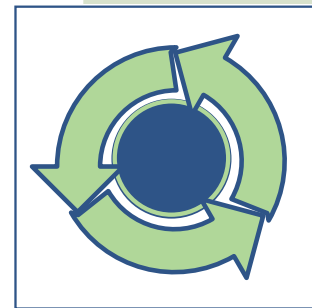


# SECTION

## PRINCIPLE B: ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY INTERACTION

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



# 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.

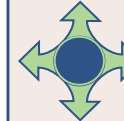
### Goal 5: Reinforce Neighborhoods And Develop Connections Between Neighborhoods

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 B: ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY INTERACTION

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

The City of Decatur requested a Strategic Plan that included consideration of social goals with economic and physical planning. The social goals identified in the Round Tables process and in subsequent community meetings were predominantly focused on a desire for improved communication and connections within the community.

During the information and data-gathering phase of the Strategic Plan, it was determined that Decatur has a wealth of existing community programs and activities that provide opportunities for communication and connection.

The Strategic Plan team reviewed issues raised in community meetings and assembled a “Communication and Connections” Focus Group comprised of residents and service providers. The result of these efforts was the beginning of a comprehensive community programs and activities list along with the identification of the three Goals and their supporting Projects highlighted on the facing page. These Goals address the eradication of barriers to community interaction.

The recommendations made in Section Five reflect the unusual nature of this principle in a planning document generated by the City. In many cases implementation is not the responsibility of the City, but must come from a collaboration between a number of parties, including the City. As a result, rather than listing one “responsible” party, we list suggested



collaborators and identify a possible “convener”.

In a number of cases a “Community Relations Manager” is identified as the responsible party or the convener for a project or task. It is recommended that strong consideration be given to establishing this position within the City staff based on current staff workloads and the potential additional workload identified in

the projects and tasks supporting Principle B. If the Community Relations Manager worked a late shift from 1:00 – 10:00 PM, he or she could attend the numerous evening meetings occurring throughout Decatur. This would provide a consistent link between various organizations and City staff, and could significantly increase the connection between the City and its residents.

PRINCIPLE B:  
Encourage Community Interaction

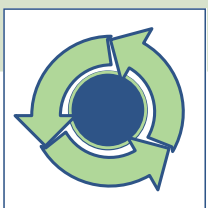
Determine methods to maximize communication and connections between residents, businesses, institutions and government.





## 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.

Goal number 4 evolved from the concern expressed by a racially diverse cross section of residents that an important part of the “character” of Decatur, its historically diverse demographic composition, may be disappearing. Quality data to document demographic change is limited at this time because the 2000 Census is in process and most currently available demographic data is based on projections from the 1990 Census. The most accurate information is provided by tCity Schools of Decatur enrollments. At Decatur High School the overall enrollment increased 17% between the 1995/96 and 1999/00 school years, while the enrollment of African-American students decreased by 8%. Thus while African-American students comprised 63% of the student body in 1996, they comprised only 50% in 2000. If this trend continues at its present rate, within five years African-American students will comprise less than 35% of the student body and in ten years less than 20%. The school enrollment numbers cannot be used as a basis for overall trends. There are numerous factors that influence enrollment figures that are not reflected in general demographic trends, including the number of students enrolled in private schools and changes in the number of residents with children. However, the enrollment figures can be used as an indicator that change is occurring and to validate resident anxiety that Decatur has the potential of becoming significantly less diverse.



In addition to implementing the projects listed under this goal, the success of Goal #4 is very closely tied to the success of the projects under *Goal #7: Increase opportunities for economically diverse housing for persons who live and work in Decatur.*

### Project 4-A: Diversify attendance at public events.

#### Current Status

Decatur has a wealth of public events that bring

the community together, from the spring and fall Concerts on the Square to the Fourth of July Parade. Not all groups or neighborhoods within the City are represented, or represented equally, at these events. In particular, African-Americans, the elderly and residents with disabilities are under-represented in attendance at many events.

#### Recommendations

Assemble a focus group to determine how to broaden the appeal of current events and/or plan additional events.



### Scope

- Task 1. Assemble a focus group to study the issue.
- Task 2. Focus group to identify potential solutions, trial events, funding and responsibility.
- Task 3. Implement potential solutions.
- Task 4. Evaluate effectiveness of potential solutions.
- Task 5. Modify solutions as necessary.

