

2023
FIVE-
YEAR



AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Vision, goals and actions for a lifelong connected,
healthy and engaged community

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all who have contributed to this Age-Friendly Action Plan for the City of Decatur.

Elected Officials

- Patti Garrett, Mayor
- Tony Powers, Mayor Pro Tem
- George Dusenbury, City Commissioner
- Lesa Mayer, City Commissioner
- Kelly Walsh, City Commissioner

Decatur Lifelong Community Advisory Board

- Susan Messing, Co-Chair
- Dan Wirth, Co-Chair
- Sandra Bailey
- Jo Giraudo
- Tim Hatton
- Gelene Howard
- Marti Keller
- Stephanie Roach
- And those previously appointed to the Lifelong Community Advisory Board

Staff

- Andrea Arnold, City Manager
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- Angela Threadgill, Planning and Economic Development Director
- Lee Ann Harvey, Lifelong Community Manager
- Eve Murphy, Planning and Zoning Intern

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Executive Summary

This Age-Friendly Community Action (AFCA) Plan outlines a five-year effort to prepare Decatur to ensure that older residents are connected, healthy, and engaged in the community. The AFCA Plan builds on the 2020 Decatur Strategic Plan, the 2015 Better Together Community Action Plan, 2018 Community Transportation Plan, the 2016 Decatur PATH Connectivity Implementation Plan, the 2017 Oakhurst for Everyone Community Transformation Plan, the 2022 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and the 2023 Town Center Plan.

The AFCA Plan for Decatur encourages collaborations within City government and partnerships with outside organizations to work toward making the City a better place for its older residents. The plan addresses nine “domains” where goals can be set and achieved. The first eight were established by the American Association of Retired Persons and the World Health Organization. The ninth, Business Services, was added by the City of Decatur. The domains are:

- Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social Participation
- Respect and Social Inclusion
- Civic Participation and Employment
- Communication and Information
- Community and Health Services
- Business Services

**The US
Census
estimates
that by 2034
individuals
older than 65
will outnumber
those 18 and
younger.**

What Is an Age-Friendly City?

Launched in April 2012, the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities is an independent affiliate of the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities, a program originally launched in 2006. The network encourages states, counties, cities, towns and rural areas to prepare for the rapid aging of the nation's population. The network encourages elected officials and local leaders to focus on and strengthen the features and services that help to make communities livable for residents of all ages, from cradle to retirement.

The City of Decatur, Georgia became the 472nd community to enroll in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. The program helps participating communities to become more livable and age-friendly by creating safer and more walkable streets, needed housing and transportation options, better access to key services, and opportunities for residents to participate in activities that contribute to the framework of the age-friendly community action plan. Each domain works to improve the quality of life while focusing on ways to help the older population age in place and be active in their community.

Action Plan

The goal of this action plan is to increase age-friendly features and initiatives in Decatur, so that residents 60 and older can participate in the community and feel safe, connected, and welcome. The action plan addresses challenges identified by residents, and describes goals that are achievable within five years.

The domains that influence an age-friendly city are outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community and health services. For its action plan, City of Decatur added a ninth domain, for business services.

For each domain, the action plan outlines specific steps the City can take toward reaching the goals described. The City of Decatur will lead these efforts, and coordinate with partner organizations as needed.

Lifelong Community Advisory Board

The Lifelong Community Advisory Board (LLCAB) was established in 2013 to assist with the expansion and implementation of the City's lifelong community initiatives. The LLCAB is made up of volunteer residents of the City of Decatur, appointed by the City Commission. The main task of the LLCAB is to advise, advocate, support and monitor lifelong community policies, programs and initiatives in the City of Decatur. Its members have been instrumental in making the City a better and more age-friendly place. They have elevated the voices of older residents and defined their wants and needs. Their work is reflected in this Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.

The LLCAB conducted transportation surveys, collected data from other plan surveys, and reviewed relevant City plans and recommendations to compile the vision, goals and actions for each of the nine domains included.

