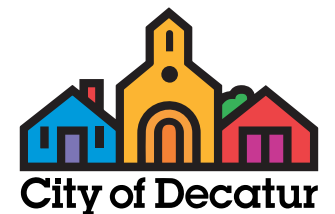




# DECATUR 360 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CITY OF DECATUR, GEORGIA | UPDATED 2016



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSIONERS

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Mayor Pro Tem Fred Boykin  
Scott Drake  
Tony Powers  
Brian Smith

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City Commission: Mayor Patti Garrett  
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Allison Adams, Jim Diez, Ben Park, Kelly Walsh, Malcolm Wells  
City Schools of Decatur: Lewis Jones  
Active Living Advisory Board: Jack Kittle, Miriam Vos  
Decatur Business Association: Tim Martin  
Decatur Downtown Development Authority: Bill Floyd, Fisher Paty  
Environmental Sustainability Advisory Board: Juliette Apicella, Greg Coleson  
Historic Preservation Commission: Alan Clark, Lisa Turner  
Lifelong Communities Advisory Board: Elizabeth Burbridge, Maria Pinkelton  
Planning Commission: Harold Buckley, Jr., Lori Leland-Kirk  
Zoning Board of Appeals: Michael Leavey, Anthony Lewis

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHECKING IN, CHECKING UP

Comprehensive Planning is a process required by the state of Georgia to ensure that all communities achieve minimum planning standards and procedures, especially as they relate to physical infrastructure. Here in Decatur, where planning (and planning some more) is a way of life, we use our Comprehensive Planning process as an opportunity to do a midterm check-up on our larger Strategic Plan, which was completed in 2010 and is due to be updated in 2020.

The Strategic Plan, like any planning document, is rooted in certain assumptions, expectations, and projections about the future. By checking in mid term, as this Comprehensive Planning process allows us to do, we're able to test our hypotheticals — in terms of population, demographics, economic development, transportation, land use, affordable housing, and natural and cultural resources — against what's actually come to pass. Then make adjustments accordingly.

In doing so, we ensure the relevance of our Strategic Plan as a guiding vision for the community, and bring newer residents up to speed on the principles and goals we share.

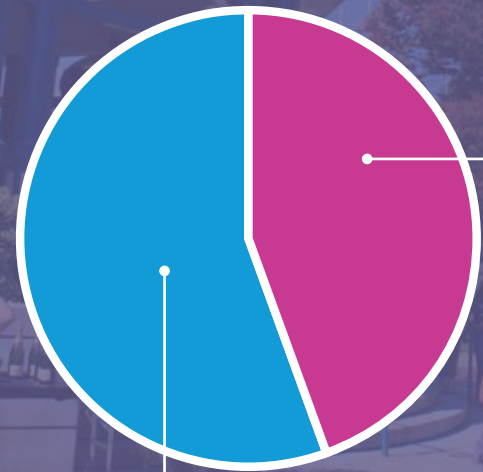
In Decatur, we believe strongly in planning. But even more so, we believe in the implementation of those plans. In making our vision real. The Comprehensive Planning process illustrates this process unfolding — the Strategic Plan guiding a decade's worth of goals and budgets while individual, specialized plans accomplish that work in detail.

In three years, it will once again be time to launch a broad-based community visioning process and create our 2020 Strategic Plan. This Comprehensive Planning process helps lay the groundwork for that effort — checking our progress against the goals and tasks we've laid out for ourselves and refining in real time the vision we hold for our future.

## 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN VISION

THE CITY OF DECATUR WILL ASSURE A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ITS RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AND VISITORS, BOTH TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE.

- PRINCIPLE A:  
Manage growth while retaining character
- PRINCIPLE B:  
Encourage a diverse and engaged community
- PRINCIPLE C:  
Serve as good stewards of the environment and community resources
- PRINCIPLE D:  
Support a safe, healthy, lifelong community



RELEVANT TASKS REMAINING

RELEVANT TASKS COMPLETE

TO REVIEW THE STATUS OF ALL RELEVANT TASKS, SEE APPENDIX.



# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



## PLANNING CONTEXT

### STUDY AREA

The City of Decatur is 4.4 square miles, bound to the north by unincorporated DeKalb County, to the east by Avondale Estates, and to the south and west by the City of Atlanta. Decatur is primarily comprised of its historic, centrally-located downtown; many historic neighborhoods, including the once-independent town of Oakhurst; walkable neighborhood schools; and 129 acres of parks and greenspace sprinkled throughout. For the purpose of this process, the study area is the entirety of the City.

### PREVIOUS PLANS

Many previous planning studies have been conducted in the City, from those addressing the City as a whole to specific focus areas and initiatives. The following summaries provide a foundation for the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update.

### 2010 STRATEGIC PLAN

The City's first Strategic Plan was adopted in 2000 to serve as a 10-year living guide for city policy, funding, and programming decisions. The 2010 Strategic Plan preserves the vision and many themes of the 2000 Plan, but established an updated task list of goals and strategies to ensure a continued high quality of life for residents and visitors of Decatur.

The 2010 Strategic Plan recommends specific improvements that will con-

tinue to build upon the many benefits for which Decatur is known – urban living, an active community life, vibrant downtown and businesses, great recreation facilities, and clear communication between the government and its citizens. Its recommendations are grouped according to four organizing principles:

- » Principle A: Manage Growth While Retaining Character
- » Principle B: Encourage a Diverse and Engaged Community
- » Principle C: Serve as Good Stewards of the Environment and Community Resources
- » Principle D: Support a Safe, Healthy, Lifelong Community

### BETTER TOGETHER COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Developed in 2015, the Better Together Community Action Plan is a direct outcome of the 2010 Strategic Plan, Principle B: Encourage a Diverse and Engaged Community. A continually collaborative process, the plan relies heavily on the community to identify specific actions for individuals, organizations, and the local government to undertake both independently and together to encourage a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable city. Six focus areas for diversity and civic engagement were identified, which address the need for an equitable and inclusive city, racially-just community policing, and diverse and affordable housing.





## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The 2012 Environmental Sustainability Plan is a direct outcome of the 2010 Strategic Plan, Principle C: Serve as Good Stewards of the Environment and Community Resources. Seven focus areas and key tasks were identified for ways in which the city's government, businesses, residents, and organizations can reduce their environmental impact with regard to food and agriculture, natural systems, buildings and energy, transportation, resource conservation and waste reduction, government management practices, and educational outreach. As "Decatur Grows Greener," the plan is intended to evolve with advances in science and technology as well as community interest so that identified goals and tasks continue to remain viable.

## CITY OF DECATUR LCI STUDY

The 2011 Livable Centers Initiative Study for the City of Decatur focuses on ways to support Decatur as a lifelong community primarily through the enhancement of its existing centers and corridors. The study provides both project and policy recommendations on land use and zoning, transportation, marketing and economic development, urban design, historic resources, environment and open space, and public facilities. Additionally, six catalyst projects were identified as those that have the ability to set the City apart, continue to define its character, enforce its role as a destination, and continue positive economic trends.

## CULTURAL ARTS MASTER PLAN

A rarity among most jurisdictional plans, the Cultural Arts Master Plan is the result of a collaborative effort in 2010 by the City of Decatur, Agnes Scott College, City Schools of Decatur, Decatur Business Association, Decatur Downtown Development Authority, and the Decatur Arts Alliance to examine the possibilities for, and current strengths of, the City's cultural offerings. Specific initiatives were developed along with a 10 year timeline to address ways to expand upon existing cultural and public art assets.

