

# SECTION



## SECTION

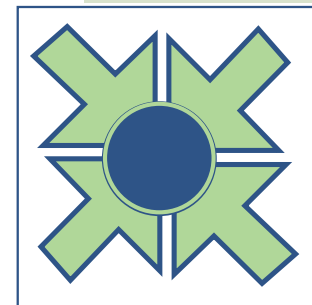
# 4



### PRINCIPLE "A":

## MANAGE GROWTH WHILE RETAINING CHARACTER

Accommodate commercial and residential growth while retaining a small-town character within an urban environment.



## VISION: *The City of Decatur Will Assure a High Quality of Life for its Residents, Businesses & Visitors Both Today and in the Future.*



Introduction: The City of Decatur requested a Strategic Plan that included physical and economic planning while incorporating social goals. The Vision, Principles, Goals and Projects listed below were developed through a collaboration of residents and government, business and institutional leaders. Goals and Projects are aligned under the Principles that they most appropriately support. It should be noted that many of the Goals and Projects do not fit neatly under a particular Principle. In fact, many of the Goals and Projects are interrelated and could support more than one Principle.



### PRINCIPLE A: Manage Growth While Retaining Character

Accommodate commercial and residential growth while retaining a small town character within an urban environment.

#### Goal 1: Retain and Enhance The Existing Character Of Commercial Districts

Project A: Refine Standards For Downtown.

Project B: Develop and Adopt Standards For Neighborhood Commercial Districts.

Project C: Adopt Standards For East College Avenue.

#### Goal 2: Encourage A Diversity Of Business Types With Particular Focus On Small Businesses

Project A: Diversify the Office Tenant Base.

Project B: Encourage Owner Occupied Retail.

#### Goal 3: Protect Existing Neighborhoods While Identifying The Potential For Selected Growth And Adopting Standards That Guide Future Growth

Project A: Adopt Standards for New Residential.

Project B: Consider Guidelines for Residential Renovations.



### PRINCIPLE B: Encourage Community Interaction

Determine methods to maximize communication and connections between residents, businesses, institutions and government.

#### Goal 4: Maintain And Encourage Racial, Ethnic, Economic, Cultural And Other Types Of Diversity

Project A: Diversify attendance at public events.

Project B: Support and expand volunteer activities.

Project C: Expand distribution of and personalize community publications.

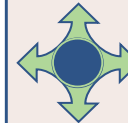
#### Goal 5: Reinforce Neighborhoods And Develop Connections Between Neighborhoods

Project A: Support Decatur Neighborhood Alliance or Similar Organization.

#### Goal 6: Strengthen Communication And Connections Throughout The Community

Project A: Improve Communication between residents, the City and Schools.

Project B: Support New and Existing Programs that Strengthen Community Connections.



### PRINCIPLE C: Provide Quality Services Within Fiscal Limits

Provide housing, transportation, environmental quality and public services to Decatur's residents and workers.

#### Goal 7: Increase Opportunities For Economically Diverse Housing For Persons Who Live Or Work In Decatur

Project A: Identify Tax Relief & Other Programs To Aid Elderly.

Project B: Provide Housing For People Working In The City.

Project C: Develop Programs To Attract Minority Residents.

Project D: Develop Programs To Improve Rental Housing.

#### Goal 8: Enhance Mobility In And Through Decatur

Project A: Selectively Reduce Traffic Volume and Speed.

Project B: Improve Public Transit.

Project C: Improve Sidewalks and Crosswalks.

Project D: Improve Bicycle Paths.

#### Goal 9: Continue The Commitment To Environmental Quality

Project A: Improve Linkages between Green Spaces.

Project B: Preserve and Expand Green Space, Wetlands & Trees.

Project C: Study Air and Water Quality Programs.

#### Goal 10: Continue To Provide Quality City And School System Services Within Fiscal Limits Acceptable To The Community

Project A: Address Concerns Regarding Taxes For General Operations.

Project B: Address Concerns Regarding Taxes For School Operations.

Project C: Address Concerns Regarding Quality Of Services.

Project D: Improve Quality Of Buildings, Parks & Recreational Facilities.

## PRINCIPLE A: MANAGE GROWTH WHILE RETAINING CHARACTER

Accommodate commercial and residential growth while retaining a small town character within an urban environment.

If there is one area of universal agreement among those who live, work and visit Decatur it is that the “small-town” character of the existing buildings must be preserved. There is also a common concern, especially among residents, that growth will change that character.

In fact, market indicators point to only moderate growth over the next ten years, given Decatur’s current availability of land, zoning and demand. Annual growth projections over ten years indicate:

Approximately 50,000 SF of office space

Approximately 20,000 SF of retail

Approximately 100 housing units

The recommendations under Principle A are not pro-growth. They are based on the belief that a healthy city needs to allow for some growth and that the physical character of Decatur can be maintained through appropriate policies and standards.

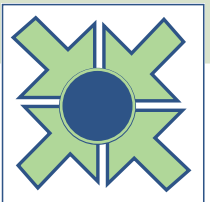


*bottom left: Decatur Bungalow*

*above: Decatur Square Storefronts*

PRINCIPLE A:  
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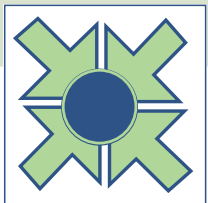
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## Goal #1: Retain and enhance the existing character of commercial districts.

Physically, Decatur has been a very stable city for the past forty years. Development has centered on the downtown and a few residential in-fill lots. This pattern is anticipated to continue during the next ten years with the addition of some growth in the neighborhood commercial districts of Oakhurst and West College and the mixed-use area of East College. The Change/Stability map to the right highlights in red the areas with a potential for growth and shows in green the areas that are projected to remain stable.