Introduction to Decatur

The City of Decatur, Georgia, is a vibrant town of 25,000 people just east of downtown Atlanta. Within its 4.7 square miles are more than 150 unique shops, boutiques, and restaurants. Visitors can arrive at any of three MARTA rail stations in the City limits, including one directly beneath the Downtown Square. Decatur is designated a Walk-Friendly City, and is Georgia's first Silver-Level Bike-Friendly City designated by The League of American Bicyclists. The City features 15 parks and greenspaces, and a Downtown Square that ranked #2 in USA Today's 2021 ranking of best public squares.

Always something happening

The City of Decatur hosts more than 40 events each year, including the Decatur Arts Festival, summer concert series on the square, jazz and karaoke nights, Truckin' Tuesdays in Legacy Park, the Beecatur National Pollinator Week festival, walks, fun runs, bike rides, Touch-a-Truck and more. The City of Decatur is a thriving place because it supports its residents, appreciates its shopowners and restaurateurs, and welcomes visitors.

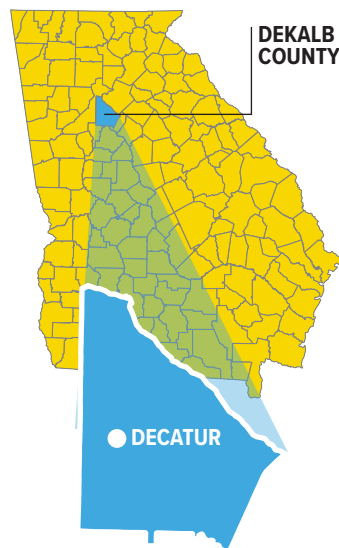
The **9** domains that influence an age-friendly city are

- ▶ Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Social Participation
- ▶ Respect and Social Inclusion
- ▶ Civic Participation and Employment
- ▶ Communication and Information
- ▶ Community and Health Services
- ▶ Business Services

Who Are Decatur Residents?

Demographics

The City of Decatur, Georgia, is located in DeKalb County which has a population of 764,382. It is the fourth most populous county in the state, and is part of the metropolitan Atlanta statistical area.



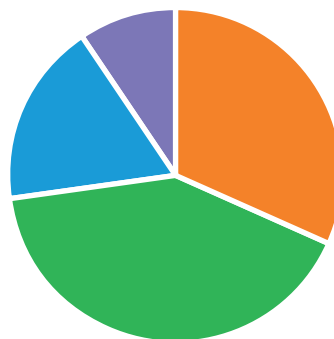
Decatur is home to 25,000 residents. Of those . . .

- **52.6%** are female persons
- **69.4%** identify as White
- **15.6%** identify as Black or African-American
- **3.9%** identify as Asian
- **6.9%** identify as Hispanic or Latino
- **10.5%** identify as two or more races
- **672** individuals are veterans
- **8.6%** are foreign-born persons

(All data from 2020 Census)

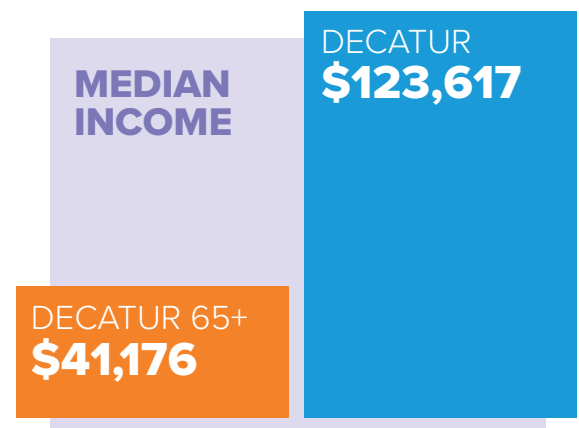
The City of Decatur is Growing Older Faster

- The US Census estimates that by 2034 individuals older than 65 will outnumber those 18 and younger.