### Implementation

#### Schedule

- Task 1: 2000, 2004, 2008
- Task 2: 2001, 2005, 2009
- Task 3: 2001-2010
- Task 4: 2002-03, 2006, 2010
- Task 5: 2004-2010

#### Responsibility

Suggested convener:

Decatur Development Authority

Suggested collaborators:

City of Decatur – multiple departments

Decatur Business Association

South Decatur Community Development Corporation

Decatur Neighborhood Alliance

Student Representatives from the Schools

Community Relations Manager\*

Community Center of South Decatur

City Public Safety Department

#### Funding

\$10,000–15,000 – Market research to determine why some populations are under-represented today at public events, and what

types of events/services would most likely draw their attendance in the future.

To be determined - Obtain corporate sponsorships for as many events/services as possible.

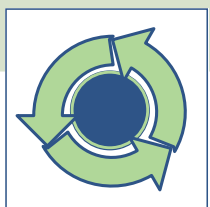
\* See first page of section 5 for description.



PRINCIPLE B:  
Encourage Community Interaction

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





## Project 4-B: Support and expand Volunteer activities.

### Current Status

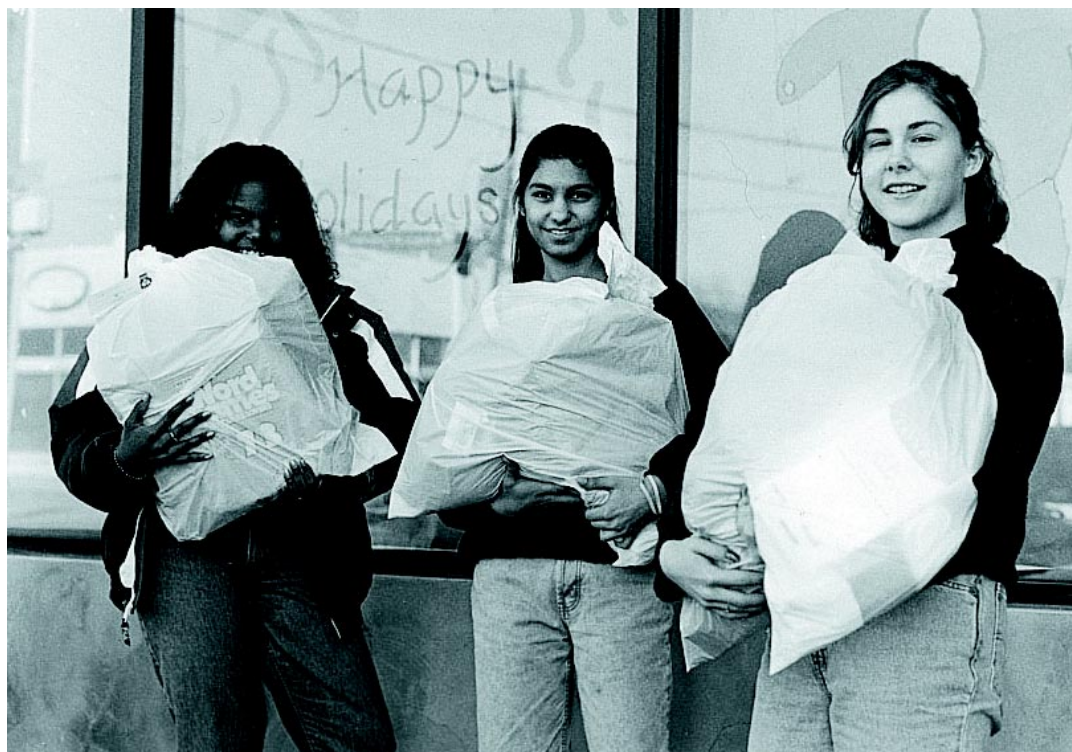
Decatur currently has a number of organizations that perform similar volunteer services, e.g. 1) the Recreation and Community Services Department has a new full-time volunteer coordinator along with a number of athletic and tutoring programs that utilize volunteers, 2) the School System utilizes volunteer tutors, 3) the KEY Club at the High School provides student volunteers, 4) the YMCA had its first "Day of Service" in Decatur in the Spring of 2000 and plans to make this a regular program, and 5) many of the churches have programs that provide services to the community.

### Recommendations

Coordinate volunteer activities in Decatur to: 1) ensure that all residents, government staff, business owners, institutions and others with an interest in the community are aware of all opportunities to contribute, 2) ensure that all activities needing volunteers have adequate participation.