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY

In 2008, the Affordable Housing Study was developed to proactively address the need for affordable rental and owner-occupied housing, especially for the City's service industry, institutional, and local government employees. The need for affordable housing in Decatur is crucial for ensuring demographic diversity as well as

long-term sustainability and economic strength. A gap analysis was conducted as part of the study, which found that the most pressing gap in housing is for incomes between \$35,000 and \$50,000 annually. A few of the recommendations of the study include: enacting a living wage legislation, annexation, an Employer Assisted Housing Program model, a homeownership rehabilitation program, establishing a community land trust, and an inclusionary zoning policy.

## COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The 2007 Community Transportation Plan was created to promote a safe, integrated, transportation system that encourages bicycling and walking as viable alternatives to automobile travel, increased connectivity between neighborhood and destinations, and transportation equity for users of all ages and abilities. An ongoing theme unique to Decatur's Community Transportation Plan is its attention to the relationship between health and quality of life to active transportation opportunities. The recommended policies, programs, and projects focus on bicycle and pedestrian improvements as well as key intersection improvements emphasizing safety and circulation.

## DECATUR/AVONDALE MARTA STATION LCI STUDY

In 2002, the Decatur–Avondale MARTA Station LCI Study was prepared to address the underutilized and aging area surrounding the Avondale MARTA station. Recommendations involve redeveloping the study area to create PLACE – pleasant, location, accessible, cohesive, and engaging – with regard to transportation, land use, urban design, and economic development. Implementation of this plan is in place, as Phase I of construction will begin in the Fall of 2016 to turn one of the station's underutilized parking lots into a mixed use development.

## DECATUR GREENWAY PLAN

The 2002 Decatur Greenway Plan (formerly the Preservation Corridor Master Plan) was developed to promote greenspace support, accessibility, and preservation through the creation of a north-south historic preservation/greenspace corridor linking the Decatur Square and the Oakhurst Business District node with four major city environmental resources that include: Woodlands Garden; the Decatur Cemetery; the Wylde Center, a community garden in Oakhurst; and Dearborn Park. The study provides preferred typical sections for each of the main corridors in

the City and recommendations for neighborhood gateways, pedestrian and bicycle streetscape improvements, and off-street multi-use trails.

## ATHLETIC FACILITY MASTER PLAN

The Athletic Facility Master Plan is the result of seven organizations — the City of Decatur; City Schools of Decatur; Agnes Scott College; Columbia Theological Seminary; Decatur-DeKalb YMCA; Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club; and the United Methodist Children's Home — that came together to identify opportunities for partnerships and collaborative efforts to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the City. Highlighted recommendations include upgrading park amenities, improving accessibility and safety of the parks and recreational facilities, creating dog parks, and shared use of various recreation facilities.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2015, the estimated population for the City was 21,957, approximately 8 people per acre. While concerns regarding an increasing population and its consequential effects were voiced during the public input sessions and survey, the reality is that the City has not yet reached its highest recorded population or threshold value. At 22,026 residents, the highest recorded population for the City occurred during the 1960s. The City's population rose rapidly between 1920 and 1960, but then declined by 22 percent between 1960 and 1990 as many local residents, mirroring larger national trends, left the city for a more suburban lifestyle.

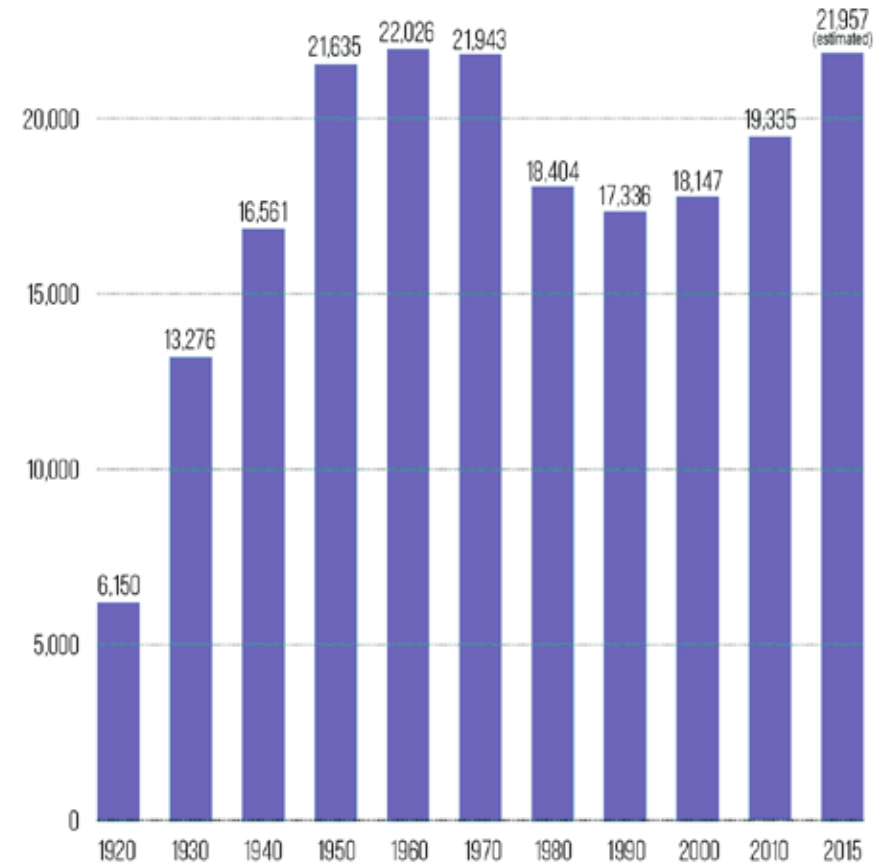
Since the 1990s, Decatur's population has steadily increased and is expected to reach the 1960s population by 2020. This increase is due primarily to the City's desired school system, community amenities, and cultural opportunities, and is fueled by a nationally-renewing interest in urban living.

Between 2010 and 2014, the adolescent cohort and the cohort of seniors 65 and older increased, while the cohort of working aged adults declined. The growth of the senior cohort mimics national trends, while the growth of the adolescent cohort is unique to the City and is a direct result of Decatur's successful school system. Projections for 2020 show that the cohort of seniors is expected to increase as baby boomers age. In order to address this aging population, Decatur has dedicated

itself to become a lifelong community and has created policies and programs to encourage aging in place.

A known concern for the City is its ability to maintain or increase its racial diversity. Between 2010 and 2014, the proportion of white and black residents decreased, while Asian residents and those of two or more races increased. However, 2020 predictions expect that the proportion of black residents will continue to decline while the proportion of white residents will increase. The Better Together Community Action Plan addresses these issues and provides many recommendations in which to maintain and promote all types of diversity, including that of race.