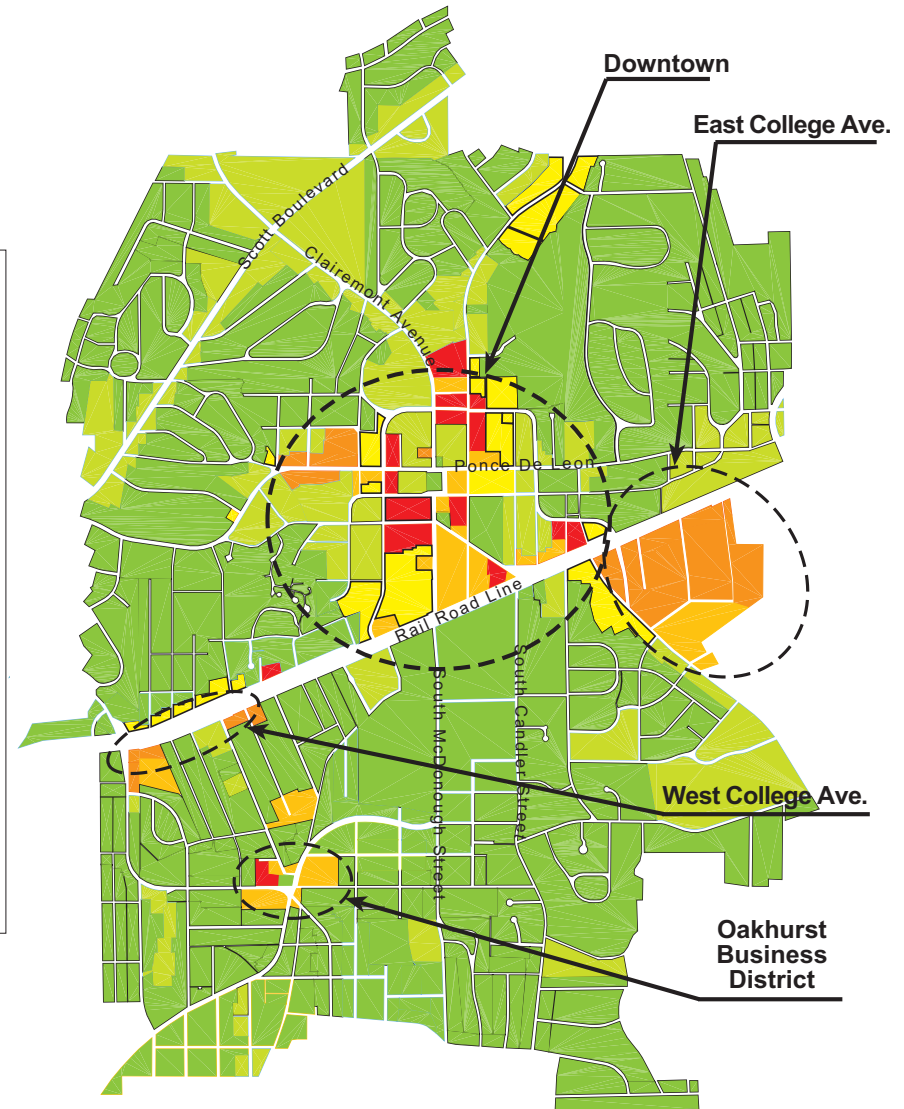
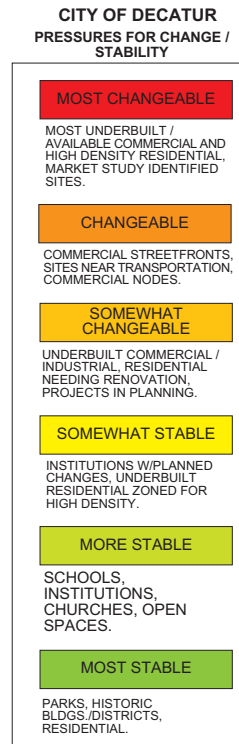
### Project 1-A: Refine Standards for Downtown

#### Current Status

Downtown Decatur today is a patchwork quilt made up of old-town fabric as exemplified by the area around Courthouse Square; car-oriented buildings from the 1970s and 1980s surrounded by large areas of surface parking or exposed parking decks; and new in-fill construction that attempts to balance pedestrian and automobile requirements.

The physical character of downtown that is so important to residents, workers and visitors is primarily defined by two elements: 1) continuity of activities at street level, 2) quality and scale of buildings. In areas of downtown where both of these elements are present there is a great deal of pedestrian activity resulting in the ambiance that defines the “small-town” quality of Decatur.

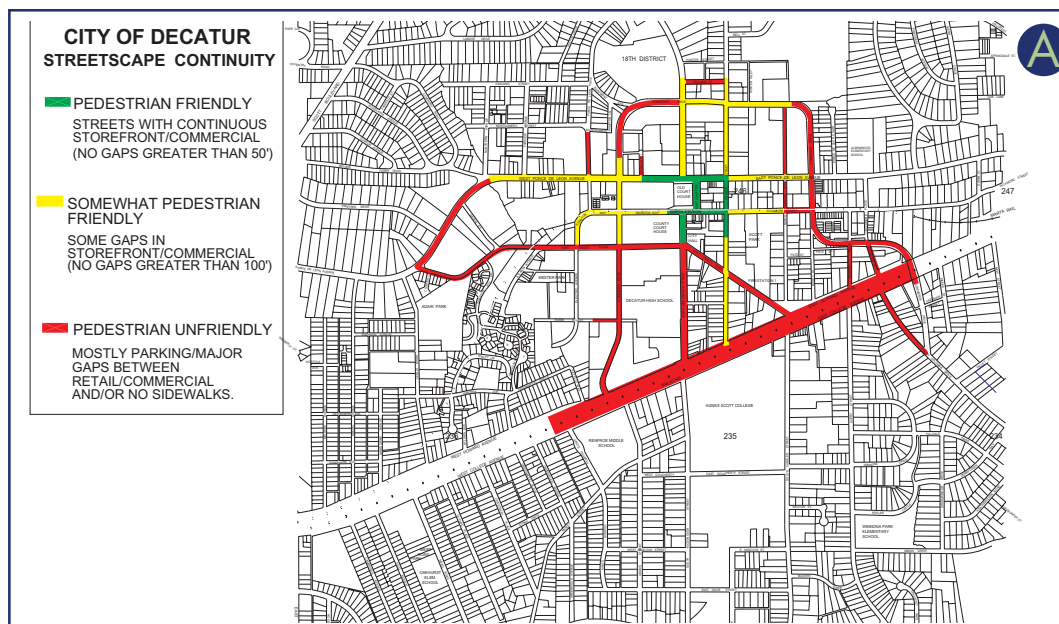
The Streetscape Continuity Map in “A” at right



provides an analysis of street-level activities throughout Downtown Decatur. Individual streets have been given a simple coding: green for pedestrian-friendly, yellow for areas that are somewhat friendly and red for those streets that are pedestrian-unfriendly. The rating is based on the assumption, currently used in planning retail areas, that the average person must see something of interest approximately every fifty feet to hold his or her attention. As shown on the map, less than 30% of Decatur is currently pedestrian-friendly and much of the area that is unfriendly does not fall under the Special Pedestrian Area (SPA) Regulations that require residential or commercial uses on the ground floor of a building.