### Scope

- Task 1. Staff a "Volunteer Decatur" position to act as a clearinghouse for all volunteer activities.
- Task 2. Develop a complete listing of all of the volunteer activities in Decatur.
- Task 3. Publicize this listing to reach all residents and others within the community.
- Task 4. Study opportunities for combining volunteer activities and/or staff.
- Task 5. Identify future funding for Volunteer Decatur.



### Implementation

#### *Schedule*

Task 1: 2000 – 2010  
Tasks 2 & 3: 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009  
Tasks 4 & 5: 2002 - 2009

#### *Responsibility*

Suggested Convener:

Director, City of Decatur Recreation and Community Services Department

Suggested Collaborators:

Volunteer Decatur  
YMCA  
School System  
Decatur Business Association  
Decatur Housing Authority  
City of Decatur

Decatur Neighborhood Alliance  
Community Relations Manager\*  
Decatur Cooperative Ministries  
Community Center of South Decatur  
Oakhurst Community Garden

#### *Funding*

Currently a staff position for Volunteer Decatur is funded through 2002 by United Way.

Funding for 2002 – 2010 must be identified. Potential sources include a United Way grant renewal and a minor fee charged to all the collaborating organizations other sources to be identified by Volunteer Decatur.

\*See first page of section 5 for description.



## Project 4-C: Expand distribution of & personalize community publications

### Current Status

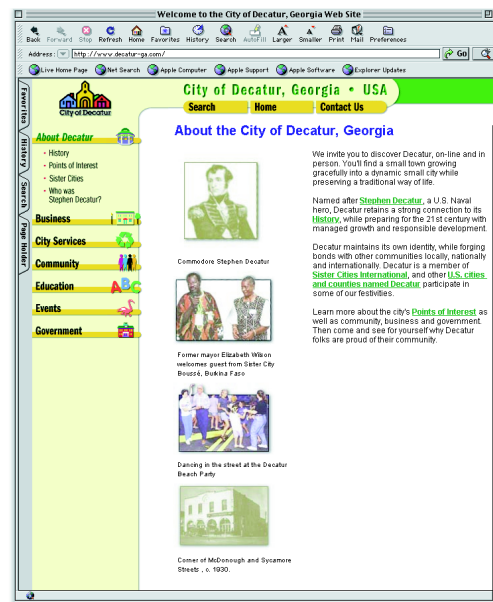
Decatur has several publications that are widely distributed within the community. These include the Decatur Focus, published by the City of Decatur; the Community Review and the Dekalb Extra, both of which serve Decatur and several nearby communities; and the Decatur Web Site, available to everyone with internet access. These publications are very good and provide a great deal of information about what is happening in Decatur. It has been determined, however, that not everyone in the community is reading or receiving the publications, meaning there is a segment of the population that may be unaware of activities and events within the City.

### Recommendations

Increase readership of existing City and community publications by including local neighborhood information in special sections of these publications.

### Scope

- Task 1. Verify that the print media is actually received at every residential unit, rental or owner-occupied, within the City. Correct the mailing list to include any residences not receiving the publications.
- Task 2. Develop neighborhood-specific sections, in both the Decatur Focus and Community Review, to encourage everyone in the City to read the publications.



left: The City of Decatur Web Site, [www.decaturn-ga.com](http://www.decaturn-ga.com)  
right: "FOCUS", the City of Decatur news publication



Task 3. Study implementation of a list serve-e-mail distribution/subscription list.

Task 4. Study providing alternative format publications for those with disabilities.

### Implementation

#### Schedule

- Task 1: 2000 – 2001, 2005, 2008  
Task 2: 2000 – 2010  
Task 3&4: 200-2001

#### Responsibility

- Suggested Convener:  
Decatur Development Authority
- Suggested Collaborators:  
Editor, Decatur Focus  
Editor, Community Review  
Publisher, Decatur Web Page  
Chair, Decatur Neighborhood Alliance

Community Relations Manager\*  
Editor, DeKalb Extra  
Editor, Decatur Dispatch  
Editor, The Champion

#### Funding

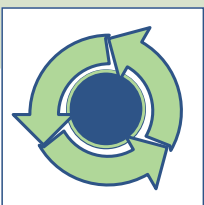
\$5,000–\$10,000 for temporary clerical support or a student intern to supplement current staff to check the residential listings and correct the mailing lists.