DECATUR POPULATION BY DECADE

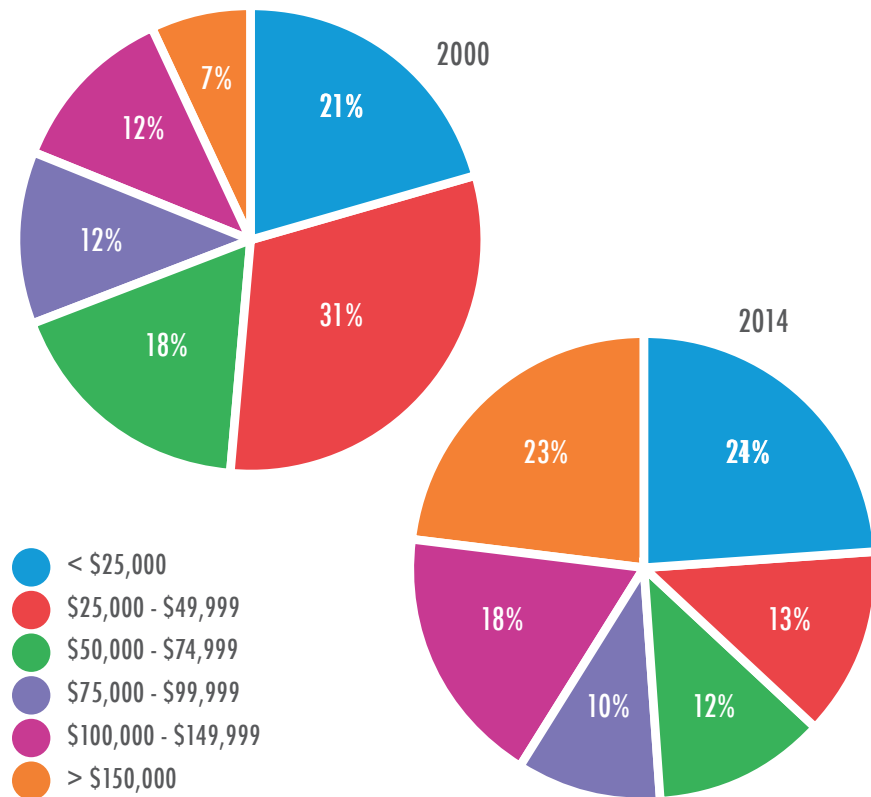


## INCOME

In 2014, Decatur’s median household income was \$77,202 compared to Metro Atlanta’s median household income of \$56,618. Approximately 41 percent of Decatur’s households make more than \$100,000 a year, while nearly a quarter of the residents make less than \$25,000 a year.

The median household income in Decatur has risen 63 percent since 2000 and is projected to rise to nearly \$80,000 by 2020. Additionally, the moderate or middle income cohort is shrinking. In 2000, 61 percent of households were considered of moderate income, while in 2014 only 35 percent were considered to have a moderate income. The City is proactively trying to address this “missing middle income” by providing a variety of housing options to accommodate this income level.

### DECATUR INCOME DISTRIBUTION OVER TIME



## EMPLOYMENT

Having its own municipal government in addition to being the county seat of DeKalb County, the largest employment sector in Decatur is public administration and government, with over 5,680 jobs offered. The educational services sector is second in jobs offered, which is largely a result of the City Schools of Decatur, Agnes Scott College, and Columbia Theological Seminary. Approximately 8,590 residents commute out daily to work, while 13,809 people commute into the City for work. Many Decatur residents work primarily in the Emory University area, Downtown Atlanta, and Midtown Atlanta. Only 884 residents live and work within the City.

## HOUSING

Three-fourths of the land uses within the City provide residential uses, with 91 percent of residential land uses being detached single-family and 7 percent comprised of multi-family, stacked flats, or townhomes. As Decatur continues to be an attractive city to which people relocate, housing costs continue to rise. Depending on the source, the current median home value ranges anywhere from \$350,000 to over \$540,000. According to one source, Zillow, between 2000 and 2014, the average home price in Decatur increased 69 percent from \$228,200 in 2000 to \$385,100 in 2014.

The largest cohort of owner-occupied households makes over \$150,000. Just 5 to 10 percent of such households at all income levels spend more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing, a recognized metric of affordability.

Rental options exist in the City for those with lower incomes, particularly those spending in excess of the 30 percent housing standard, but options for those of middle income have been limited by an excessive market demand that has reduced availability and inflated leasing rates. As new, higher end apartments — such as The Place on Ponce, The Alexan, and the ARLO — become available downtown, much of this demand will be met, allowing historic, neighborhood rental units to once again become a viable, middle income solution.

The City of Decatur first introduced its inclusionary housing ordinance in 1998, which provided multi-family developments a density bonus opportunity if they set aside affordable units. Known as a lifecycle dwelling units, the rent or purchase price is affordable by a family whose income is 80% percentage of the area median income (AMI) for families in the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area. The ordinance



provides that that maximum number of dwellings permitted may be increased by up to 20% if a minimum of 75% of the additional dwellings are designated as life-cycle dwellings. Since the ordinance became effective, only two for-purchase and one for-rental developments have voluntarily taken advantage of the density bonus, creating less than 50 affordable lifecycle dwelling units. This is a less than ideal result in a city that is committed to the creation of affordable housing options.

## LAND USE AND ZONING

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

Historic land use and zoning policies adopted by past City Commissioners were designed to protect, preserve, and enhance the City's residential neighborhoods and to limit commercial development to existing commercial areas. As a result, Decatur's land use has remained remarkably stable. Because Decatur is nearly built out with very limited undeveloped land, any new development is likely to be redevelopment of an underutilized or aging property.

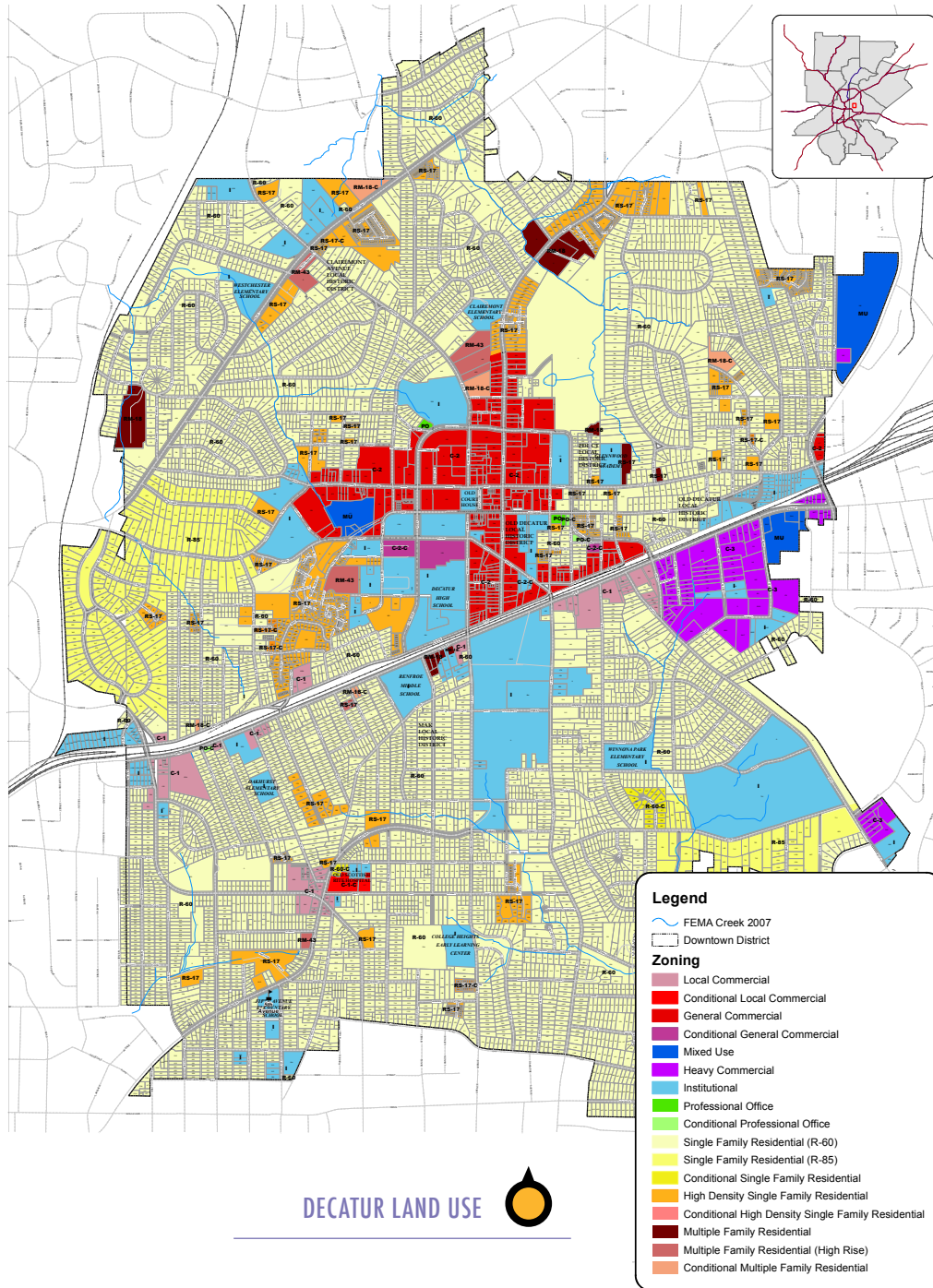
As shown on the Land Use Map, commercial and high density residential land uses are focused around the downtown core, as well as the neighborhood center of Oakhurst. Transitional, medium density residential acts as a buffer between the downtown core and the surrounding, lower density residential areas

