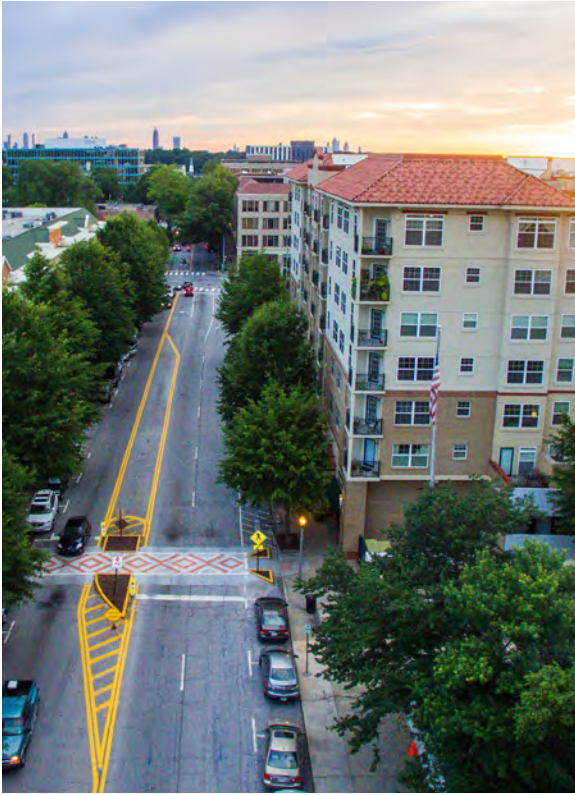


Smart Growth Planning in Action

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Overview: City of Decatur, Georgia

Project Summary: The city of Decatur has a long history of community-based planning that identifies a long-term vision, outlines goals and objectives and directs the development of both short- and long-term programs. Decatur's economic revitalization efforts date to 1982 with the adoption of the Decatur Town Center Plan. The current economic success of the downtown business district is a result of an incremental approach to plan implementation and an acceptance that success requires sustained commitment to the plan. Decatur has developed a critical partnership between city officials, the business community and residents to ensure that the city's goals and objectives address the needs and concerns of all citizens. The Decatur Downtown Development Authority, appointed by the Decatur City Commission, serves as advocates and advisors to the Commission on development issues and helps establish the partnerships that have been essential to success.

Communication and public involvement are important components of a successful economic development plan. The city of Decatur has revisited its development plans several times since 1982 to update the vision and revise goals and objectives. The Decatur City Commission routinely involves citizen-based task force groups to assist in the development of specific master plans for individual projects to assure public input and involvement.

Challenges: In the early years of the Town Center Plan implementation, Decatur worked with local developers who had a personal commitment and investment in adhering to the goals of the plan. The Decatur Development Authority adopted a strategy of working with developers early in a project to ensure plan compliance rather than implementing strict design standards and guidelines. As Decatur's development momentum increased, the city adopted a set of design standards to protect its unique character, but allow for creative, contemporary approaches to smart growth.



The success of Decatur’s development program has brought escalating property values and rental rates. The city works with downtown property owners and local lenders to ensure that locally owned businesses are given priority consideration for retail space. Decatur also offers a 20 percent density bonus for residential developments that include affordable units. The concept of lifelong community is an important issue with city officials who want to make sure that adequate housing and a variety of housing options exist for all market segments, from young adults to senior citizens.

Decatur Planning History

- **Decatur Town Center Plan** 1982 (updated 1989)
- **Downtown Streetscape Master Plan** 1995
- **MARTA Plaza Redevelopment Master Plan** 1999
- **Downtown Design Standards** 1999
- **Decatur Strategic Plan** 2000
- **Avondale/Decatur MARTA Station LCI Plan** 2002
- **Affordable Housing Study** 2008
- **Community Transportation Plan** 2008
- **Strategic Plan** 2010
- **Decatur LCI Plan 10-year Update** 2010
- **Community Transportation Update** 2018
- **East Lake MARTA Station LCI master plan** 2018 (underway)
- **United Methodist Children’s Home master plan** 2018 (underway)
- **2020 Strategic Plan** (kicking off in 2019)





1. Decatur MARTA Station

Plaza Improvements and Entrance

When it opened in 1979, the Decatur MARTA station was the end of the east line and one of the few stations in operation. Decatur residents were strong supporters of the transit system and the one-cent MARTA sales tax. The station was originally planned to be located along the railroad tracks located south of the central business district but city leaders were concerned the station would create a physical barrier that further divided the city into the north and south districts. City leaders were strong advocates for moving the station into the heart of the commercial center of the city believing that it was a critical component of the long-term vision for downtown development. Thirty five years later their vision has become reality.