The best writers for the neighborhood sections are neighborhood residents. Coordinating a regular section or rotating sections to include input from the 28 neighborhood organizations that have identified themselves is a significant task. This may require some supplemental staff funding.

\*See first page of section 5 for description.

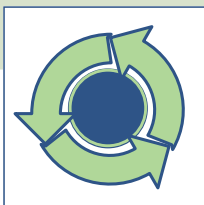
## PRINCIPLE B: Encourage Community Interaction

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



PRINCIPLE B:  
Encourage Community Interaction

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



## Goal #5: Reinforce neighborhoods and develop connections between neighborhoods.

Goal number 5 developed out of resident's statements that the old Decatur feeling of community is eroding. In the community workshop, a resident who moved to Decatur in the 1950s explained that the quality that brought and kept her in Decatur as the "Miss Grundy" factor. She described it simply as neighbors looking out for neighbors. The message repeated in community meetings throughout the Strategic Planning process was "start small." Begin with individual neighborhood organizations where neighbors can get to know each other, then move to the larger goal of connecting neighborhoods throughout the City.

Most areas of the City of Decatur are currently represented by one or more of the approximately 30 identified neighborhood organizations. These organizations are by definition independent and have varying degrees of structure. Each one of these organizations develops community between neighbors its own way.

**Project 5A:** Support the Decatur Neighborhood Alliance or a similar collective organization.

### Current Status

During the Round Tables and Strategic Planning processes it was determined that the



large number of neighborhood organizations and their typically informal structure create a need for an "umbrella" neighborhood organization to: 1) act as a clearinghouse for information to and from the City and other government, institutional and business organizations, 2) create connections between the activities of the individual organizations, and perhaps organize collective events, 3) provide support to neighborhood organizations that need assistance, 4) develop a citywide strategy for helping neighbors get to know neighbors.

The Decatur Neighborhood Alliance, an Action Team that developed out of the Decatur Round Tables process, appears to be the natural group to become this "umbrella" organization. Currently the Alliance does not have formal funding and is still in the process of defining its mission and goals. The City's Director of Community and Economic Development is the informal liaison between the Alliance and the City.

### Recommendation

Formalize and reinforce the Decatur Neighborhood Alliance (DNA) or a similar collective organization. Ensure that the DNA or a similar organization meets the needs of neighborhood organizations for information, connections with other organizations and support.

### Scope

- Task 1. Meet with the DNA and determine if the DNA is interested and able to become the collective organization that can meet the needs of Decatur's neighborhood organizations.
- Task 2. If the DNA cannot meet the needs of the individual neighborhood organizations, determine a method for forming an organization that can.
- Task 3. Work with the DNA or a similar organization to formalize its structure and funding.



Task 4. Work with the DNA or a similar organization to meet the needs of the individual neighborhoods.

### Implementation

#### *Schedule*

Tasks 1 - 3: 2000- 2001

Task 4: 2001 – 2010

#### *Responsibility*

Suggested convener:

Community Relations Manager\* (or  
Community and Economic Development  
Director)

Suggested collaborators:

Neighborhood Alliance  
All Neighborhood Organizations  
Housing Authority Residents Association

#### *Funding*

\$10,000/year for portion of Community  
Relations Manager\* position.

\$5,000-15,000/year for the DNA or a similar  
organization for communications, meeting  
costs, etc.

\*See first page of section 5 for description.



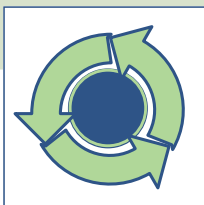
PRINCIPLE B:  
Encourage Community Interaction

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



**PRINCIPLE B:**  
Encourage Community Interaction

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



## Goal #6: Strengthen communication and connections throughout the community.

Project 6-A: Improve communication between residents, the City and Schools.

### Current Status

During the Decatur Round Tables process two issues that dealt with communication were articulated:

1. The need to identify the best method for enabling all citizens to participate in the healthy flow of information about the work of the City.
2. They need to encourage information and opinion flow to/from the school board, to create forums for community members to receive information and discuss creative alternatives and solutions, create new mechanisms for input to the schools.

During the Strategic Plan process these items both scored in the top ten in an informal survey in which the participants were asked to rank the ten issues most important to them. Residents also determined that any communication process developed should foster dialogue which Decatur Round Tables did so well. The Round Tables provided opportunities for interaction, mutual understanding and joint action towards building community. This indicates that precious resources of time and money are being wasted on communication that is not achieving



desired goals.