### RESIDENTIAL

Decatur is primarily made up of various single-family residential zoning districts. The four single-family zoning districts and three multiple family zoning districts reflect different types of residential land with varying densities and land development regulations. When the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) took affect in 2015, the R-50 and RM-22 zoning districts were added to encourage denser single-family living as well as provide an additional opportunity for multi-family development. The residential districts in the UDO promote a variety of housing types that reflect diverse users and aim to meet the need for the missing middle housing – smaller single-family housing as well as smaller unit multi-family establishments.

### COMMERCIAL

Our historic, central business district (C-2 – General Commercial zoning) is solely



located north of the bisecting railway, in the downtown area and allows for commercial, mixed-use, and high-density residential uses. This zoning district, along with the Special Pedestrian Area and Downtown Decatur Parking overlay districts intends to encourage a dense, urban and pedestrian-friendly environment in the downtown core. Local commercial, C-1, is located primarily along the College Avenue Corridor and in the centrally located Oakhurst Village.

The NMU - Neighborhood Mixed Use zoning district was added with the adoption of the UDO. This district intends to meet the commercial needs of a small residential area while simultaneously protecting that residential area by limiting future commercial development or redevelopment.

The C-3 – Heavy Commercial zoning district is primarily located in East Decatur Station along College Avenue. This district is the closest in regards to any typical industrial zoning district by allowing only specific light industrial and manufacturing uses.

## INSTITUTIONAL

The City of Decatur has a relatively high proportion of institutional land for its small size, which is primarily located in or near the downtown area. The remaining institutional land is scattered throughout the City as neighborhood public schools, private schools, or places of worship. Additionally, Decatur is home to two private colleges – Agnes Scott College and the Columbia Theological Seminary — which make up the majority of the institutional land.

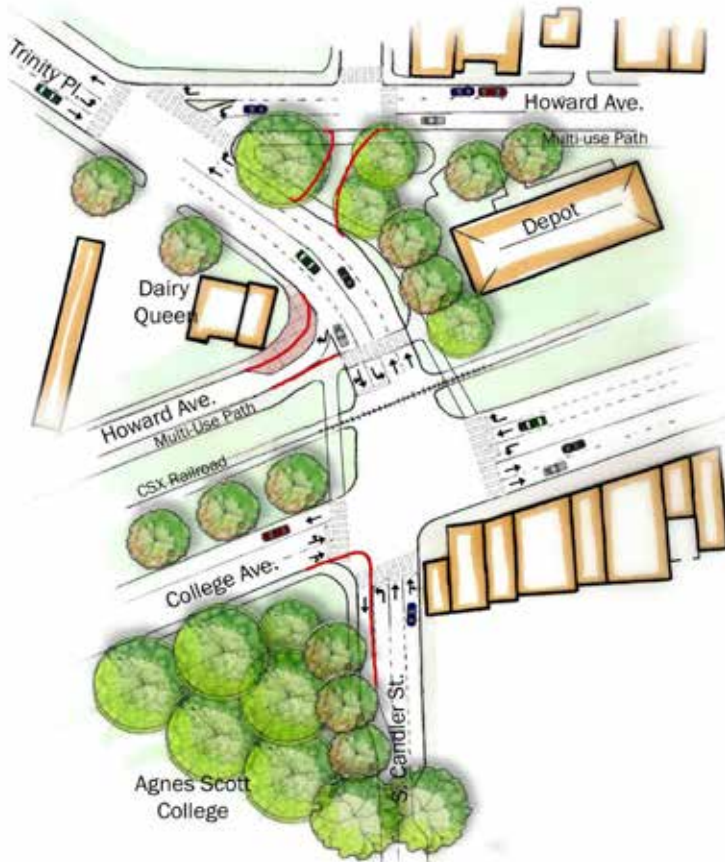
## TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

### ROADWAYS

While Decatur does not have direct interstate access, three major State and US highways connect the City of Decatur to the rest of the Metro Atlanta region: College Avenue (US 278), Candler Road/Clairemont Avenue (SR 155), and Scott Boulevard (US 78). Each of these corridors experience heavy volumes and high speeds, especially during peak hours, and not surprisingly were identified in the public input sessions and the

survey as corridors of concern with regard to congestion, speeding, and pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and safety.

The majority of the City's roadways are characterized as local roads. While local roads tend to experience lower volumes and speeds compared to collectors or arterials, many of the residents have expressed their frustration with increasing traffic along these neighborhood roads. As a result, the City has established a Complete Streets team made up of a diverse group of City staff. Many of the complete street projects include traffic calming measures as well as improvements to the existing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Traffic calming has become so popular among the many neighborhoods in the City, that the City is in the process of developing a formal Complete Streets petition process and project prioritization to address the resident needs with limited funds.



## RAILROAD

Another vocalized concern is safety and accessibility surrounding the CSX railroad. The CSX railroad bisects the City, creating a significant physical barrier that separates the northern portion of the City, including the downtown, from the southern portion of the City. Plans are underway to improve two of the three intersections that occur at the railroad, which once complete will improve vehicular circulation as well as provide a safe connection for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing the railroad.

## TRANSIT

Decatur is unique in that, aside from the City of Atlanta, it has the most number of transit stations within its boundaries. Three MARTA rail stations: East Lake, Decatur, and Avondale are located along the east-west Blue Line, which follows the bisecting CSX railway and College Avenue. Because the stations are centrally located between the northern and southern ends of the City, there is great opportunity for successful transit ridership and transit oriented development. Currently, of the three stations, the Decatur station located in the downtown core experiences the most ridership, even without any parking capacity.

Both the East Lake and Avondale stations are vastly underutilized. Plans are currently underway to redevelop the Avondale station with mixed use development, including market-rate apartments, senior housing, and commercial space. The East Lake station is the perfect location for future development within the City as it has two large, nearly empty parking lots and experiences the lowest daily ridership. The City has a long term plan to coordinate with MARTA and the City of Atlanta to prepare an East Lake Station Master Plan and entice redevelopment of the station and surrounding area.

## BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN

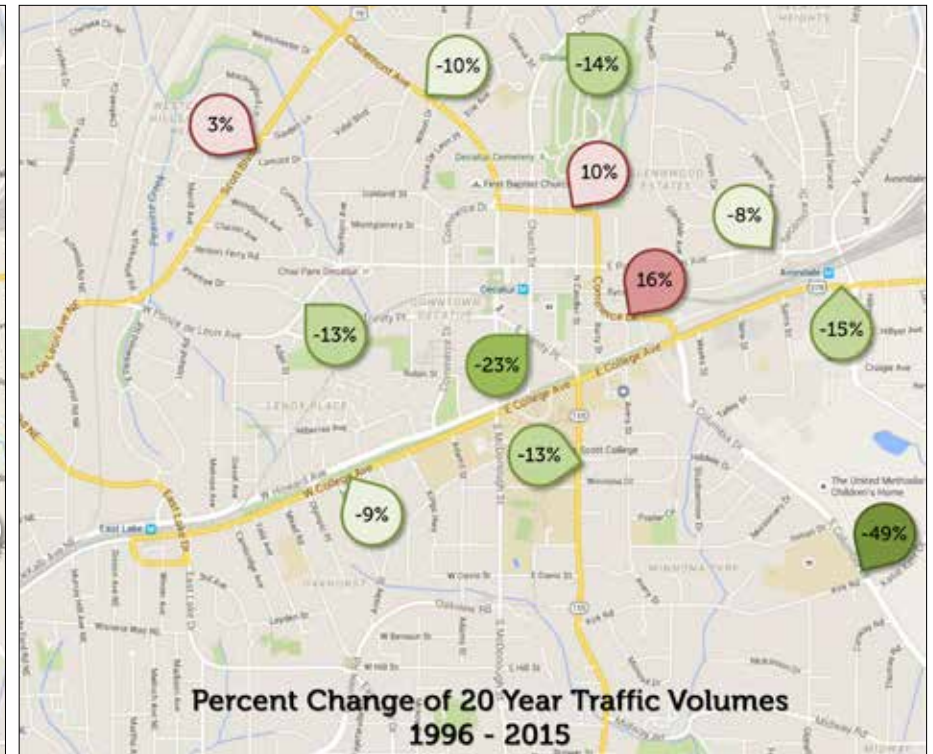
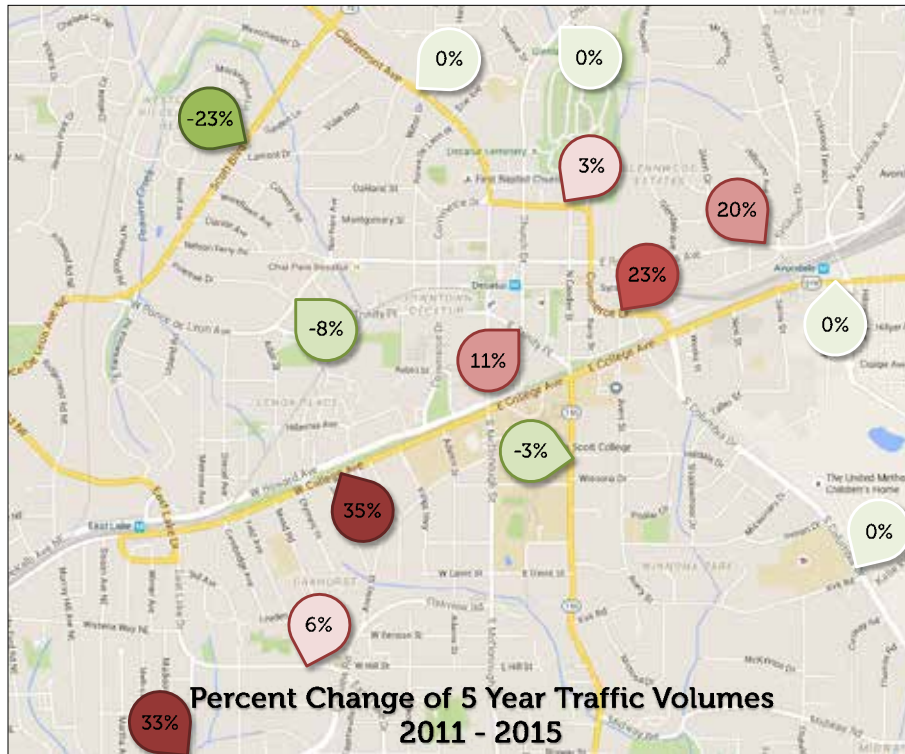
Decatur is recognized nationally as a walk-friendly community as well as a bicycle-friendly community. While much of the pedestrian infrastructure is aging, deficient, and does not meet current design standards, the City is currently conducting a pedestrian infrastructure assessment of all its sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps to establish a maintenance and repair schedule. Furthermore, during the 2000 Strategic Planning process, the City dedicated itself to providing at least one sidewalk along every street – a goal that the community still supports.

Bicycle infrastructure is continually evolving. Sharrows and bike lanes, which were

once the national standard, have since become subpar infrastructure as these facilities tend to only be used by highly experienced and dedicated users. Sharrows and bike lanes do not safely accommodate young and inexperienced bicyclists, thus standard practice for bicycle infrastructure has moved to the cycle track – a wide,

dedicated, physically-separated bicycle facility. The City is currently constructing its first cycle track as part of the N. McDonough Streetscape improvements, with future plans to extend the cycle track along Commerce Drive and Church Street.





## TRAFFIC

Responses from the Comprehensive Plan survey and the public input sessions indicated residents' concerns for increasing traffic. However, in comparing traffic volumes to those from five and twenty years ago, and despite some increases since along certain corridors, there's a notable distinction between actual traffic counts and the perception of congestion.

Some of this perception is likely influenced by the City's intentional efforts to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety and access, especially within the downtown core. As the configuration of certain roadways changes with the implementation of these efforts, the sense of congestion can be amplified. Even if similar quantities of traffic are being accommodated.



## PROTECTIONS AND ASSETS

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION

One of Decatur's greatest assets is its historic downtown commercial buildings, neighborhoods and single-family homes. The City has seven National Register districts, and five locally designated historic districts, which are the McDonough-Adams-Kings Highway District, the Clairemont Avenue Historic District, the Old Decatur Historic District, the Ponce de Leon Court Historic District, and the Parkwood Historic District. Additionally, the City has designated the Scottish Rite Hospital for Crippled Children in Oakhurst and the Old DeKalb County Courthouse as locally designated historic properties. Each of these local historic districts has its own design and development guidelines prepared by the neighborhoods in conjunction with the Decatur Historic Preservation Commission.

Though one of the City's greatest assets, the historic preservation of single-family homes is greatly threatened as many smaller, affordable historic homes are being demolished for larger single-family replacements. To address the loss of these historic homes, the City is actively working with property owners to make historic neighborhoods and individual properties eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits, be a resource for historic rehabilitation how-to through its Old House Fair (discontinued in 2014), amending the definition of a demolition, and increasing the permit fees for demolition of detached single-family residential homes. Additionally, the City and its Historic Preservation Commission hold an annual design award competition that highlights recent projects that promote preservation, design, sustainability, and advocacy of residential, commercial, and civic buildings.



## GREENSPACE

The City of Decatur has approximately 129 acres of greenspace, which includes the downtown square, city parks, greenways, community gardens, and the Decatur Cemetery. The City's largest greenspace is the Decatur Cemetery with 54 acres of urban forest, grassy hills, and nature trails. The City ensures that all residents in the city limits live within a half mile of a greenspace and continually looks for opportunities to expand greenspace by means of pocket parks or collaborating with organizations to allow for shared use grounds such as the First Christian Church's Toy Park.