The original station was designed in the 1970s when there was little interest in preserving historic commercial districts. As a result, the station designers made no effort to complement the historic character of the older buildings around the courthouse square. The 100 block of Sycamore Street, once one of Decatur's main retail streets, was closed and replaced by the MARTA plaza which is the roof of the MARTA station below it. No longer could cars drive around the old courthouse square and an entire block of historic retail buildings was destroyed. For the next several decades, city leadership partnered with the Decatur Downtown Development Authority and the Decatur Business Association to improve the station and reduce the physical barriers it created through small, locally funded projects.



The 1996 Olympics created an incentive to make larger improvements. With the assistance of MARTA and public contributions from the city of Decatur and the Decatur Downtown Development Authority the bus-to-rail transfer location was moved from Church Street to a new facility on Swanton Way. This improvement removed bus traffic and congestion from Church Street and created a new off-road facility for bus transfers. Thanks to a major contribution from Decatur Federal Savings and Loan, the unattractive station entrance located in the heart of the courthouse square was removed and replaced with the community bandstand. An elevator shaft that was located on the old courthouse lawn was also removed.

In 1999 the city, the DDA and the Decatur Business Association jointly funded a master plan to look at structural design improvements to the plaza and Church Street entrance to help blend the area into the historic fabric of the surrounding square. With this plan in hand, the city was able to quickly take advantage of the first round of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative program and received a grant to implement the master plan. The city of Decatur and the Decatur Downtown Development Authority provided the required matching funds for this grant.

Today, the station and the plaza offer a pedestrian scaled design that is more useful for festivals and special events and links the two sides of the square more effectively.





before

2. Town Square Condominiums

225 E. Ponce de Leon Ave.

Project Summary: This project, started in 1999, was the first mixed-use residential development in the downtown commercial district. The Decatur Downtown Development Authority identified the area for residential development in 1994 and began working with individual property owners to secure their support and cooperation. The DDA purchased a critical piece of the site from MARTA in 1996 and operated it as a short-term, paid parking lot to pay an interest-only purchase loan. The DDA paid for a downtown housing market study and used it to market the site to potential developers. Construction started on the project in 1999 and the units were 60 percent sold before the developer broke ground. While the original market was intended to be young professionals, more than 60 percent of the units were sold to empty-nesters ready to sell their single-family homes in Decatur or wanting to leave the suburbs for smaller, more conveniently located condominiums. The developer was required to adhere to the downtown district design standards that required the parking deck to be hidden, retail space to be located on the ground floor and the construction of streetscape improvements according to the city's streetscape design standards.

Challenges: As the first residential project built in downtown Decatur, the developer was gambling on an untested market. The site was difficult to assemble and prolonged negotiations resulted in increased financing costs. While the DDA had secured ownership or owner cooperation of the majority of the site, one private property owner and a church ultimately refused to sell resulting in a challenging site design. The location of residents in a downtown district created issues related to noise from adjacent commercial businesses and early downtown dumpster pickups that had never been a problem before.

* Originally planned as a 112 unit project of one and two bedroom units, several purchasers elected to buy two units and combine them to create three bedroom, 2,500 sq. ft. units reducing the total number of units built to 105

By the Numbers

Number of Units 105*

Number of Affordable Units Set Aside 10

Size of Site and Density 1.9 acres built,
58 units per acre (70 allowed)

Average Size of the Units 800-2,500 sq. ft.

Sales Price for Units \$150,000-\$450,000

Retail Space 13,000 sq. ft.

Cost of Construction \$16 million

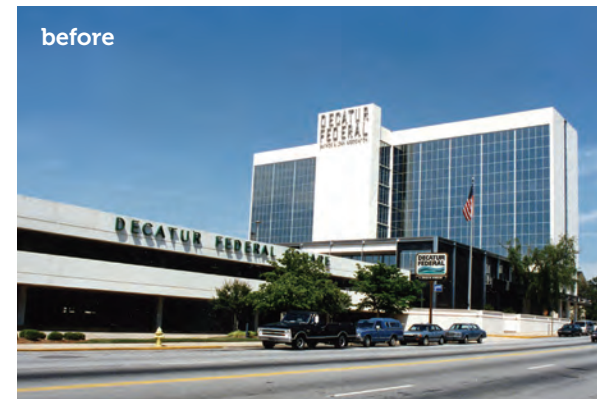
Financing Conventional

3. Decatur Renaissance Condominiums

230 E. Ponce de Leon Ave.

Project Summary: Originally planned as an apartment project, the Renaissance development was changed to condominiums in response to the strong condominium market in the city of Decatur. This 169-unit project provides a smaller, more affordable condo option. It was built over and in front of an existing parking deck. This project added one more piece to our effort to build back retail storefronts along the entire length of Ponce de Leon Avenue, fill in surface parking lots, and screen parking decks. The project includes the required ground-level retail and the developer constructed the required streetscape improvements to the city's specifications.

