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Following is the City of Decatur's Strategic Plan covering the next ten years. The plan is ambitious and represents our best hopes and wishes for what the future may bring. While we may not achieve everything, without a plan, we might not achieve anything.

The Strategic Plan contributes to sustaining the City of Decatur as a livable community, one where people can live, work, play and feel connected to others. A livable community is also one that demonstrates its concern for those currently in need as well as for the future generations. As "The City of Homes, Schools and Places of Worship", Decatur defines a livable community.

The Strategic Plan is a unique attempt to provide a vision for the City that combines economic and physical planning along with incorporating the social goals of the community. Implementation of the plan will take dedication and commitment from each one of us. The Strategic Plan will provide a framework to for decision-making and provide guidance to the City Commission as well as the community for the next ten years.

The Strategic Plan represents a community-based effort to provide guidance for our future. Development of the plan required many hours of hard work and thousands of hours of investment by members of our community. By incorporating input from the Decatur Round Tables process, four Focus Group sessions and a four-day Public Workshop, the plan builds upon and reflects the concerns, interests and successes of each one of us.

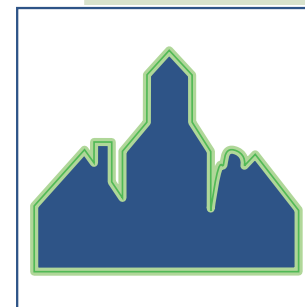
We commend this plan to your reading and ask for your commitment to making the next ten years a success.

Bill Floyd, Mayor • Andrew Harris, Mayor Pro Tem
Jim Baskett, Commissioner • Kecia A. Cunningham, Commissioner • John Ridley, Commissioner

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SECTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



SECTION 1



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Decatur in 2000 is the type of community many people are trying to find, and a community that the residents want to protect. It has historical character; there is a strong sense of community within a very diverse population, and residents have access to a high level of both public and private services.

The decision to create a ten-year Strategic Plan for the City of Decatur came from a growing concern among residents and community leaders that with Decatur again “on the map” for developers, and with changes in demographics resulting from the sharp escalation in property values, Decatur was in danger of losing the qualities that are so valued by its residents, businesses and visitors.

The 2000 Strategic Plan was a community-driven project from the start. In the fall of 1998 the City Commission and Downtown Decatur Development Authority retained Common Focus, a local community-building group, to bring together citizens, institutions, business/property owners and the City leadership. The

process, known as the Decatur Round Tables, involved 500 community members and resulted in the identification of 60 Action Items (summarized in Section Two) and the formation of Action Teams focused on finding solutions to the issues raised.

In February 2000, the City retained the consultant team of Brookwood/Brown, a joint venture of Brookwood Group, an Atlanta development management, planning and architecture firm, and RL Brown & Associates, Inc., an architecture and construction management firm located in the City of Decatur. The Brookwood/Brown team was charged with collaborating with the City and community in the development of a ten-year Strategic Plan that would address physical and economic planning issues while incorporating social objectives.

The Strategic Planning process used as a starting point the successful 1982 Town Center Plan. The 1982 Plan combined sound planning principles based on maintaining a

pedestrian-friendly environment with the simplicity of summarizing recommendations in 10 key goals. The City’s leadership was able to use the goals effectively to focus its efforts, resulting in the current success of downtown Decatur.

Working closely with the City and the Round Tables leadership, the Brookwood/Brown team developed a process to validate community input from the 1998 Round Tables process. At the same time, the team gathered data on market conditions, housing and transportation, and interviewed residents and community, institutional, business and government leaders. While the data gathering and interviews were underway, four public Focus Group sessions were held to share information and prioritize the Action Items identified during the Round Tables. Over 100 people spent hours in Focus Group discussions defining their vision for Decatur. The diversity of the Decatur community, in age, race and income, was well represented by the participants in the Strategic Planning process.





The Principles that support the vision, illustrated in the chart below, describe the fundamental physical, economic and social objectives of the Decatur community. These principles form the foundation of the strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning process culminated in a four-day Workshop from June 1-4, 2000. Over 200 members of the Decatur community came together to review and comment on a

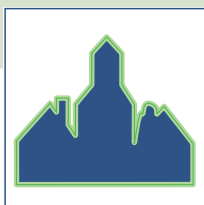
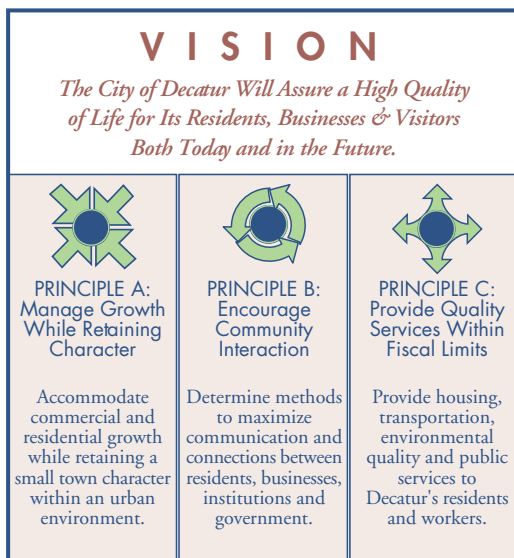
preliminary draft of the Strategic Plan. Many of these residents, government and business leaders also participated in intense discussion sessions that focused on refining the Principles, Goals and Projects. A summary of the results is included below. Details and illustrations are contained in Sections 4, 5 and 6 of this Strategic Plan document.