In 2014, the City adopted the Community Forest Management Plan to develop a more comprehensive approach to forest management in Decatur. The plan establishes a framework for increasing canopy coverage to 50 percent within 25 years. In 2015, canopy coverage was estimated at approximately 44.8 percent, a slight reduction from the 45.1 percent in 2010. This reduction is likely due to the loss of older trees at the end of their lifecycle as well as a loss of trees due to new development. In order to restrict clear-cutting and significant tree loss during development, the City also adopted the 2014 Tree Canopy Conservation Ordinance. The ordinance encourages future development to be better integrated into the existing topography, as well as requires replacement of trees removed for future canopy coverage, on site or through payment to the tree bank fund.

## CITY SCHOOLS

The City of Decatur is one of five cities in the Atlanta region that has its own local school system. Decatur's school system was designed with neighborhood elementary schools and a centrally located middle school and high school to foster connected neighborhoods, build community, provide walkability, and ensure the safety of Decatur's youngest population.

Over the past ten years, the City Schools have seen a drastic increase in enrollment as a result of the school system's high rankings and educational standards. Since 2009, school enrollment has grown between 8 and 12 percent each year and nearly every school in the system is over capacity. While the City of Decatur does not directly manage the school system, it is our main driver for growth, impacting the City's economic development, transportation network, and taxes.





# COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### STEERING COMMITTEE

The Comprehensive Plan Update process was overseen by a Steering Committee made up of citizen appointments and representatives from our various boards and commissions. Mayor Patti Garrett represented the City Commission and was an integral participant. The City Commissioners each appointed a representative. There was also representation from City Schools of Decatur and the Decatur Business Association.

The initial meeting of the Steering Committee was March 2, 2016, followed by subsequent meetings on April 13 and June 1. Throughout, the committee provided assistance as it relates to: formulation of appropriate questions for the community survey; oversight of the community engagement process; participation with other community members in the Public Input meetings; general guidance throughout the process; and concluding feedback on community priorities.

Steering Committee members identified their perspectives on both Assets to Build Upon and Future Challenges, each represented via word cloud.

A series of public input meetings were held in a variety of locations to provide opportunities for community members to voice their opinions on topics applicable to the Comprehensive Plan Update. The dates, locations and topics of the meetings were publicized in the City's Decatur Focus publication, website ([www.decaturga.com](http://www.decaturga.com)), the City's Planning website ([www.decaturnext.com](http://www.decaturnext.com)), The Decatur Minute blog, and social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Neighborhood associations and other community groups also publicized the meetings, and regular updates were made through a variety of other online and print media, including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Decaturish, and Decatur-Avondale Estates Patch.

### MARCH 16, 2016

Decatur's Comprehensive Plan Update kicked off on Wednesday, March 16 with a meeting at the Decatur Recreation Center. Its focus was a close-up look at economic development, population growth, and transportation. The Open House format allowed residents to pop in, review current data, ask questions, and provide input. Approximately 50 people attended this session.



ASSETS TO BUILD ON, AS IDENTIFIED BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE



FUTURE CHALLENGES, AS IDENTIFIED BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE

## MARCH 26, 2016

Drizzly weather didn't prevent residents from attending a booth at the City's Touch-a-Truck event on March 26. At least 25 participants — including children — stopped by to look at displays and provide feedback to City and Atlanta Regional Commission staff on areas of desired change.

## APRIL 20, 2016

The Public Works Community Room was the site of the April 20 session, which examined affordable housing, historic places, land use, and natural resources. Approximately 25 attendees voted on a variety of favorite options. The categories included photo arrays of housing options, public art and gathering places. As part of the visual preference survey, participants voted by placing a dot on the picture that best represented their preferred approaches to land use and development.

## APRIL 24, 2016

April 20's topics were replicated on April 24 at the Earth Day booth in the Oakhurst neighborhood of Decatur. The much larger turnout of over 160 attendees included residents from throughout Decatur. Attendance was enhanced by beautiful weather, a parade, and a variety of entertainment.

Participants at both the public meeting and the Earth Day event were enthusiastic supporters of Bungalow Court development as an option for addressing Missing Middle housing. The Quadplex/Triplex and the Tiny House options nearly tied as the next most popular options. The Public Art option that was filled with greenery was by far the most popular for both the public meeting and the Earth Day attendees.

## MAY 18, 2016

A presentation and public participation meeting was held on May 18 at the Decatur Housing Authority Community Center. The approximately 20 attendees represented both Housing Authority residents and the residents of other Decatur neighborhoods. Using key-pad voting, participants drilled down on prioritization and implementation of our Strategic Plan's remaining tasks.

## MAY 28, 2016

On May 28, a booth at the Decatur Arts Festival attracted over 100 attendees. This event utilized the same themes as the indoor public meeting and the outdoor Earth Day event.

## JUNE 8, 2016

A public wrap-up presentation was held at Decatur Recreation Center. There was a turnout of nearly 60 people. A recap of the various public meetings was provided.

## JUNE 14, 2016

A second public wrap up presentation was given during the Planning Commission monthly meeting on June 14. A few residents attended this presentation.



## COMMUNITY SURVEY

### ABOUT THE SURVEY

A survey of community members was conducted from March 14 through May 31, 2016. The link for the SurveyMonkey online survey was publicized through the same channels as the community meetings — the City’s Decatur Focus publication, website ([www.decaturga.com](http://www.decaturga.com)), the City’s Planning website ([www.decaturnext.com](http://www.decaturnext.com)), The Decatur Minute blog, and social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. Neighborhood associations and other community groups also publicized the survey link. Survey link information was made available through a variety of other online and print media, including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Decaturish, and Decatur-Avondale Estates Patch. Hard copies of the survey were provided to those without internet access.

The survey was designed to obtain information from City of Decatur residents, business owners, and property owners, assessing the Strategic Plan’s vision, principles, and applicable tasks in light of current circumstances (demographics, transportation facilities, housing characteristics and more).

The survey categories included Economic Development, Transportation, Land Use, Housing, Natural and Cultural Resources, Other Thoughts about Decatur, and demographic information.

### SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

A total of 1,052 people completed the survey. Females represented the majority of the respondents at 63% while male accounted for 36%. The majority of those who took the survey were between 25 and 44 (41%) and 45 and 60 (36%). This was followed by 13% who were 61 to 75 and 9% who were 76 to 84. Only 3 people who identified themselves as 85 and older took the survey.

Respondents were asked to identify their race or ethnicity. A total of 81% identified themselves as White, 3% as two or more races, 2% as black, 2% as Asian, and 1% as Other. “Prefer not to answer” was selected by 9% who gave a response to this question.

There was a great cross-section of neighborhood affiliations identified by the respondents. Oakhurst, the largest neighborhood geographically, was identified by 25%. This was followed by Winnona Park at 16% and Downtown Decatur at 13%.

The majority of people who identified the length of time they have lived in Decatur have resided here less than 20 years. A total of 26% specified they have lived here 10 to 19 years, 20% for 5 to 9 years, and 29% for less than 5 years.

There was a definite gap between those who identified as owning their home versus renting. Those who own their home with a mortgage totaled 74% and those who owned with no mortgage were 19%. A total of 6% rent and less than 1% live with family or friend and do not pay rent.