Much of Decatur's existing storefront development provides visual interest and is shown as pedestrian-friendly on the map. The traditional storefront and streetscape shown in "B" at right demonstrates the desirable character to be produced in new developments that comply with the Special Pedestrian Area Regulations.

Downtown Decatur includes those areas zoned C-2 that are south of the intersection of Commerce and Clairemont, north of the railroad, east of the intersection of Trinity and West Ponce de Leon and west of the intersection of Commerce and the railroad. Zoning regulates everything from the maximum height of a building (80' in a C-2 district) to the setbacks and buffers between adjacent zones. Zoning requires all development in the SPA district to adhere to the Decatur Streetscape Design Guidelines.



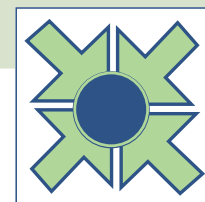
A: Streetscape Continuity Map

B: Pedestrian Friendly Streetscape in Downtown Decatur.



## PRINCIPLE A: Manage Growth While Retaining Character

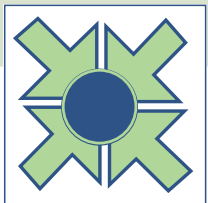
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## Recommendations

During the next ten years downtown is expected to absorb most of Decatur's projected residential, retail and commercial growth. A model of what the downtown might look like in 2010 is shown in "C" at right. The location of buildings and their configurations are not definite but are based on interviews with developers and others in the business community. They may be considered an "estimate" of the future.

All of the new commercial buildings are projected for properties that are currently surface parking lots or have long been planned for future development. The new residential buildings are projected for sites with surface parking or small non-historic structures. Appropriate buildings on any or all of these sites are anticipated to contribute to an expansion of the pedestrian-friendly zones defined in "A" on the previous page.

Because the cost of land in Decatur has risen so sharply in recent years, projects built in downtown in the future will almost all be at least five stories (the height limit of existing zoning). It is possible to maintain the small-town and pedestrian feeling of the area with such buildings through attention to detail and materials. The character sketch "D" at right provides an example of how a dense mixed-use development can use materials and techniques to reduce the perception of multistory scale so the development effectively blends into the existing fabric.

The Policies and Standards in the "Scope" section that follows are aimed at ensuring that new development retains the small town feeling without inhibiting the "eclectic" architectural



*C: Model of Potential Downtown Decatur in 2010*

*D: Character Sketch of Mixed-use Infill*

styles which are a major part of Decatur's character.

## Scope

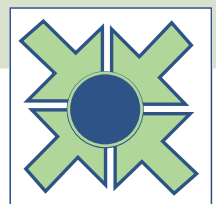
### Policy 1

Manage projected growth in Downtown, with priority given to Sites 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 as indicated in "E" on the next page.

All sites are located at prominent "gateways" to the Downtown, and development will help reinforce the "boundary" of Downtown. In addition, most of the sites are currently used for surface parking, while one includes a bank. Having quality buildings with street level activity at these locations will reinforce the pedestrian feeling of Downtown.

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A transportation model based on standard occupancies for the projected retail, office and residential growth in the configuration shown in “C” indicates that the existing roads can accommodate the automobile traffic generated.

### Standard 1

Implement a parking and shuttle study.

Much has been done to improve the parking situation in Downtown including signage, public education, brochures, shifting enforcement to the Downtown Decatur Development Authority and increasing on-street parking where appropriate. Previous studies indicate that parking problems are not based on a lack of parking spaces but on the need to continue to improve management and access to the parking that exists.

### Policy 2

Encourage new development to be compatible with the character of the existing downtown buildings.

As illustrated in “D” on the facing page, new development can retain the character of the existing buildings while having a diversity of architectural styles.

### Standard 1

Extend and refine the SPA Regulations to apply to streets throughout downtown Decatur.

As indicated in the Streetscape Continuity Map “A” on page 27, there are a number of streets that are not on the list of those currently regulated.

### Standard 2

Amend the SPA Regulations to require that

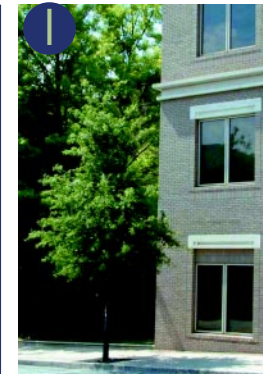
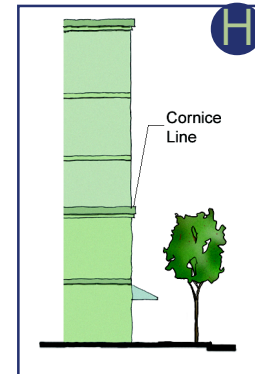
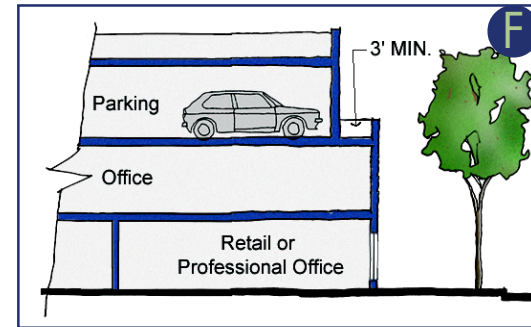


parking decks be set back from lower floor uses by at least 3' as illustrated in “F” above.

The current SPA Regulations require that all parking decks have either residential or commercial uses on the ground floor. Photograph “G” above Ponce de Leon Place shows the back of the new retail center facing West Ponce de Leon and Commerce. While this development attempted to address street level activity along the primary streets, it is a good example of why the SPA Regulations requiring pedestrian-friendly ground level activities should be extended throughout Downtown Decatur.