DECATUR'S OLDER ADULTS

60-64 years old	1,297
65-74 years old.....	1,683
75-84 years old.....	722
85 years or older	381
TOTAL	4,083



(All data taken from American Community Survey 2021 Census)

Facts and Figures about Decatur Residents

63%

over age 60 are employed part time or full time, and

11.7%

of those residents travel to work via public transportation

17.1%

aged 65-74 have a disability. For residents older than 75, the figure is

48.2%

2,265

receive Social Security

1,567

have a retirement income

Household Data



8,096

households averaging 2.64 persons each



median Decatur household income

\$123,617

85.6%

of residents have lived in the same house for more than a year

67.2%

of homes are owner-occupied. The average 2021 home price exceeded

\$700,000

The median gross rent in 2021 was

\$1,456

63%

of residents feel there are not adequate housing options to enable them to retire in Decatur

Fewer than

50%

believe they will be able to remain in the City as they age because of the lack of affordable adequate housing in Decatur.

The City of Decatur was recognized as an All-American City in 2018 for its Better Together equity and inclusion initiatives, and again in 2023 for its civically minded youth engagement programs.

Age-Friendly Features in the City of Decatur

Decatur works to make the city a better place so that all individuals can thrive. The City of Decatur was recognized as an All-America City in 2018 for its Better Together equity and inclusion initiatives, and again in 2023 for its civic-minded youth engagement programs. The League of American Bicyclists named Decatur as the first and only Silver-Level Bicycle friendly Community in Georgia in 2021. The Atlanta Regional Commission recognized Decatur as a Green Community in 2022.

Among its many awards and recognitions, the City of Decatur was named the best place to live in Georgia by *Niche* and Decatur Square was ranked the second-best public square in the United States by *USA Today*.

There are many ways that the population aged 60 and above can get involved in their Decatur community, by serving on a volunteer board or commission and participating in any of the many programs dedicated to older adults. Some unique opportunities include:

- Senior day field trips
- Wednesday Walking Club
- Tai Chi/Qigong
- Monthly birthday celebrations

The City conducts several programs designed to serve the older population. The Martin Luther King Jr. Service Project provides volunteer services and supplies to help ensure that older residents can live safely and comfortably in their homes. Enthusiastic volunteers repair roofs, fix plumbing, electrical, and HVAC systems, repair damages from wear and tear, rake leaves, install insulation and weather-proofing and much, much more. Another program, A Season of Giving, works to provide holiday gifts to low-income seniors and children.

In addition to the programs and services provided to the older population, the City of Decatur has conducted surveys to understand the needs of the community. Feedback provided in 2014 and 2016 from surveys focused on making Decatur more age-friendly. The City has implemented or enhanced many important initiatives, including:



- The GO 60+ Shuttle, and more recently the twice-weekly Decatur Circulator shuttle program, which has 15 stops including eight focused on the older population
- An active Complete Streets Policy that was adopted in 2006
- Expanded homestead exemptions (pending approval on 2023 ballot)
- A property tax assistance program
- Zoning codes that allow duplex and walk-up flats in single family zoning districts
- Zoning codes that allow accessory dwelling units
- Support for the construction of nearly 200 new affordable senior housing apartments as part of the Avondale MARTA Station transit-oriented development
- Citywide sidewalk assessment study in 2018 to identify and prioritize improvements, repairs and new installation of safe sidewalks
- Prepared a Parks and Recreation master plan and a Town Center Plan that provide recommendations to promote better quality of life for older adults
- Options for low-cost internet access for low-income residents



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Domain Description: Availability of safe and accessible buildings and outdoor spaces

Vision: Older adults live in an environment that includes safe and accessible outdoor spaces, buildings, and walking paths

Challenges:

- Older adults are unaware of the activities and programs in the outdoor spaces of the City of Decatur
- Older adults feel there is an insufficient number of outdoor spaces in proximity to their residences

What Decatur has done:

- Adopted the City of Decatur Parks and Recreation Master Plan, to be implemented over the next 10 years to improve and expand recreational facilities,
- Adopted the Decatur PATH Foundation Connectivity and Implementation Plan that will provide 9.2 miles of protected bicycle lanes and pedestrian trails
- Established six pocket parks throughout the City of Decatur in neighborhoods and commercial areas