Challenges: The biggest challenge for this project was the engineering problem of adding six residential levels on top of an existing parking deck. This required specialized geotechnical testing, innovative structural design and a lightweight, non-combustible structure for the apartment levels. Also challenging: the logistics of constructing a mixed-use project in the middle of an occupied office complex on top of a parking deck that serves four buildings, while maintaining the safety of existing tenants without limiting access. The project was granted a zoning variance to exceed the 80-foot height limit by 17 feet to allow the required density in the small project footprint. The height variance was supported by the Decatur Downtown Development Authority because it helped the out-of-scale bank building adjacent to the project blend in with the surrounding area. (The bank was built in the 1960s, prior to the height restrictions.)



By the Numbers

Size of the project site 1.7 acres

Number of residential units 168

Affordable Units 0

Range of Sizes 750-1,220 sq. ft.
55% one-bedroom, 45% two-bedroom

Sales Price \$150,000-\$250,000

Retail Space 5,500 sq. ft.

Construction Cost \$14.7 million

Financing Conventional



before

4. The Artisan

201 W. Ponce de Leon Ave.

Project Summary: The 201 W. Ponce de Leon project is a two phase mixed use development with residential and street retail on a 1.928-acre site at the northeast corner of W. Ponce de Leon Avenue and Commerce Drive. The first phase was approved at 105 units – seven of these units were two-level townhouses with street-front access and two of which were live/work units with street-level commercial space and a level of residential above. The first phase included 12,000 square feet of street level retail and the required structured parking providing a total of 373 spaces. The second phase of the project added 57 residential units.

The Decatur Downtown Development Authority sold a surface parking lot as part of this land assembly and required the replacement of 113 public parking spaces in the parking deck as part of the sales agreement.

Challenges: Phase one followed a trend in downtown Decatur with strong sales in the larger two-bedroom units and slower sales in the one-bedroom units. We learned that our market continues to be skewed toward empty nesters interested in larger units and more amenities. As a result of this trend, buyers purchased two units and combined them for large two and three bedroom units resulting in a reduction of the total number of units in phase one from the projected 105 units to fewer than 75 units.

This interest in larger units was reflected in our difficulty in attracting buyers for the affordable units. The developer planned all of the affordable units as one-bedroom units and proposed a \$20,000 subsidy with a 10-year equity restriction. We found that young buyers as well as qualifying empty nesters were not interested in one-bedroom units with such a long equity restriction. Because the number of total units was reduced, we allowed the developer to reduce the number of affordable units in the first phase from 13 to 9, increased the subsidy from \$20,000 per unit to \$30,000 per unit and dropped the 10-year equity restriction but required that the initial \$30,000 subsidy be repaid to the Decatur Housing Authority when the unit was resold.

* Proposed project called for a total of 162 units in two phases. As a result of purchasers combining two units to get larger condominiums, the total number of units in phase one was reduced from the approved 105 units to 75 units. The number of approved affordable units in phase one was reduced from 13 to nine and the range of unit sizes increased to a maximum of 2,700 sq ft.

By the Numbers

- Number of Units** 74*
- Number of Affordable Units Set Aside** 9*
- Size of site** 1.928 acres
- Size Range of Units** 785-1,400 sq ft *
- Average Sale of Units** \$225,000
- Retail Space** 12,000 sq ft
- Tax Value** \$20 million
- Financing** Conventional

5. SunTrust Bank Building

198 W. Ponce de Leon Ave.

Project Summary: The SunTrust Bank building provided more than 8,000 sq. ft. of space for the bank with an additional 5,000 sq. ft. of retail along West Ponce de Leon Avenue. The bank was required to place all parking behind the building and the drive-in banking facility at the rear of the site, with driveway access restricted to a rear street. The developers funded the construction of streetscape improvements along the Commerce Drive side of the property.

Challenges: This project was the product of months of negotiations with the developer to ensure that the building would be an asset to downtown Decatur. The Downtown Development Authority advocated for a higher density building because it was felt that a one-story branch bank was too suburban in appearance and not the highest and best use for this important downtown corner. As a compromise, the developer agreed to design the building to appear to be two stories in height. The developer also made several design modifications, increased the percentage of glass and worked to improve the traditional retail appearance of the Ponce de Leon frontage.

Another issue was a requested driveway entrance on Ponce de Leon Avenue. Thanks to the support of a number of Decatur residents, the Planning Commission and the Decatur City Commission, the developer agreed to omit the Ponce de Leon Avenue curb cut. While the project improved the appearance of this corner, it offered several indirect improvements too. First, the SunTrust drive-in bank located on the opposite corner was closed, freeing up this key block for redevelopment. Second, the developer agreed to permanently close the driveway “courtyard” adjacent to the Old Courthouse and next to Souper Jenny. The driveway created a number of traffic and pedestrian safety problems. Finally, the SunTrust move from the square opened up a beautiful, historic building for a more appropriate use.



By the Numbers

Total Square Feet 15,000 sq. ft.