### Standard 3

Amend the SPA Regulations to require a cornice line at the 2<sup>nd</sup> story on all buildings as



E: Focus Sites for Projected Growth

F: Parking Deck Set Back Diagram

G: New Retail Center at Side Street

H: Cornice Line Diagram

I: Cornice Line Example

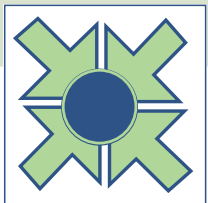
illustrated in “H” above.

The scale of current buildings Downtown varies from older one- and two-story buildings to more modern buildings of five or more stories. Most recent development has voluntarily approximated the scale of the older buildings with architectural features such as a cornice line, as shown in photograph “I”, above. With four to six new buildings projected over the next ten years, adding a requirement for this type of architectural feature is recommended.



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**Standard 4**

Amend the SPA Regulations to require that doors and windows constitute a minimum of seventy-five (75) percent and a maximum of ninety (90) percent of the area of the frontage for commercial buildings, beginning at a point not more than three (3) feet above the public sidewalk. All doors and windows shall be of transparent glazing. See “J” at right for example.

The current SPA Regulations require certain uses on the ground floor, all of which would typically have visibility requirements resulting in some amount of glazing. The percentage of glazing recommended is based on a study done by the Atlanta Bureau of Planning that determined that 75% was the standard percentage of glazing for buildings similar to the historic retail structures in Downtown Decatur. See “K” at right for example. In some of the office buildings in Decatur this amount of fenestration has already been successfully included. See “L” at right. This level of fenestration will help fulfill the goal of providing as many elements of “interest” for pedestrians as possible.

**Standard 5**

Develop regulations that require dumpsters and loading areas to be screened so as not to be visible from any public plaza, outdoor dining area, public right-of-way or residential area. Screening that is of a compatible material with adjacent buildings may be used. See diagram “M” at right.

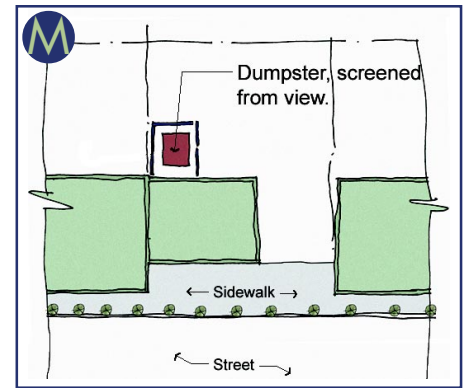
Currently there are a number of dumpsters in locations that severely compromise the character of the Downtown. See photo “N” at



*J: Fenestration Diagram*

*K: Historic Retail Fenestration*

*L: Office Building Fenestration*



*M: Screening Diagram*

*N: Photo of Dumpster in Undesirable Location*



right. Removing dumpsters from view will become even more important if retail and/or restaurant growth continues. If a suitable location cannot be found on-site, business owners must be required to take their trash to a remote location.



### Standard 6

Amend current C-2 zoning to provide an additional height-dependent set back for properties adjacent to residential uses. See recommended dimensions in diagram "O" at right.

The C-2 zoning in Downtown Decatur in the majority of cases provides adequate set-backs from side and rear yards. In a couple of locations where development is anticipated (see "P" at right), the side or rear lot set-backs combined with the maximum allowable height may not provide adequate protection for adjacent single family homes. For those cases where C-2 zoning is adjacent to Residential zoning, a graduated maximum allowable height based on a graduated set-back will provide the scale modification necessary to a satisfactory transition between the commercial and residential districts.

### Standard 7

Amend traffic ordinance to limit hours and location of loading and unloading in front of businesses in Downtown Decatur.

A great deal of traffic congestion in Downtown stems from the unregulated loading and unloading of supplies in front of commercial buildings. Working with business owners to determine limited loading/unloading times and locations that reduce traffic congestion is recommended.

### Implementation

#### Schedule

Policies: 2000 – 2010

Standards: 2001 – 2003

### Responsibility

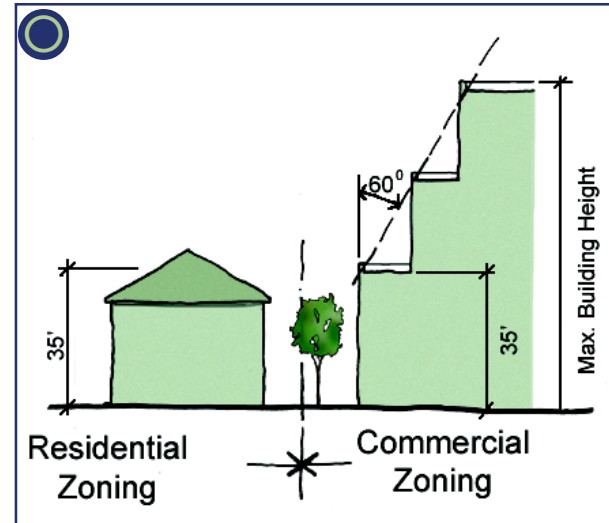
Policies: Community & Economic Development Director

Standards: Assistant City Manager

### Funding

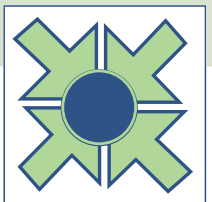
Estimate of additional funding required: \$10,000 - \$20,000 between 2000 – 2002 for additional planning, economic development staff or consultants.

O: Set-Back Diagram  
P: Set-Back Photo



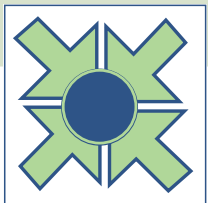
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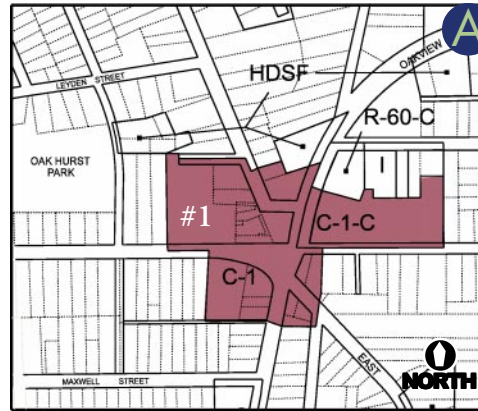
**Project 1-B:** Develop and Adopt  
Neighborhood  
Commercial District  
(NCD) Regulations.