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Increase and promote ways that community members, especially older adults, can stay active by enhancing the spaces to be inclusive, accessible and safe for all residents

- a. Make outdoor spaces and buildings more age-friendly by adopting a universal design standard
- b. Enhance the ability of older adults to get around independently by increasing the number of ADA-accessible parking spaces at City-owned facilities
- c. Seek recommendations from the Lifelong Community Advisory Board for help with decisions on placement of restrooms, water stations, benches, and shaded areas when renovating outdoor spaces or creating new ones
- d. Provide seasonal accommodations for older adults to comfortably attend special events, including items such as lawn chairs, umbrellas, and blankets

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Parks and Recreation Dept.
- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development Dept.

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- Lifelong Community Advisory Board



Transportation

Domain Description: Availability of safe, easy access and affordable modes of transportation and alternative ways to get around the City of Decatur

Vision: Older adults have the availability of easily accessible, safe, reliant, and affordable modes of transportation and ability to choose alternative ways of transportation

Challenges:

- Older adults feel like there is a lack of knowledge and easy availability of public transportation
- Older adults do not feel safe when using sidewalks or crosswalks

What Decatur has done: To allow for more individuals to get around the City of Decatur easily, the City has:

- Following the operations of the GO 60+ Shuttle service, the City and its Downtown Development Authority piloted the twice-weekly Decatur Circulator shuttle program which has 15 stops, eight focused on the older population
- Adopted a complete streets policy in 2006
- Conducted traffic calming efforts for residents to feel safer when walking along major streets
- Based on a citywide sidewalk assessment in 2018 to gather evidence on the priority of repairs for sidewalks and sidewalk gaps, the City started the needed repairs and improvements
- The City of Decatur was designated as the first Silver Level Bicycle Friendly City in Georgia and a Walk-Friendly City for its investments in safer walking and cycling
- The City of Decatur has more than 60 miles of tree-lined sidewalks



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Increase the accessibility and availability of a variety of public transportation options in the City of Decatur

- Expand the Decatur Circulator shuttle pilot program as an alternative way to get around the City of Decatur
- Distribute marketing materials to publicize the shuttle service and other means of public transportation offered for older adults
- Establish a partnership with MARTA for older adults to renew their senior ridership card at a central location (visitor center, recreation center or square)

Goal 2: Complete evaluations of all City of Decatur sidewalks and intersections for needed improvements to increase safety of pedestrians

- Reduce the crossing distance by implementing pedestrian islands and bulb-outs where possible
- Increase the time of the pedestrian count signal at intersections while prioritizing senior living areas first
- Paint speedtables and crosswalks in high-traffic areas with high-visibility markings
- Complete the citywide sidewalk assessment and implementation
- Continue traffic calming efforts by implementing best practices for safer walking and cycling facilities

Goal 3: Promote driver education support for older adults

- Promote Georgia's Older Driver Safety Awareness Week and AARP Smart Driver Course

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Public Works Department
- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development Dept.

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- Georgia's Department of Driver Services



Housing

Domain Description: Availability of different housing options within a community for the ability to age in place and to have education about financial security

Vision: Older adults have the ability to age in place and gain the financial knowledge needed

Challenges:

- Older adults do not have sufficient housing options within the community for different stages of life
- Older adults have difficulty with repairs to their homes, often times due to fixed incomes or financial insecurity

What Decatur has done:

- Put forth amendments to the City's homestead exemption policy (to be on the 2023 ballot for vote)
- Established a property tax assistance program
- Established an Affordable Housing Task Force and incorporated their recommendations into the City's comprehensive plan
- Amended zoning codes to allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Amended zoning codes to allow duplexes and walk-up flats in single family zoning districts
- Supported senior affordable housing developments throughout the City



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Increase awareness and knowledge on how to age in place

- a. Provide a workshop to assist seniors in reviewing financial options that could aid in aging in place
- b. Produce a comprehensive guide covering existing tax exemptions, forms of assistance, and other strategies for aging in place

Goal 2: Expand opportunities for older adults to get necessary home repairs

- a. Expand the partnership for students to assist seniors in their homes and help with minor repairs to earn service hours or volunteer experience