Number of retail spaces 2-3



6. Alexan At Clairemont

Clairemont Avenue at Commerce Drive

Project Summary: This residential project is a rental property designed to have its major focus on Commerce Drive. The design and siting of the project extends the residential flow of the Artisan Phases I and II that helped create a more pedestrian-friendly experience along Commerce Drive. The project includes units on the ground floor that have direct access to the sidewalk to create a stronger connection with pedestrians at the street level. The project includes developer-funded streetscape improvements and a road diet investment in concert with the city's Community Transportation Plan and a grant-funded improvement for the Commerce Drive/Clairemont Avenue intersection that connects to this project.

Challenges: The project met all zoning requirements but temporary construction easements and some permanent sewer easements were required from the city's adjoining conference center property. The Development Authority facilitated discussion between the developer and the adjacent Artisan condominium owners which resulted in green screening, upgraded landscaping, improved location of roof deck air conditioning units and a commitment to plant additional street trees.

By the Numbers

Number of units 176 rental units

Net increase in property value \$38 million

Annual school tax generated \$515,000

7. The Place on Ponce

315 W. Ponce de Leon Ave.

Project Summary: This mixed use development includes 235 residential apartments and 10,000 sf of retail space on an approximately 5-acre site. The property includes a 10-story office building constructed in the 1960s that exceeds the current building height limit of 80 feet. The new development consists of three components. The first is a parking deck to replace surface parking for the office building and provide parking for the new residential units. Some shared parking was allowed to reduce the height of the parking deck and accommodate for the fact that office parking spaces go unused at night and on the weekends. The second component is a building constructed in front of the existing office building. It includes 10,000 sq. ft. of street-level commercial space with 28 apartment units above. The remainder of the apartment units were constructed on the large surface parking lot behind the existing office building. Nine units have direct access onto Montgomery Street to create the appearance of townhouses. This building is limited in height to three stories at the street and steps back to a maximum height of 80 feet.

Challenges: This site is one of only a handful of commercial zoned properties in the downtown district that adjoin single-family residential districts. Several developers attempted to develop the site. Carter USA worked out an agreement with adjoining neighbors which required compromises to accommodate the interests of home owners fronting Montgomery Street, across from the apartment development, who were concerned about height and scale. It also accommodated the concerns of single-family property owners facing Fairview whose backyards adjoined the development site on its western edge. Negotiations also included concerns of an existing condominium building that backed up to the planned parking deck for the project. A number of design changes were approved to meet these concerns:

- Reduced the height of the building fronting Montgomery to three stories
- Reduced the height of the building behind the Fairview homes to three stories and changed design and materials of the parking deck where it adjoined these properties, and worked with residents to design an acceptable planting buffer.
- Notched parking deck to protect a stand of larger trees behind the 335 condominium building and lowered the parking deck by one level.

Negotiations over this project led the city to tighten up ordinance requirements to control development adjacent to single-family districts.



By the Numbers

Number of units 235 dwellings

Additional retail space 13,000 square feet

Net increase in property value \$54 million

Annual school tax generated \$600,000



8. 335 W. Ponce de Leon Condominiums

Project Summary: This downtown condominium project was developed on an empty surface parking lot along a section of Ponce de Leon Avenue that is experiencing redevelopment of retail and restaurant business. The site was one acre in size and the project includes the maximum number of residential units allowed in the C-1 zoning district. It also included the required street-level retail space and the developer constructed streetscape improvements that meet the city's required standards. Unlike more traditionally designed buildings closer to the Old Courthouse square, this project has a more contemporary design in response to the adjacent bank building, art deco building across the street and nearby rehabilitated gas stations and industrial buildings. The project was marketed to a young, professional demographic.

Challenges: The site was very tight and required creative solutions to meet the city's design requirements for street-level retail, hidden parking and limited curb cuts. The design team created a space that incorporated a second-floor swimming pool, fitness center and cabana bar, provided for a variety of residential unit sizes and included several large top-floor penthouse units. The larger two-bedroom units sold quickly, but the smaller one-bedroom units were slower to sell.

By the Numbers

Number of Units 70

Number of Affordable Units Set Aside 0

Retail Space Seven retail spaces ranging in size from 1,197-1,558 sq. ft.

Average Size of the Units 809-2,462 sq. ft.

Sales Price for Units \$170,000-\$515,000

Cost of Construction \$12 million

Financing Conventional

9. The Arlo

245 E. Trinity Place

Project Summary: The development site included a deteriorated county-owned maintenance facility and a run-down motel. The Decatur Development Authority purchased the county building and worked with adjacent private property owners to assemble the site and market it to developers. A sales agreement was reached in 2008 but the developer ended up losing the property to an investor during the economic downturn. The investor restarted the project, and it was completed in 2016. This project represents an improvement at an important gateway into the downtown business district from the south and east of Decatur. The construction schedule coincided with planned streetscape improvements connecting the downtown core to the railroad tracks and Agnes Scott College and the Winnona Park neighborhood to the south. The developer funded the streetscape improvements adjacent to the project and the city used grant funding to complete the network. The plans also included a much-needed intersection improvement at the rail crossing to provide for pedestrian and bicycle safety. The project includes 30 parking spaces in the parking deck for the Old Depot building across the street, which is owned by the Development Authority.

