its current parking regulations and pricing to incentivize parking behavior that benefits downtown businesses and prioritizes convenience. On-street parking should be regulated/priced to create turnover to allow for availability of convenient spaces for short-term visits (lunchtime, visiting a specific business, picking up items, etc.). Long-term parking (employees, longer visits) should be located in garages or surface parking lots and be priced lower per hour than on street parking to encourage the usage of these facilities.

In turn, the creation of a Parking Benefits District would collect the additional revenue from higher meter prices and be spent in the location where it was earned. Revenues can be directed toward street and sidewalk improvements, block-by-block industrial trash compactors, and if collected over time, it can pay for new parking structures as well.



Action Item:

5. Continue to connect and collaborate with unhoused programs and advocate organizations to create a Housing First program.

Many Town Center 2.0 Plan participants cited the need to address unhoused issues in downtown. The City has a MOU with Frontline Response to provide unhoused individuals in the city with bedding, food, and restrooms when the temperature drops to 38 degrees or below. Frontline's facility is located in DeKalb County, and the agency provides transportation to the shelter from Decatur. Since the partnership started in December 2022, 38 individuals have been served through 92 intakes. The City also partners with Frontline to help unhoused individuals find long term housing placement. In place since 2018, this partnership served 17 individuals in 2022. In addition to continuing this partnership with Frontline, the City should also continue to support other organizations and places of worship to create a Housing First program.



Action Item:

6. Create a downtown ambassador program to provide safety and information services.

To address clean and safe issues and visitors service needs, many cities and downtown organization have “downtown ambassadors.” These ambassadors are trained to help visitors with directions and recommendations, as well as act as safety personnel to interface with local police to help make downtown more welcoming and safe. They can also be trained to offer homeless outreach services to connect people with need assistance and resources. A downtown ambassador program should be created for Downtown Decatur. Managed by the Decatur Tourism Bureau and Visitor’s Center, this service would be funded by hotel/motel taxes.



Action Item:

7. Work with community members, arts organizations, and other groups to develop programming that reflects the community’s composition and expand its relevancy to a variety of demographic groups.

Programming that represents the diversity of Decatur is essential to the success of downtown and its public spaces because it plays a role in the perception of a welcoming downtown. Scaled from street musicians to concerts, from food trucks to festivals, it is important to plan, support and fund diverse, relevant programming that welcomes everyone downtown. Collaboration with the community, arts organizations, and other groups will ensure that the program of events meets the needs of the entire Decatur community.

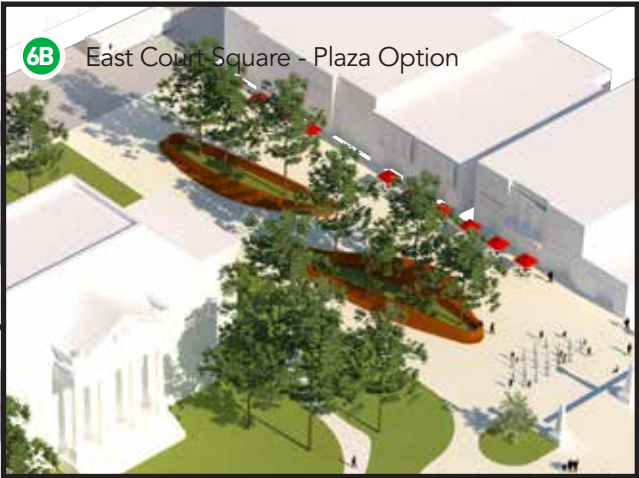


Action Item:

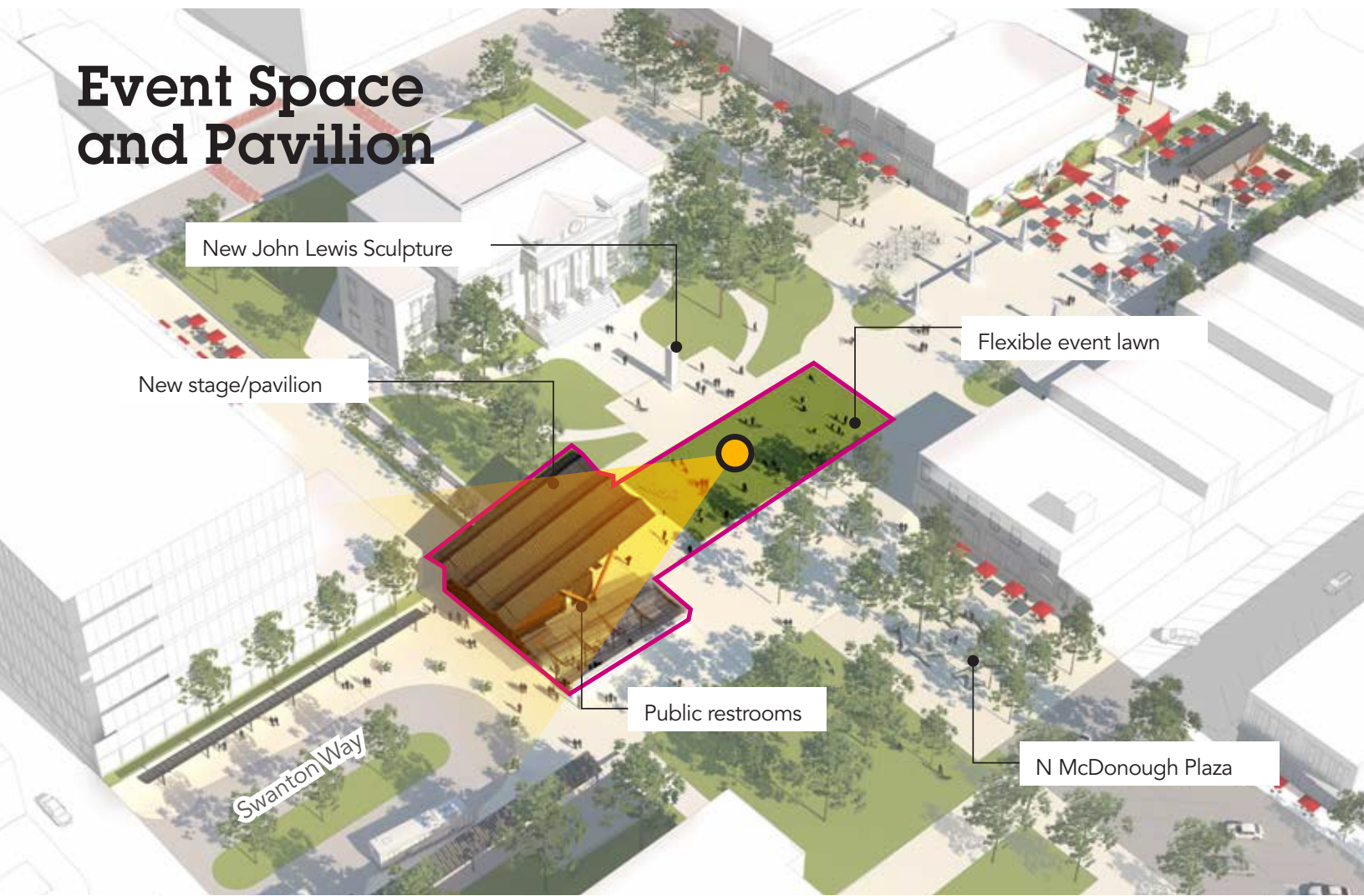
8. Expand capacity of the DDA to include commercial district manager services for routine engagement with property owners, businesses, and the development community.

Enhancing the capacity of the DDA will help to support the implementation of the Town Center Plan 2.0. Having additional staff to focus 100% on the improvement of Downtown Decatur will help to improve the downtown experience for all. This position would:

- Lead curation of retail services and amenities downtown by recruiting new businesses and engaging with property owners.
- Serve as a liaison for linking small businesses with the appropriate services and resources locally and regionally.
- Oversee economic development activities downtown including real estate development and serving needs of employers and anchor institutions.
- Facilitate partnerships with key organizations to align marketing, promotion, place management and programming activities.



Event Space and Pavilion



The concept for a refreshed Decatur Square starts by removing the existing bandstand and relocating this structure to a different city park or location. This space is opened up and reimagined as a flexible event lawn that faces a new monument to John Lewis, the historic courthouse building, and a new flexible pavilion and stage at the westernmost edge of the square. The new event lawn and pavilion will enable the Square to accommodate large events more comfortably, with the new stage structure allowing for small to medium performances and concerts. Behind the stage area, flexible space may include a green room, storage space, or a public restroom facility (a need

for Decatur Square expressed by both residents and businesses alike). The new stage structure is designed to be visually distinctive and transform what is currently underutilized space by MARTA's ventilation structure into a signature element. The design for this stage pavilion incorporates this ventilation structure so they visually read as one. The MARTA ventilation structure is recommended to be wrapped with an architectural façade treatment, such as wooden slats that include removable panels to allow for maintenance.