## SURVEY RESULTS

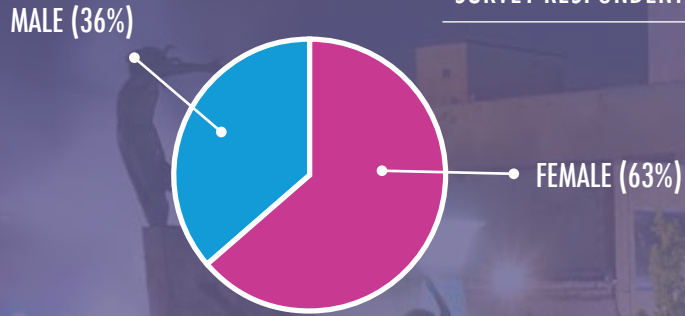
### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The survey began with questions regarding Economic Development. Respondents were asked whether the City should use taxpayer funded economic incentives as part of its business recruitment and retention strategy, in order to expand employment opportunities. Only 26% of respondents supported funding incentives. A total of 41% said No and 33% were Unsure.

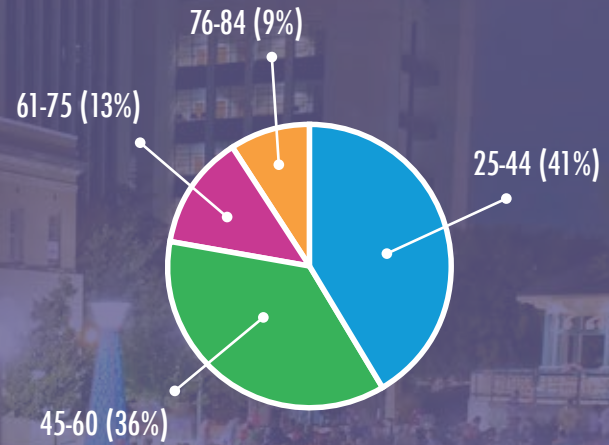
There were a lot of opinions about the type(s) of businesses people would like to see in Decatur as we work to expand the City’s retail and service industry. Respondents could choose multiple options. The majority of responses were for a variety of clothing stores (Clothing 40%, Second-hand clothing 30%, Children’s clothing 23 %). There was also a great deal of interest (38%) in a bookstore. Many people (43%) chose to offer their own options. These suggestions centered primarily around access to grocery-related stores (high-end foods, small neighborhood markets, bakeries). Other responses included bike/outdoor sports store, movie theater, office supply, shoe store, and arts and crafts store, among the suggestions.

Respondents were interested in factors that would limit business prosperity and patrons’ access to businesses. There was concern about constraints for locally owned businesses due to the high cost of rent. A total of 71% of people believed that the City of Decatur should consider options for creating programs that would assist new retailers in testing the market and growing their business. They were also asked whether traffic or parking issues had been a barrier to patronizing retail and service businesses in downtown Decatur. This was a concern of 70% of respondents.

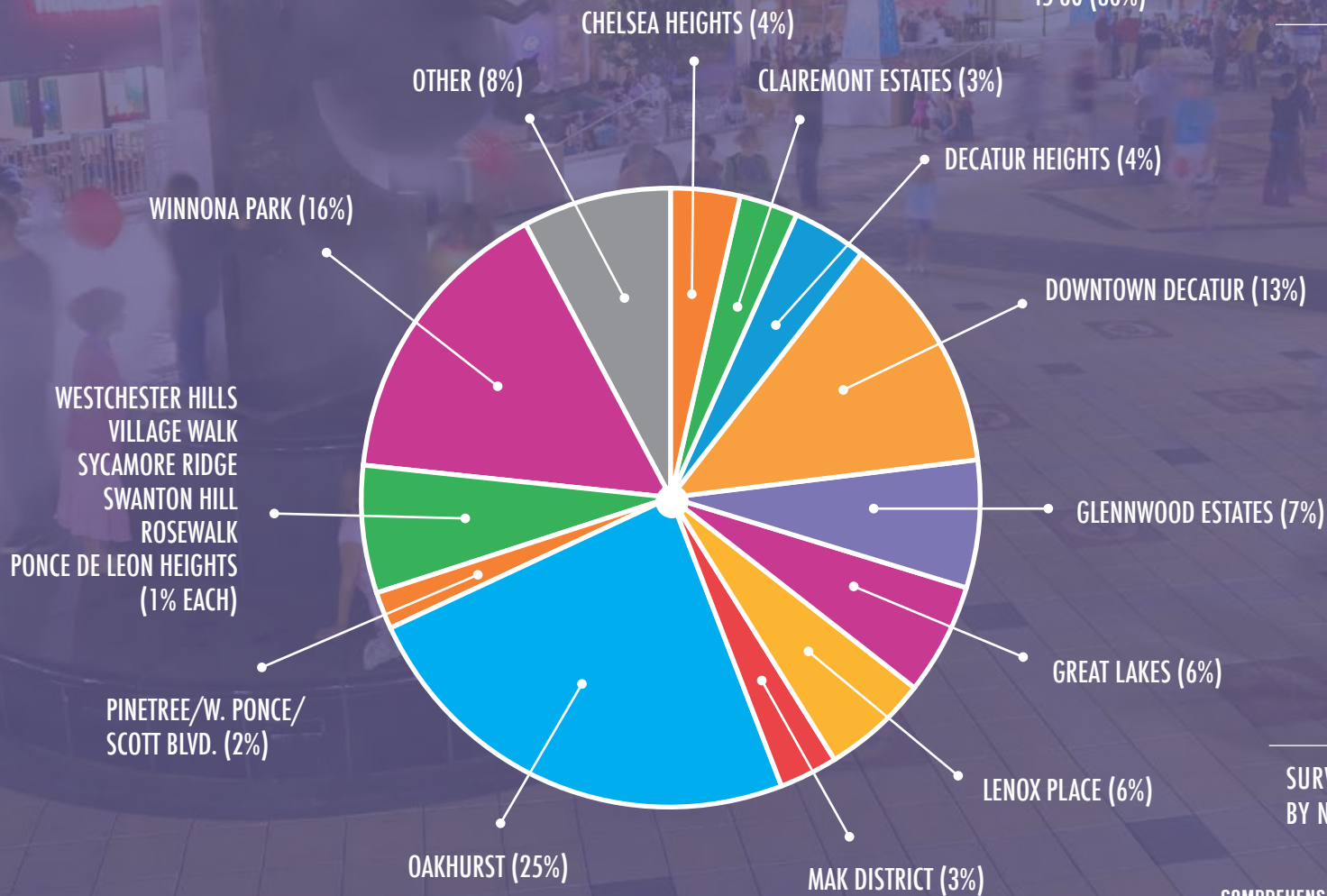
SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY GENDER



SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AGE



SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY NEIGHBORHOOD





## TRANSPORTATION

Decatur residents love to walk and bike. A total of 86% routinely walk as a form of transportation within the City. The barriers for those who do not routinely walk were predominantly due to not having the time and safety concerns. Only 28% of respondents routinely bike as a form of transportation within the City. The main barriers to biking were safety concerns followed by not having a bike. Others reported they did not bike due to not having the time, weather conditions, and health limitations. Many of those who provided their own response stated that they preferred walking. There were also many who expressed infrastructure concerns related to the need for additional bike lanes. Many people wanted more bike racks.

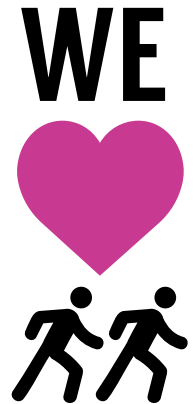
A total of 54% of people did not believe there were adequate on-street bicycle lanes and off-street bike paths to help make bicycling a part of their outdoor exercise. The other main barrier was safety concerns.