The developers of the Arlo used the city's affordable housing density bonus. This incentive allows a developer to add 20% more units to a project if 75% of these units are priced to be affordable to individuals and families earning less than 80% of the median household income. The purpose of the program is to provide affordable housing options for younger residents, service employees, and empty-nesters who are often priced out of Decatur's residential market. Apartment sizes included in the program reflect the percentage of apartment sizes available in the total development. For example, if 20% of the total number of apartments are efficiency units, then only 20 percent of the 22 affordably priced units can be efficiency units.

Challenges: The economic downturn put this project on hold and we were delighted when it kicked off again. A 2008 Affordable Housing Study conducted by the city of Decatur identified a lack of new apartments as the major gap in the city's housing market. The final negotiations were complicated by the Development Authority's commitment to keeping the long-established Dairy Queen in the deal requiring lengthy lease negotiations. Dairy Queen has returned to the project in a newly created space fronting E. Trinity Place.



By the Numbers

- Number of units** 214
- Affordable units** 22
- Net gain in property tax value** \$50 million
- Retail space** 13,000 sf



10. The Callaway Project

120 W. Trinity Place

Project Summary: This 4.7-acre site in downtown Decatur was once owned by DeKalb County and was the location of a 1970s office building – one of the ugliest in Decatur – that housed a variety of county functions. It sat on a large surface parking lot and was slowly deteriorating as the county moved its operations out of the building. The urban myth was that it had been built as a parking deck and then was turned into an office building. While that wasn't true, photos of the building show how that rumor could have started.

In 2003, the Decatur Downtown Development Authority approached DeKalb County about purchasing the site with the goal of redeveloping it. The property was one of the largest redevelopment parcels in the downtown area. Because it was owned by the county, it contributed nothing to the city's tax base. The site offered an ideal opportunity to stimulate development south of the courthouse square and provide a better connection between downtown Decatur and the neighborhoods to the south.

For more than 10 years, the DDA worked to move this project forward. In 2013, the idea gained traction and DeKalb agreed to sell the property. The county leased back the building for two years to allow time to relocate remaining departments. The city issued bonds to purchase the site and the county's lease payments covered the city's bond payments.

Through a competitive bid process the city selected Cousins Properties in partnership with AMLI to develop a mixed-use project for the site. It took three more years to work through design and permitting issues. In 2016 Cousins Properties bought the property and construction began in 2017. When completed, the estimated taxable value of the site will be \$68 million. The property generated no property tax revenue prior to development.

Challenges: The complexity of negotiating with DeKalb County made this project a test in perseverance but the project is a critical part of the city's downtown redevelopment plan. The DDA and the city were committed to the development of some commercial office space as part of the mixed-use development plan. The developer agreed to include a 35,000 sq. ft. office building at the corner of N. McDonough and E. Trinity Place. It was fully leased when construction began.

By the Numbers

Number of units 329 rental units

Commercial space

Retail/restaurant 18,000 sf

Office 35,000 sf

Parking 721 parking spaces in structured parking deck

Estimated net property value \$68 million

Estimated Annual school tax revenue \$636,000

11. Hampton Inn and Suites

120 Clairemont Avenue

Project Summary: This outparcel had originally been approved for a phase II office building as part of the development of the adjacent office building in 1993. Over the years, various development projects were presented including a mixed-use residential property. The Hampton Inn and Suites is being developed by Vision Hospitality and includes 136 hotel rooms and a parking deck. This project meets a need for additional hotel rooms in downtown Decatur. The Decatur Conference Center located behind the adjacent Marriott Courtyard can accommodate larger regional meetings and conferences but the Marriott doesn't have enough hotel rooms to meet this need. Marriott management is positive about the new hotel and sees it as a business generator that will benefit everyone. The Marriott currently has some of the highest occupancy rates in the market. The hotel is expected to open in first quarter of 2019. The new hotel will increase the taxable value of the property and will bring additional hotel/motel tax revenue to the city.

Challenges: Because the property was planted with trees and no development projects materialized for more than 20 years, many residents assumed that it was a city-owned park. The city approached the property owner with several ideas including a transfer of development rights to acquire the site but legal restrictions and the high cost of property in the downtown district made this a difficult option. In addition, the need for an additional hotel in downtown was an important consideration.