Each of the Principles is supported by Goals and Projects that include Scope, Schedule, Responsibilities and Funding information. **Principle A: Manage Growth While Retaining Character** is based on the desire to preserve the qualities of Decatur's built environment as the City enters a new millennium. Physical planning recommendations are aimed at balancing the community's desire to retain the existing small-town character against the moderate growth likely to occur over the next ten years, according to a study of market conditions. The Goals and Projects developed under this Principle incorporate an understanding that a healthy city needs to provide for some growth and that the physical character of Decatur can be maintained through appropriate policies and standards. The Strategic Plan includes a number of carefully

crafted recommendations that if carried out will result in a Decatur with more small town qualities in the future than it has today. *Goals 1, 2 & 3 support Principle A.*

Principle B: Encourage Community Interaction is based on the desire to hold the social fabric of Decatur together as its experiences change due to demographic and economic pressures. *Goal #4: Maintain and Encourage Racial, Ethnic, Economic, Cultural and Other Types of Diversity* is aimed squarely at dealing with demographic issues. *Goals 5 & 6* address the social issues identified during the public input sessions. These were predominantly focused on a desire for more communication and connections within the community. This was set against a backdrop of the data gathered on current activities, services and programs in Decatur which indicated that the city has a wealth of opportunities for social interaction and communication.

It was determined that Decatur may not need more programs. Instead, the City, School System, residents, institutions and business community may need to carefully and





thoughtfully adjust those that exist.

Principle C: Provide Quality Services Within Fiscal Limits articulates the community's desire for quality social and physical services and amenities against the reality that City residents currently pay high property taxes. Decatur has a history of providing high quality housing, transportation, environmental, public and school services to its residents. It is remarkable that a city the size of Decatur can successfully compete against municipalities with ten and 20 times the population when there are few economies of scale. In most cases the same requirements for quality of materials, reporting and staffing exist.

While most residents expressed pride in and appreciation for Decatur's current services, almost universally there was the desire for more or improved services. Because taxes are already high, and City and School staff are currently working at maximum capacity, the identification of new sources of revenue is critical to achieving the Goals under this Principle.

The Goals and Projects listed under Principle

C contain some of the most innovative ideas of the Strategic Plan. *Goal #7: Increase opportunities for economically diverse housing for persons who live or work in Decatur* is driven by the fact that market conditions are fast making Decatur a place where the teachers, office staff, public safety workers and retail and restaurant workers who work in the city can no longer afford to live in the city. In addition, many of the residents who grew up in the city cannot afford to stay.

Projects under Goal #7 are aimed at working alongside market conditions to create housing that is affordable for people who are invested in the community but are priced out of the open market. Funding for the projects is likely to come from a combination of private, state and federal sources. The level of Decatur's commitment to creating economically diverse housing will be a test of the city's determination to retain its character. A true "small town" provides housing for everyone in the community.

Goal #8: Improve mobility in and through Decatur and Goal #9: Continue the commitment to environmental quality contain many of the

"big ideas" in the Strategic Plan. Recommendations made in the Projects listed under these Goals balance three competing elements: 1) desire for the highest quality of life possible, 2) Decatur as a small player in a large region, and 3) the economic challenges of paying for any proposed remedies. Fundamentally, all Projects focus on taking care of those elements of the transportation system or environment that Decatur can control. For example, without commitment from others within the region it is not likely that mass transit linkages to areas outside of Decatur can be improved. However, Decatur can better utilize existing mass transit through improvements to MARTA bus stops and routes. There is also the potential of allowing public access to the two private shuttle routes operated by Agnes Scott College and Emory University. And while, Decatur may not be able to "close out" regional traffic, the City can reduce the level of local traffic by investing in sidewalks and bicycle routes.

Environmental quality is a local, regional and global issue. Decatur cannot control all elements of its environment, however, it can become a model of environmental





commitment. Projects under Goal #9 focus on preserving the green space, wetlands and trees within Decatur. They also include creative recommendations for adding green space and trees within the limits of available funding. One concept proposed that may assist with funding and implementation of various projects under Goals 8 & 9 is the development of a Decatur Regional Steering Committee. This group, envisioned as a collaboration between key residents and government, business, and institutional leaders, would focus on issues that require regional collaboration or funding.

Goal #10: Continue to provide quality City and School System services within fiscal limits acceptable to the community attempts to address the concerns raised about tax rates versus quality of services. The City and School System independently levy taxes and both have elected leaders who are sensitive to the concerns of their constituents. In gathering information and through discussion groups with residents, it became apparent that one of the primary issues to be addressed by Projects under this Goal is the appropriate communication of facts and plans.

The Vision/Principles/Goals identified as part of the Strategic Plan for Decatur's future include all those elements that make the City special today. In many ways the plan is a continuation of the status quo with controlled accommodation made for the changes that will occur.

The real test of the value of the Strategic Plan will be how much of it is implemented. In Section 7 the Monitoring Plan provides a summary table, organized by the Principles and Goals, with a schedule for each project. The Plan recommends that a Monitoring Team be assembled periodically by the Decatur City Commission to include residents, business, government and institutional leaders. The Monitoring Team would meet to review the progress made on each project, make any necessary adjustments to projects and report to the community on the status of the Plan.

The only appropriate end to a document whose creation took hundreds of people is a list of the names of those people. See Section 7 of this document.