**Current Status**

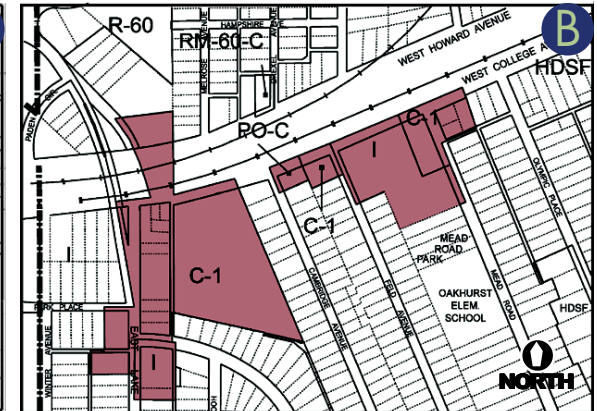
There are two neighborhood commercial districts in Decatur (Oakhurst Business District and West College Avenue, as shown in the zoning maps in “A” and “B” at right) that have the potential to experience significant physical change over the next ten years. Both areas are zoned C-1, which is a fairly restrictive commercial zoning with a 35 feet/two-story height limit.

The Oakhurst Business District began a revitalization effort ten years ago that focused on bringing stable new businesses into existing retail buildings that were vacant or had experienced a high turnover rate. Beginning in the mid-1990s and at an escalated rate since 1998, almost all of these vacancies have been filled. The result is a blend of commercial uses that serves many of the needs of the diverse Oakhurst community, including a laundromat, restaurants, a service station, a grocery store and two specialty retail stores. Opportunities for infill and the potential redevelopment of one of the largest parcels (identified with a #1 in “A” at right) still exist.

The West College Avenue commercial district is not as defined an area as Oakhurst. This five-block commercial strip is important for three reasons: 1) it is a gateway into Decatur from the west, 2) it is a buffer between a busy artery (College Avenue), the train tracks and the single-family residential Oakhurst neighborhood, and 3) it has a significant



A: Zoning Map Oakhurst  
C: Oakhurst Commercial District



B: Zoning Map West College  
D: West College Retail



number of institutions (Thankful Baptist Church and Oakhurst Baptist Church) and businesses, including a BellSouth training facility, a laundromat, hair salon, grocery store and service station. Currently only the small cluster of commercial buildings between Feld and Cambridge Avenues appropriately address the street. See “D” above. Thankful Baptist Church is a landmark building that is traditionally oriented toward the street but has a large parking area with minimal landscaping. The BellSouth property is quite large and has no physical or operational relationship to the

street or the community. The small cluster of commercial properties on the corner of East Lake and College are not well maintained and do not represent Decatur well for those entering from the west. Redevelopment of these properties into mixed use residential and retail could transform this section of College Avenue and provide a more appropriate gateway into the City.

**Recommendations**

Reinforce both commercial districts by creating special NCD policies and standards.



## Scope

### Policy 1

Encourage development of properties with residential located above retail in commercially-zoned areas. See E at right.

Having a mix of uses in NCD areas is an advantage because it provides 24-hour activity. Typical NCD businesses are open limited hours, leaving times during the morning or evening with little activity. Residential is particularly attractive because usage peaks are in the morning and evening. There are no examples in Decatur of residential located above retail in an NCD, primarily because the current zoning does not allow this use without a variance. Rather than change the zoning, which would open up the option of having this use in all areas zoned C-1, it is more appropriate to encourage owners to seek a variance in the NCD areas only, and to provide assistance when they do.

### Policy 2

Encourage new development to conform in character to existing older retail.

Oakhurst and West College both have very good examples of pedestrian-friendly retail. See “C” and “D” on the previous page. Maintaining this character in any new development or remodel is critical to the long-term success of the districts.

### Policy 3

Assess the redevelopment potential of the BellSouth property, the corner of East Lake and College Avenues, and the MARTA parking lot associated with East Lake Station.

Developing mixed-use multifamily residential with retail along the front of any of these properties will provide a more appropriate



gateway to the area and enhance the buffer between the busy College Avenue/Railroad artery and the single-family residential neighborhoods to the south.

### Standard 1

Create a new NCD Regulation that addresses: a) buffers between commercial and residential. See “F” at right; b) commercial/institutional use at front of lot with parking behind. See “G” at right; c) landscaping of parking areas. See “G” at right; and d) streetscape – modification of Downtown requirements for NCD use.

## Implementation

### Schedule

Policies: 2000 – 2010

Standards: 2001 – 2004

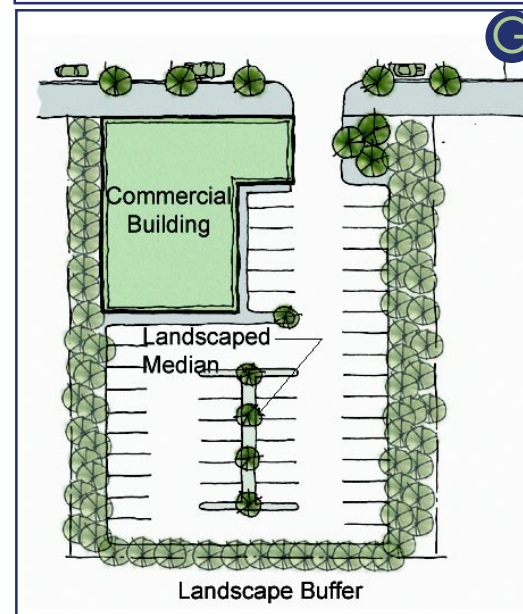
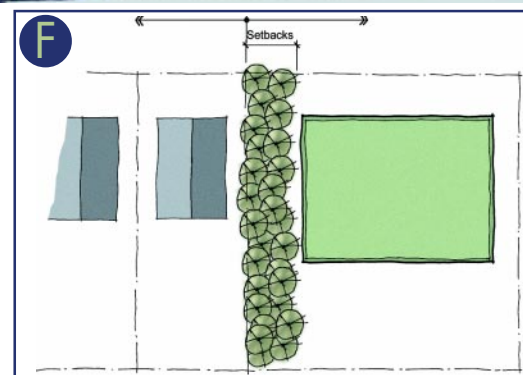
### Responsibility

Policies: Community & Economic Development Director

Standards: Assistant City Manager

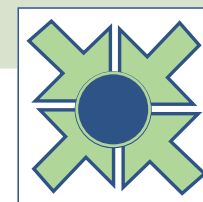
### Funding

Estimate of additional funding required: \$10,000 - \$25,000 total, primarily between 2000 to 2002, for additional staff and/or consultants.