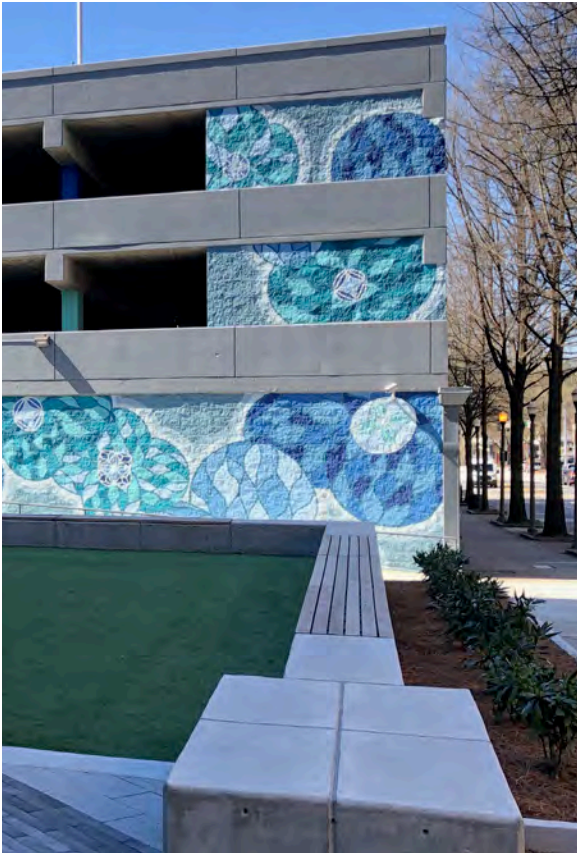


By the Numbers

Hotel Rooms 136

On-site meeting space 1,500 sf

Parking 90 spaces in 3-story deck



12. West Court Square

This 170,000-square-foot, seven-story office building was built in 1972 adjacent to the historic DeKalb County Courthouse as one of several new “modern” office buildings constructed during a building boom that began in the late 1960s and extended through the 1970s. These new buildings made little effort to fit into the historic character of Decatur or create a connection to the sidewalk. Instead, they focused their main entrances onto newly built parking decks with an assumption that remaining older commercial buildings would eventually be torn down and redeveloped.

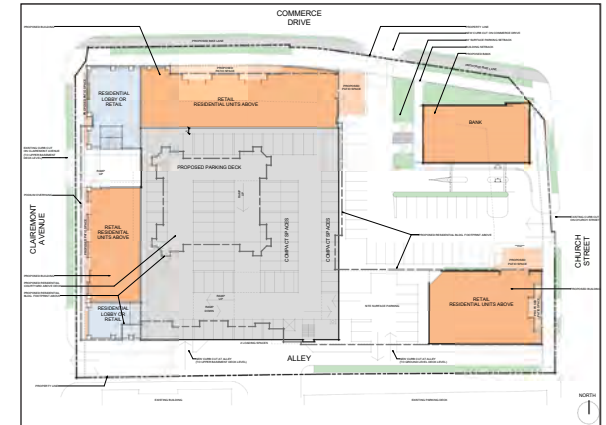
The building originally housed a large engineering firm but over the years transitioned into a variety of smaller commercial tenants. Most recently it housed classroom space for DeVry University and the Art Institute of Atlanta.

A new owner is working to breathe new life into the building and create a better connection between the building and the surrounding commercial district. Interior and exterior renovations are currently under way. The exterior of the parking deck was renovated and a new, more visible entry was created onto Ponce de Leon Avenue. A small surface parking lot with several curb cuts was removed and replaced with a pocket park and the owner commissioned artist Mary Rose to create a mural on the parking deck and the building to bring color and life to the street-fronting façade. In addition, the owners added outdoor lighting to the plaza area at the front of the building and is working to bring new ground floor retail and restaurant tenants to create more activity and interest during the day and into the evening.

13. Bank of America Redevelopment

The 2.7-acre site is located at a major gateway into the downtown Decatur business district with frontage on three major streets. Currently the property contains a 1970s-era bank branch building surrounded by a large surface parking lot with little pedestrian connection. The approved redevelopment plan includes replacing the existing bank branch with a new, smaller facility at the corner of Church Street and Commerce Drive that is better oriented to the street. Once complete, the bank would move into the new building and the existing building would be demolished. A new parking structure would be built at the center of the block with mixed-use residential and ground-level retail uses around and on top of the parking deck. The developer has agreed to donate property along Commerce Drive to allow for the addition of a bicycle track in addition to the required streetscape improvements to add wider sidewalks, street trees and street furniture along all three sides of the site.

Challenges: Design standards required that all new construction front existing streets and create a strong connection between the buildings and the pedestrian sidewalk. This requirement meant working closely with the design team for the bank to assure that the bank building had public access from the sidewalk and was not totally focused inward onto a small dedicated parking lot. It also meant limiting the size of the drive-through banking area and not allowing direct access from a public street into the drive-through area. Design review continues on the bank building. Plans for the 2nd phase of the project to include the parking deck and mixed use have not been submitted at this time.



By the Numbers

- Bank branch** 4,500 sf
- Retail/restaurant** 25,000 sf
- Residential** 200 units
- Estimated net property value after development** \$77 million
- Estimated Annual school tax after development revenue** \$750,000



14. Oakhurst Business District

The Oakhurst Business District is the heart of the Decatur neighborhood often referred to as Oakhurst Village. Once an independent city, Oakhurst grew up along the Atlanta streetcar line and was incorporated in the early part of the 20th century along with similar cities like Kirkwood and Edgewood. Around the 1920s, Kirkwood and Edgewood were pulled into the city of Atlanta and Oakhurst was annexed by Decatur.