In interviews and discussion sessions that included City and School System staff, all persons felt that they were doing everything possible to communicate.

### Recommendations

Before taking additional action, evaluation should be made of why communication is not working within the current organizational structures of the City and School System. The next step is to make any adjustments that are necessary.

### Scope

- Task 1. Develop a plan to ensure that creative citizen dialogue is a part of our public life.
- Task 2. Develop a process for evaluation of communications between the school system and its key stakeholders (city government, parents of students, students and other residents).
- Task 3. Implement the recommendations of Task 1 and Task 2.



Task 4. Develop and implement training for citizen leaders to strengthen their ability to facilitate and organize community groups and associations.

### Implementation

#### Schedule

Task 1: 2000 – 2001  
Tasks 2-4: 2002 – 2010

#### Responsibility

Suggested Conveners:  
Community Relations Manager\*  
Community and Economic Development Director  
City Schools of Decatur Public Information/Community Services Officer  
Citizen group including Round Table Action Teams

#### Funding

Option A: Current staff assigned to coordinate.  
Option B: \$10,000–25,000 for professional consultant to assist staff.

\*See first page of section 5 for description.





**Project 6-B:** Support new and existing programs that strengthen community connections.

**Current Status**

Decatur has a wealth of publicly and privately funded community programs and activities that provide a diverse number of ways for residents to interact. In addition, there are a number of “informal” non-funded organizations, such as Families Uniting Neighborhoods (F.U.N.) and

Decatur Safe Kids. Other than the Leadership Map developed during the Decatur Round Tables process, there is no common listing of all these services and activities. During the course of the Strategic Plan, dozens of additional organizations and hundreds of programs were identified and the idea evolved of creating a “Directory” of the services, programs and activities currently available in Decatur.

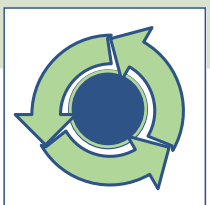
Few existing programs have the funding or

support that they would like or need. For example, although the Recreation Department and the School System are collaborating on a successful and progressive after school program, it is only available in three elementary schools because of funding limitations.

The Decatur Recreation and Community Services Department offers a wide variety of programs where many people in Decatur experience a great degree of diversity in participation.

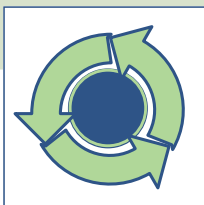
**PRINCIPLE B:**  
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## Recommendations

### Scope

- Task 1. Create a comprehensive Directory of all community programs and activities in Decatur.
- Task 2. Determine if there are common elements among organizations or programs that can develop into a unified support system such as a Decatur Youth Foundation, etc.
- Task 3. Establish a Youth Council, appointed by the City Commission, to make recommendations on matters affecting the youth in Decatur and to organize events for City youth.
- Task 4. Based on a survey of “informal” organizations such as FUN and Safe Kids, determine if there are ways to provide support such as by assigning a “liaison” within the City and/or School System. The Decatur Police have already begun a planning process to work with Safe Kids.
- Task 5. Encourage programs that involve public safety officers in social interaction with residents, businesses and visitors.
- Task 6. Identify programs and activities with barriers to accessibility and determine what type of support is required to make them accessible.
- Task 7. Implement support systems.

### Implementation

#### Schedule

- Tasks 1 - 3: 2000 – 2001, 2006-2007
- Tasks 4 - 7: 2001 – 2010



### Responsibility

Tasks 1-3 & 5-7:

Suggested Convener:

Volunteer Decatur Director

Suggested Collaborators:

City/School System

Housing Authority

Decatur Business Association

Private Service Providers

South Decatur Community

Development Corporation

Community Center of South Decatur

Oakhurst Community Garden

Public Safety Department

Task 4:

Suggested Convener(s):

City Leader/Schools Leader

### Funding

Task 1: Staff funding in place for first directory through the United Way “Volunteer Decatur” position.

\$5,000–7,500 publishing & printing costs needed for first directory.

\$15,000–20,000 staff and printing costs needed for each subsequent directory.

Task 2: \$10,000–20,000 for additional staff and/or consultant.

Task 3-6: Same as 2

Task 7: Tbe determined based on outcomes of 3, 4, 5 and 6.