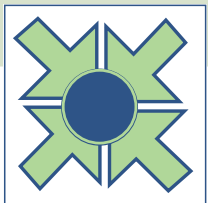
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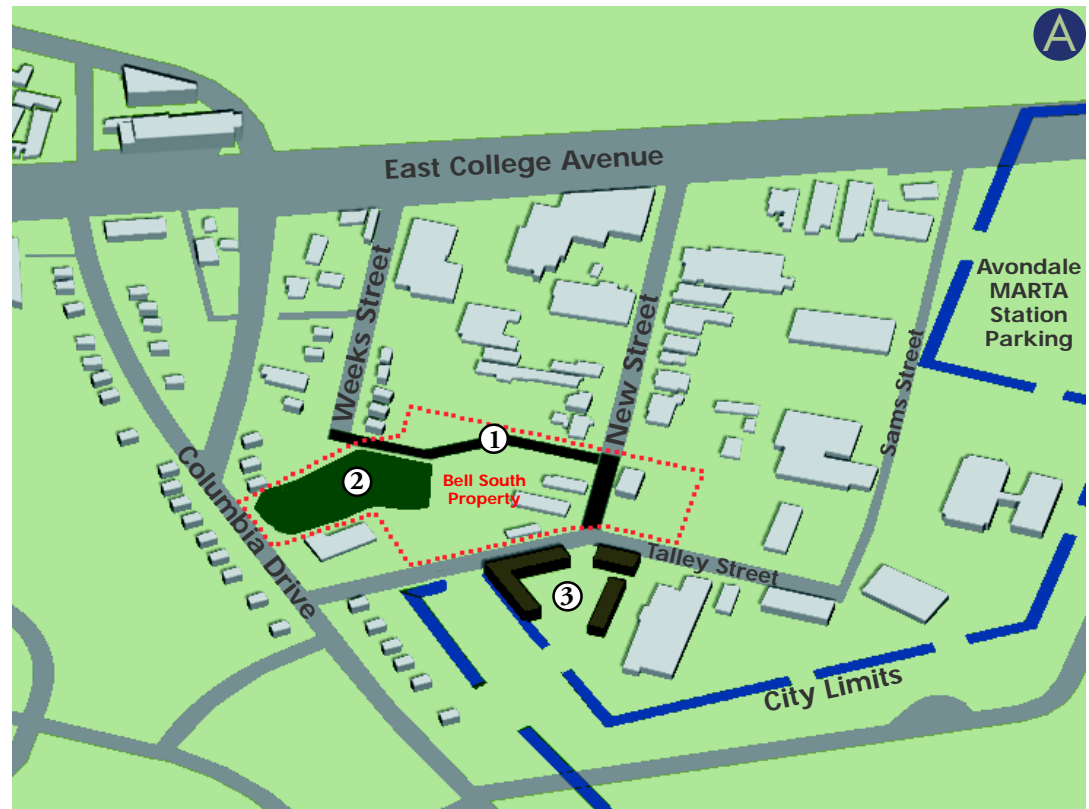


## Project 1C: Adopt standards for East College Avenue

### Current Status

East College Avenue is the area on the eastern edge of Decatur, south of the railroad tracks, bounded by East College Avenue on the north, Sams Street on the east, Talley Street on the south and South Columbia Drive on the west. The area is comprised primarily of properties zoned C-3, heavy commercial, but also includes some properties zoned I, Institutional, including the City of Decatur Leveritt Public Works Building, DeKalb County DFACS and the Friends School of Atlanta. There are also low-density single-family residential properties along South Columbia Drive zoned R-60. The area is located immediately south of the Avondale MARTA Station. Both East College and Commerce Drive leading into South Columbia Drive are state highways and support significant traffic volumes. The area currently has limited access with two dead-end streets, Weeks Street and New Street, and the loop of Sams / Talley Streets. There are several single-family houses at the lower half of Weeks Street. The primary businesses in the area are related to automobile repair and sales. There is also a machine shop, a hardware store, a biomedical lab, a veterinary clinic, a BellSouth vehicle yard and a few construction-related businesses, as well as a convenience store. The building stock is primarily single-story, warehouse-type metal panel construction, with a few two-story brick or precast concrete office buildings. See “B” to the right.

Proximity to the MARTA station and accessibility of the area to traffic corridors along College Avenue and South Columbia Drive



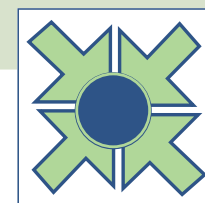
make it a prime location for mixed-use development, some higher density residential, and a variety of retail/office uses, including loft-type live/work spaces.

### Recommendations

The Strategic Planning Team recommends development of a detailed comprehensive master plan for this area as a separate project. The policies and standards that follow are first steps toward creating a new “transit friendly commercial district” by encouraging new street connections, more green space and a mix of uses including residential multifamily, high density single-family, loft office/retail uses, and the







institutional uses already in place.

### Policy 1

Improve internal neighborhood access by eliminating two dead-end streets.

Reconnect New Street to Talley Street, re-establishing the right-of-way across BellSouth site shown on the street map. Investigate the status of the right-of-way to connect the southern end of Weeks Street across the BellSouth property with New Street to the east. (See number 1 in “A”). Being able to drive and walk within a district without returning to the main roads is a key to the viability of an identifiable neighborhood with an integrated mix of uses.

### Policy 2

Acquire green space for a neighborhood park / passive recreation area.

In redevelopment of the area, consideration should be given to acquiring the western portion of the BellSouth site with frontage on South Columbia Drive. (See number 2 in “A”). A neighborhood park could become a focal point for new residential development adjacent to it.

### Policy 3

Encourage high-density residential development in the southwestern area of the district near the proposed neighborhood park, and adjacent to single-family housing.