The landmark Scottish Rite building in the Oakhurst District was the site of the original Scottish Rite Convalescent Hospital for Crippled Children. Designed by famed architects Neel Reid and Hal Heinz in 1919, the Scottish Rite buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and recognized as a local historic landmark. When the Scottish Rite hospital relocated to the north Atlanta suburbs in the 1970s, the building was given to a newly formed organization called the Community Center of South Decatur with plans to use it as a community center. Over the years, the building deteriorated and maintenance costs overwhelmed the ability of the community group. It was given to the city of Decatur in 1997 to facilitate a needed renovation through a public/private partnership.

The city sold the property to Progressive Redevelopment Inc. (PRI), which agreed to rehabilitate the historic buildings, provide new single-family housing for the neighborhood and provide a portion of the property for use by the Community Center of South Decatur. The renovated buildings now house a variety of commercial tenants including a physician, an eye doctor, various non-profit offices and a restaurant. A portion of the site was sold off for private sector commercial use and returned to the tax rolls. PRI partnered with the Shepherd Center to construct 14 new accessible apartment units for people with temporary or permanent disabilities honoring the historic purpose of the original building.

PRI made substantial investments that stabilized the property and brought new life to the buildings. Unfortunately, the economic downturn threatened the property with foreclosure. City of Decatur and the Decatur Development Authority partnered to assume ownership in 2014 with the goal of finding a new tenant for the west wing to stabilize rental income. In 2016, Scout leased the western wing and the eastern wing (which includes the Solarium) was transferred to the Community Center of South Decatur in 2017. DDA is currently negotiating to sell the main office building and the west wing to a private owner. The Oakhurst Business District is home to a small but thriving commercial district that includes locally owned restaurants and retailers. A recently completed streetscape project upgraded sidewalks and added street lights to improved the pedestrian experience. The city recently rebuilt a 1960s era fire station. The city rebuilt a 1960s-era fire station to better establish its place in the community and earned a LEED Silver certification. Most recently the city completed a redesign of Harmony Park at the center of the district and added an improved streetscape network throughout the commercial district.

15. East Decatur Business District

This 60+ acre district was identified in the 2000 Decatur Strategic Plan as an area ripe for change. Originally the city's industrial district, the area was in transition and offered an opportunity to shape how it would grow and develop. The city received a Livable Centers Initiative Grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission in 2003 to fund a master plan. The plan, which involved a great deal of community input, envisions a mixed-use, residential district that capitalizes on the existing MARTA station to create a transit-oriented development district. The plan includes the concept of a universal water detention facility that will be incorporated into a lake and park to serve the district and the adjacent Winnona Park neighborhood. The focus is on creating a new neighborhood with a variety of housing options that incorporates creative work spaces and retail and restaurant uses to serve neighborhood needs. City Schools of Decatur acquired a site in this district and is currently building a new elementary school serving grades 3-5 that is scheduled to open in the fall of 2019.

PHASE 1

The name originally applied to a group of older warehouses acquired and redeveloped by a private development partnership but the name has now come to refer to the entire district that once served as Decatur's industrial area. These owners have encouraged the development of a growing creative business hub in these spaces supported by successful retail and restaurant businesses. The district is now home to two craft breweries, a small distillery, and a wine workshop that allows patrons to bottle their own wine. In addition, there are small creative offices, fitness centers, a church, a private high school, a glass blowing studio and a wide variety of open warehouse space that appeals to less traditional commercial ventures. These development partners continue to acquire land in this area with plans to proceed as residential and mixed-use development opportunities arise in the district. The developers are dedicated to sustainable building practices and encouraging pedestrian and cycling connections throughout the district and to adjoining neighborhoods.

Talley Street Lofts, located at the intersection of Sams and Talley streets is a 90-unit condominium project that was completed in the district before the economic downturn. Decatur just completed a renovation of its public works facility across the street from Talley Street Lofts to provide an improved street frontage and enhanced pedestrian experience. The project included a small street level retail space that can be rented to a coffee shop or similar type of neighborhood retail/commercial use to benefit the district.





16. Avondale Station Parking Lot Redevelopment

The Decatur Development Authority worked in partnership with MARTA to revive development plans for the south parking lot of the Avondale MARTA station. After a competitive process, Columbia Ventures was selected as our development partner, and construction began in earnest in 2017. The project, called Decatur East, will be developed in three phases to include a mixture of market-rate apartments, affordable apartments targeted for seniors, and condominiums for purchase, along with retail and commercial developments. The focus is on incorporating pedestrian and cycling connections through the site to adjacent neighborhoods and the MARTA station located to the north of the site. It will also help create an improved pedestrian experience along the College Avenue corridor, an important gateway to Decatur.