Goal 3: Approval of the City's expanded homestead exemptions for older adults of low-and-moderate income

- a. Increase the awareness of homestead exemptions before the ballot vote through social media, postcards, and other outreach

Goal 4: Increase the number of ADUs throughout the City of Decatur

- a. Provide workshops and information sessions to educate and inform residents on the impacts of adding ADUs
- b. Explore the possibility of encouraging ADU construction by allowing residents to apply for grants or loans through City funds if rented to older adults, caretakers, or individuals with an income of 30% AMI

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development
- City of Decatur Finance Department

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- AARP Georgia
- ATL ADU Co.
- Backyard ATL
- Lifelong Community Advisory Board
- Decatur Land Trust



Social Participation

Domain Description: Availability of ways for the older population to safely go out into the community and participate in activities

Vision: Older adults are able to participate and be active in their community in a variety of activities

Challenges: Older adults feel like they are excluded from activities and from the community

What Decatur has done: To increase social participation among older adults, the City of Decatur has:

- Reduced fees for recreational activities
- Invested in the GO 60+ shuttle and the pilot program for the Decatur Circulator shuttle
- Supported many different festivals held in the City of Decatur



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Increase information about activities and opportunities throughout the City of Decatur that allow older adults to interact with residents of all ages throughout the City

- a. Work with the Decatur Visitors Center and the three Decatur recreation centers to have an age-friendly feature or filter on their community events portal to help identify activities and opportunities for older adults
- b. Expand daily activities for older adults at all community recreation centers

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Visitors Center
- City of Decatur Parks and Recreation Department

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- Lifelong Community Advisory Board



Respect and Social Inclusion

Domain Description: Availability of ways to participate in events that engage with multiple generations and different genders, cultures and race/ ethnicities

Vision: Older adults feel valued and respected in the community and no one is excluded in events and programs. The City encourages and promotes intergenerational events, and different events that highlight different cultures and backgrounds

Challenges: Older adults do not feel respected or included in decisions about them or the overall community

What Decatur has done:

- Established multiple boards that advocate on behalf of or include older residents
- Hosted trainings to allow for residents to learn more about being a dementia- and age-friendly community



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Decrease social isolation among older adults and people of all ages throughout the City of Decatur

- Foster community through conversations by organizing small diverse groups of residents in activities such as monthly lunches, book clubs, and Front Porch Fridays hosted by the Lifelong Community Advisory Board
- Support neighborhood walking groups that promote inclusion of older adults

Goal 2: Develop intergenerational programs at City facilities

- Install chat benches to encourage intergenerational conversations covering a range of topics

Goal 3: Decrease ageism and elder abuse among older adults throughout the City of Decatur

- Work with the 200 Stories Project to ensure that older adults are represented in the City's bicentennial celebration
- Work with the City Schools of Decatur to implement educational activities that bring together young and older adults to learn from one another and engage in respectful, meaningful conversations
- Publish information in the Decatur Focus on ageism and how to recognize types of elder abuse

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Parks and Recreation Department
- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development Department

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- City Schools of Decatur
- Decatur neighborhood associations
- Lifelong Community Advisory Board



Civic Participation and Employment

Domain Description: Opportunities for older residents to participate in the community through programs that help them obtain employment or volunteer opportunities

Vision: Older adults are involved in the community through employment and volunteering opportunities at local businesses

Challenges: Older adults do not feel like they have all the skill-sets to achieve employment or meet volunteering needs due to advancements in technology

What Decatur has done:

- Established a volunteer opportunities section on the City of Decatur website



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Increase in-person and at-home volunteering opportunities for older adults to participate in civic engagement activities

- Identify in-person and at-home volunteering options.
- Provide at-home volunteer opportunities with the materials needed to participate
- Work with the City's volunteer coordinator to help promote volunteer opportunities among older adults to participate in community events, nonprofits, celebrations and city governance
- Establish a job training assistance program that includes learning new skills
- Establish a referral service for businesses to employ older residents