A good first site for new residential development would be the triangular site on the south side of Talley Street across from the proposed restored intersection of Talley and New Streets. The building masses indicated by a “3” in “A”

on the previous page represent a two-story residential development on a 2.3-acre site.

### Policy 4

Encourage pedestrian and bicycle connections, particularly to MARTA and to adjacent Decatur neighborhoods.

Install sidewalks on all streets according to a standard based on the downtown streetscape requirements. This would include a minimum 5'-wide sidewalk with a minimum 4'-wide planting strip with trees, and the installation of curb and gutter where needed.

### Policy 5

Encourage redevelopment of existing sites toward the uses shown in image “C”.

Retail storefronts are encouraged along College Avenue. Office and Loft Office development is encouraged in the middle of the blocks between College and Talley Streets. The location of Institutional (City, County and Friends School) uses is mixed, with newer high-density residential development along Talley Street, the south portion of Weeks Street, and the new east-west connection between Weeks and New Streets.

### Policy 6

Encourage development with fewer parking spaces and a higher height limit than zoning dictates in the area adjacent to the MARTA station. Rather than change the zoning, which would open up the option of this variance for the areas zoned C-3, it is more appropriate to encourage owners in this location to seek a variance from existing requirements, and provide assistance when they do so.

### Standard 1

Create a new Transit-Friendly Commercial District (TFCD) Regulation that addresses: a) allowance for live/work type loft spaces, b) buffers between commercial/institutional and residential uses, c) commercial/institutional use at front of lot with parking behind, and d) landscaping of parking areas. These would be similar to the recommendations illustrated in Project 4B.

### Implementation

#### Schedule

Policies: 2001 – 2010

Standards: 2001 – 2003

#### Responsibility

Policies: Community & Economic  
Development Director

Standards: Assistant City Manager

#### Funding

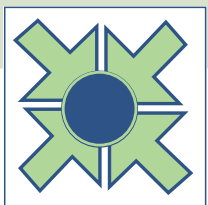
\$50,000-\$100,000 for staff and consultant planning from private and public sources.



- 1: Multifamily Residential
- 2: Retail/Office
- 3: Institutional
- 4: Mixed-Use

**PRINCIPLE A:**  
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**Goal #2: Encourage a diversity of business types with a particular focus on small businesses.**

Decatur currently has a diversity of business types in its restaurants and its retail stores. The office market, however, has a more narrow tenant base.

**Project 2-A: Diversify the office tenant base.**

**Current Status**

Major commercial and institutional tenants in Downtown Decatur are Emory Clinic, Eggleston, CDC, Simons Eastern, Third Millennium, Allied Systems, First Union and Wachovia. The remaining space is primarily occupied by small law firms. Decatur's market base of office tenants lacks diversity in part because the office supply is so limited. With new development of office space anticipated over the next few years, the opportunity to broaden the tenant base will be created.

**Recommendations**

With the anticipated expansion of the County government offices and the potential for Emory, Third Millennium and several of the other relatively large employers to continue to expand, the City should focus its efforts on maintaining current, and attracting new, small- to medium-sized office tenants.

One immediate avenue toward this goal is to encourage high-tech firms to locate in Decatur. In the past ten years the Atlanta region has become the headquarters for high tech firms, many of which began with office space for under 10 people. The restaurants, the small-

town atmosphere and the desirable in-town neighborhoods available in Decatur make it a desirable location for these firms, most of whom are competing for a limited number of available employees. One significant advantage of high-tech firms is the relatively high pay scale of employees. This can help create a stable base of customers for both restaurants and stores in Downtown.

**Scope**

- Task 1. Implement a program to make individual contacts with the existing small- to medium sized office tenants and address any issues related to their remaining in Decatur.
- Task 2. Begin an initiative to attract high-tech businesses to Decatur. For example, become involved with the Governor's Yamacraw project, a new initiative in economic development based on business incubation and recruitment, research, and education in the high-bandwidth telecommunications area. This program is expected to result in a number of spin-off businesses, many of which will need the type of office space in an attractive location that is available in Decatur.

- Task 3. Conduct market studies on a periodic basis during the next ten years to remain current with the types of businesses Decatur should pursue to continue to diversify its office tenant base.

**Implementation**

***Schedule***

- Task 1: 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009
- Task 2: 2000 – 2010
- Task 3: 2003, 2007



***Responsibility***

- Suggested Convener:  
Decatur Development Authority
- Suggested Collaborators:  
Decatur Business Association

***Funding***

- Task 1: Current Downtown Decatur Development Authority; no additional funding.
- Task 2: Current Downtown Decatur Development Authority \$10,000 - \$25,000 for a specialty consultant to advise on technical or other issues.
- Task 3: \$25,000 - \$50,000 over ten years, depending on the number of market studies required. Note that this cost is only for a study of the office market.



## Project 2-B: Encourage owner-occupied retail.

### Current Status

Historically Decatur has been a city of small locally-owned and owner-occupied retail businesses. This is part of the character of Decatur, where dining or shopping is an experience personalized by business owners who know their customers.

Today Downtown Decatur has more than 40 restaurants. There are approximately ten restaurants in the Oakhurst business district and other scattered locations. This “boom” in eating establishments has occurred over the last five years as the demographic composition of the Decatur area has changed. Today, the approximately 100,000 county residents who live within a three-mile radius of downtown have an estimated average household income of \$50,810.

Along with the restaurant surge, Decatur has experienced a slightly more moderate addition of retail stores, primarily Downtown. This year, Oakhurst is seeing the first signs of new retail activity. Overall, the retail market still has several major gaps. For example, there are no stores that offer a wide selection of clothing.

Many of the restaurants and retail establishments that have come to Decatur in recent years are owner-occupied and therefore continue to support the City’s small-town character. These businesses rely on the fact that Decatur is becoming the shopping, entertainment and business district for the intown neighborhoods east of Atlanta. There are three possibilities that might have a negative impact on retail in the future: 1) the appeal of Decatur to the intown neighborhood



population is relatively new. There is the potential that without ongoing marketing efforts it is not sustainable into the future; 2) with the success of Decatur’s locally based retail, larger “chain” establishments may turn their attention to the city, threatening the viability of current owner-occupied establishments; 3) Rising rents may make it difficult for small businesses to compete with chain establishments.