This mixed use project is nearing completion creating a new gateway to the City of Decatur and bringing new life to a 7.7-acre surface parking lot. The project includes a 728 space parking deck to replace MARTA parking spaces and serve the new development. The 92 unit senior housing development is complete and currently leasing targeting seniors in the 60%-80% median income category. The market rate units will soon begin leasing along with the ground floor retail/restaurant spaces fronting College Avenue and the new courtyard area. The developers worked closely with the PATH Foundation to incorporate a new bicycle and pedestrian trail through the development utilizing the existing MARTA Bridge to cross College Avenue, the railroad tracks and the MARTA station to the north. This new trail extends south to connect with the 77-acre Legacy Park property that was acquired by the City in 2017 and once housed the United Methodist Children's Home. The trail extension provides a safe pedestrian and cycling connection between the north and south side of Decatur and creates a new Safe Routes to School option to the Talley Street School currently being built.

By the Numbers

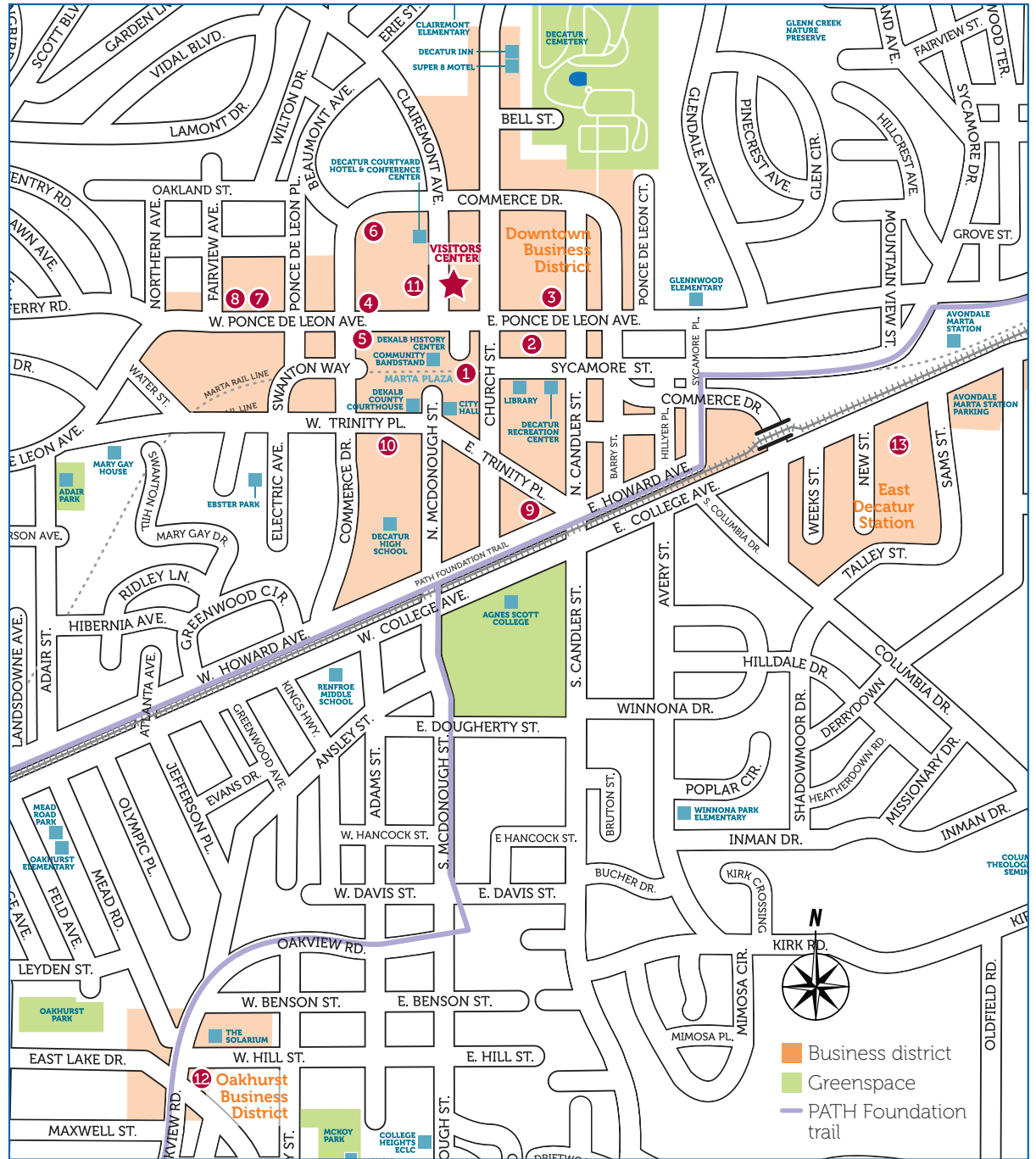
Market rate residential 288 units

Senior affordable residential 92 units

Commercial space 22,000 sf

Parking 728-space deck

Project Locations



For more information, contact

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