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development Department

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Visitors Center Staff
- Lifelong Community Advisory Board
- Senior communities throughout the City
- Local nonprofits in the City of Decatur



Communication and Information

Domain Description: Availability of communication channels that provide older adults easy access to information

Vision: Older adults can easily access information from a variety of channels to stay informed and connected with the City of Decatur and the community

Challenges: Older adults do not use many of the current communication channels and there is a technology gap

What Decatur has done:

- Explored options for low cost internet access for low-income residents
- Invested in print, email listservs, social media, and SMS text message services to provide a variety of communication outlets



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Older adults will be connected to information about all relevant services via multiple forms of media to ensure timely access for all

- a. Update the City of Decatur's website to include a tab of updated opportunities, resources and information in a "one stop shop" pertaining to all things for older adults in Decatur
- b. Create and distribute brochures describing resources available to older adults
- c. Improve information channels through communication with the older residents of Decatur
- d. Encourage the Decatur Focus to begin a monthly column focused on opportunities for, and news about, the older adult population
- e. Offer an opt-in email newsletter and increase the use of social media to provide timely information
- f. Advocate to expand free internet access in areas of low to moderate income or those serving older adults
- g. Establish a technology class to teach older adults who might need extra assistance
- h. Establish a class offered through the the Decatur Police Department to provide programs for the older adult population to learn about scam tactics and how to avoid them

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Equity and Engagement Department
- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development Department
- City of Decatur Police Department

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- Georgia Perimeter Technical College
- Lifelong Community Advisory Board



DOMAIN

Community and Health Services

Domain Description: Availability of a range of community and health services that improve the quality of life for all older adults

Vision: Older adults have access to a range of community and health services that improve their health and quality of life

Challenges: Older adults often must travel to seek community and health services not available in the City

What Decatur has done:

- Host weekly year-round farmers markets and provide matching funds for SNAP/ EBT spending



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Increase knowledge on how to access health services available in the City of Decatur and DeKalb County

- a. Promote the availability of resources available through the City of Decatur and DeKalb County Council on Aging

Goal 2: Increase the safety measures and preparedness of older adults

- a. Set up a booth at local festivals where the Decatur Fire Department and a local nonprofit to hand out life cards and provide health screenings for the older adult community

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development Department
- Decatur Fire Department

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- Lifelong Community Advisory Board
- DeKalb County Council on Aging
- Local nonprofit focusing on health screenings such as Georgia Charitable Care Network or Giving Kitchen



Business Services

Domain Description: Availability of a variety of businesses and developments throughout the community that meet the daily needs of older adults on fixed incomes at affordable price points

Vision: The City of Decatur has businesses and developments that are age-friendly and actively thinking about the older population when discussing new projects, accessibility to their businesses or new developments

Challenges: There are limited businesses that provide products and services to meet everyday needs of older adults within the community and proximity to residences

What Decatur has done:

- Established a Decatur Downtown Development Authority
- Established a Decatur Business Association



Five Year Plan

Goal 1: Increase involvement of the business community in offering more age-friendly products and services

- Develop a dementia-friendly business program with local businesses
- Provide incentives to encourage local grocery stores and restaurants to offer discount days to older adults 60+ (early bird specials, senior days, etc.)
- Promote a local commercial grant program to business owners to assist in modifying their places of business to be more accessible

Goal 2: Increase and encourage new age-friendly development in the City of Decatur

- Explore the inclusion of a grocery store at the east lake MARTA station redevelopment
- Collaborate with property owners and leasing agents to offer a diverse array of dining and shopping options representing different cultures, price points and generations

Responsible Parties for Implementation:

- City of Decatur Community and Economic Development Department

Suggested Partners for Implementation:

- Decatur Business Association
- Decatur Development Authority
- Dementia Spotlight Foundation



**Decatur Lifelong
Community
Advisory Board**

Susan Messing, Co-Chair

Dan Wirth, Co-Chair

Sandra Bailey

Jo Giraudo

Tim Hatton

Gelene Howard

Marti Keller

Stephanie Roach



**Lifelong Community
Advisory Board**

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