During the Round Tables and Strategic Planning process, residents of Decatur expressed two issues with the current retail: 1) not enough of the retail is oriented to the needs of residents, and 2) there are few African-American or other minority business owners.

### Recommendations

#### Scope

- Task 1. Continue initiatives developed out of the Town Center Plan to create an identity for Downtown Decatur.
- Task 2. Continue initiatives to attract owner-occupied retail.
- Task 3. Periodically conduct surveys to identify residents and visitors retail

needs, and focus on recruiting retail that will meet these needs.

- Task 4. Assemble a task force representing residents, government, business and institutions to identify methods for recruiting and retaining African-American and other minority-owned businesses.
- Task 5. Implement recommendations identified by task force in (Task 4).

### Implementation

#### Schedule

- Task 1: 2000 – 2010
- Task 2: 2000 – 2010
- Task 3: 2003 – 2007
- Task 4: 2001 – 2002
- Task 5: 2003 – 2010

#### Responsibility

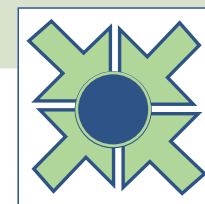
- Tasks 1 – 3:  
Decatur Development Authority (DDA)
- Tasks 4 & 5:  
Suggested Convener: DDA  
Suggested Collaborators:  
Decatur Business Association  
South Decatur Community Development Corporation  
Neighborhood Alliance

#### Funding

- Task 1: Current DDA
- Task 2: Current DDA
- Task 3: Current DDA  
Additional \$10,000 - \$20,000 over ten years depending on the number of retail studies required.
- Task 4: Current DDA
- Task 5: Possible additional staff funding for the DDA.

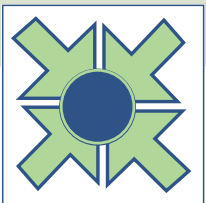
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**Goal #3: Protect existing neighborhoods while identifying the potential for selected growth and adopting standards that guide future growth.**

**Project 3-A: Adopt standards for new residential.**

**Current Status**

The Development Pressures & Stability map prepared by Brookwood/Brown indicates that none of the predominantly residential neighborhoods will experience significant “new” growth. Current zoning does not allow for much, if any, redevelopment. This does not mean that “retaining the character” of neighborhoods does not need to be addressed.

Based on market trends, including the increasing number of permits, it can be anticipated that infill will occur in some of Decatur’s neighborhoods, especially those on the south side. Homes substantially below market value for their area may be demolished to create lots for new construction, and remaining vacant lots may be developed.

**Recommendations**

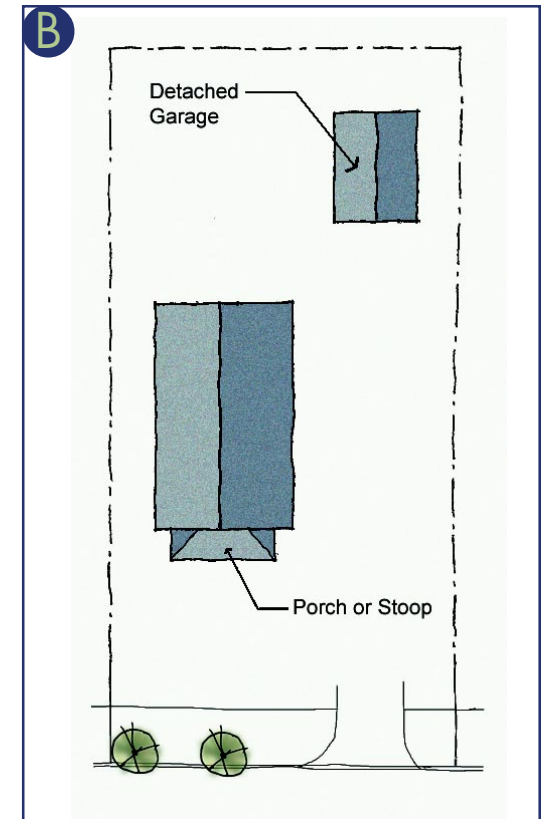
Part of the character of Decatur is the eclectic blend of housing styles. Any regulations for new single-family and medium-density residential should be made keeping this in mind. At the same time, many homes in Decatur’s neighborhoods have one traditional feature that sets the character for the



community: they are oriented to the street, with a porch or stoop providing a “connection” between public and private space. Furthermore, where garages exist, they typically are located behind or on the side of a house. Photograph “A” above illustrates infill that is compatible with the neighborhood.

**Scope**

- Policy 1: Encourage all new single family housing to follow the character of the existing housing in the surrounding neighborhood.
- Policy 2: Encourage residential builders to consider “vistablilty” when designing amd building new houses; just a few basic design adjustments can make it possible for disabled persons to visitfamily and friends.
- Standard 1: Amend current single-family “R” zoning to require that garages are on the side or rear of new homes. See diagram “B”.
- Standard 2: Amend current single-family “R” zoning to require that new homes include a “front” door that faces the



street and incorporates a front porch or stoop as an architectural feature. See diagram “B”.

**Implementation**

**Schedule**

Policies: 2001  
Standards 2000 – 2001

**Responsibility**

Assistant City Manager

**Funding**

\$10,000- \$20,000 for additional staff and/or consultant.



### Project 3-B: Consider guidelines for residential renovations.

#### **Current Status**

A high percentage of the recent construction permits issued in Decatur are for renovation of existing single-family homes. Current zoning provides regulations for height and set-backs that guide the design of additions and protect adjacent property.

Where significant expansion of an existing house occurs and/or in cases where a majority of houses in a neighborhood are already at or beyond their set-back lines, new additions, even when they are within current zoning, have the potential to “overwhelm” neighboring property. Photograph “A” at right illustrates a scale of house addition that if replicated throughout the neighborhood would change its character.

#### **Recommendations**

Maintain visual character of neighborhoods and quality of life for all residents by considering new guidelines for residential additions. Encourage all renovations to maintain the architectural integrity of the existing house. See “B” at right.

#### **Implementation**

##### *Schedule*

2000 – 2010

##### *Responsibility*

Assistant City Manager

##### *Funding*

\$10,000-\$20,000 for additional staff and/or consultant.



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