There was concern about adequate bicycle and pedestrian connectivity from 56% of respondents. In response to the question regarding types of connectivity they would like to see, the majority were interested in continuous sidewalks on at least one side of the street, followed by additional crosswalks at key intersections, and finally bicycle tracks and/or lanes. A total of 56% of respondents did not believe that Decatur has adequate bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between its residential neighborhoods and its commercial districts.

In adopting the Community Transportation Plan, the City Commission supported a policy to create a more balanced approach to transportation options. When asked whether there was interest in the City improving pedestrian and bicycle service, even if it would result in increased automobile congestion and slower vehicular movement, there was resounding support (77%). Respondents were asked to prioritize transportation improvements. The top priority was sidewalk connectivity (34%). When asked to prioritize transportation corridors for traffic calming measures, 29% chose Scott Boulevard, S. Candler Street 19%, Ponce de Leon Avenue 17%, Clairemont Avenue (north of Commerce Drive) 9%, and Church Street (north of Commerce Drive) 8%.

Decatur has the benefit of three MARTA stations and several bus routes within the City. However, a total of 64% said they do not routinely use bus or rail transit options within the City or to destinations outside of the City. The greatest barrier to doing so was that transit does not go to their destination. This was followed by transit too infrequent, don't have time, and safety concerns.

When asked to think long-term (20 years out) regarding types of transportation enhancements the City should consider to reduce dependence on automobiles, respond to the needs of an aging population, and ensure the long-term economic sustainability of the City, the majority of responses related to a trolley/shuttle bus/circulator. Numerous other ideas were mentioned, ranging from improving sidewalks, crosswalks and traffic lights to self-driving cars, golf carts, and another tunnel under the railroad tracks.





## LAND USE

Greenspace can represent both active uses (sports fields/courts, playgrounds, dog parks) and passive uses (nature trails, ponds, meadows, general open space). The survey asked whether greenspace in the City of Decatur (can be existing spaces or new acquisitions) should lean more towards active or passive use. A majority responded that they preferred balanced opportunities for active and passive uses.

Over 500 people offered suggestions regarding a desired location for additional greenspace. The suggested locations ranged from Downtown to Oakhurst to Howard Avenue to Decatur Heights to East Decatur Station to Winnona Park to United Methodist Children’s Home and many more. Some people thought that pocket parks would be a good solution. Others questioned whether there would be any areas in the City that could affordably be purchased for a park.

People do regularly utilize the existing parks. A total of 45% report that they visit City of Decatur parks more than once a week and 40% visit more that once a month. Less than 2% of the people who responded indicated that they never go to a park and 14% go once or twice a year.

In addition to the options offered, a total of 185 people offered additional suggestions. These suggestions ranged from better restroom access to safety concerns (walking and biking access, lighting, police patrols) to increased maintenance. People were also interested in greater connectivity among parks.

There were also many suggestions regarding more amenities in the parks — places to sit, community gardens, flowers and trees, sports facilities (tennis, soccer, basketball courts, fields, and a walking/running track), playground equipment (including for older children and adults), and water fountains. People would like to have additional dog parks. There was also interest in a broader range of aesthetics ranging from art to water features.

## HOUSING

The survey included a number of questions related to housing and options residents would like to see in the future. This included asking what type(s) of housing, if any, people would like to see in areas outside established residential areas. There was interest in attached single-family townhomes (29%) and multifamily condominiums



A total of 870 people responded to a question regarding changes that would encourage or enable them to visit the parks more often. The biggest influence would be parks with more walking paths (66%). People also would like parks located closer to their residence (38%).

(24%) and some interest in multifamily apartments (17%). A total of 35% did not prefer any types of housing outside established residential areas.

Respondents were also asked about preferences for alternative type(s) of housing, if any, they would like to see within established residential areas. The most popular

option was Cottage Courts (five to nine detached dwelling units organized around a shared internal courtyard) at 43%. This was followed by Tiny Homes (36%), Accessory Dwelling Units (small self-contained dwelling located on the same lot as a principal home but physically separated) at 27%, attached townhomes at 22% and duplexes at 16%.

The majority of respondents were supportive of some increased housing regulations. A total of 70% were interested in Decatur pursuing stricter infill housing design guidelines for the purpose of preserving compatibility of scale and maintaining the current variety of housing types and size. There was also strong support (73%) of mandatory inclusionary housing in future multi-family developments. Inclusionary zoning is a voluntary requirement that a specific percentage of new multi-family development projects should be affordable by people with modest incomes.

People were also asked how they would define affordable housing. They were provided a scenario to help with this definition. According to the scenario, current average sales price of a single-family home in the City of Decatur is \$600,000. In order to purchase this home, household income would likely need to be at least \$138,000 annually. As an example, the average salary for a City of Decatur public safety employee between the ages of 25-34 is approximately \$44,000 and the average salary for a City of Decatur non-public safety employee between the ages of 25-34 is approximately \$42,000. If two City of Decatur average wage earners between the ages of 25 to 34 wanted to purchase a home in the City, their combined salaries would support a purchase of \$360,000.

Respondents were asked whether a single-family detached house selling for \$360,000 meets their definition of affordable housing. A total of 17% said it meets their definition and 48% indicated it exceeds their definition. Only 4% said it was less than their definition and 7% were unsure. Nearly a quarter (23%) believe that housing prices are dictated by the market and whatever the market attracts defines what is affordable.

They were also asked to provide any additional comments about affordable housing. The 379 comments offered a wide range of responses, including the impact of affordable homes being torn down to make way for larger, more expensive homes. There was concern that this was causing an increase in the loss of community diversity in income, race, and age. People were worried about the impact that increased taxes due to higher home assessments was having on senior citizens.

Many of the responses reflected the desire for Decatur employees to be able to afford to live in the City. There were also many comments that accommodations should not

be made for City staff to live in the City or for there to be an increase in affordable housing. Instead, they stated that the market should decide what is affordable and that those who cannot afford to live in the City limits could live outside of the City. There were also a number of people who believed that an increase in apartments and condominiums was a solution and others who were completely against these options.

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Respondents were asked whether they observed any environmental quality issues in Decatur that needed to be addressed. The majority (31%) of over 900 people who answered this question did not observe any environmental quality issues. Those that did observe them ranked the issues as clogged storm drains (29%), litter/dumping at 27%, polluted streams at 21%, abandoned property at 18%, and air pollution at 12%. A total of 20% offered additional concerns. The list included property not being maintained; not picking up after dogs; tree removal due to development; backed up and overflowing sewer lines; broken sidewalks; inadequate number of public trash and recycling receptacles; noise and light pollution; and potholes.

There was a mixed response to the question about whether the City has done enough to preserve historic housing. A total of 27% said Yes, 37% said No, and 36% were Unsure. There was also a mixed response regarding whether the City is adequately preserving stream buffers and protecting groundwater quality. There was a Yes response from 17%, No from 25% and Unsure from 58%.

## OTHER THOUGHTS ABOUT DECATUR

There were 683 responses to the question about what the City should do more of to continue to be a great place. A number of responses related to Quality of Life issues that people felt were working and they would like to have continue and increase. These issues included our great school system and how it can be supported; the opportunities to connect with the community, including Decatur 101 and festivals and other events; great shops and restaurants; and “keep up the great work.”

There were also issues that people felt needed improvement. These issues included: allow for more affordable housing and reduced taxes for senior citizens; provide more alternative housing options, including smaller homes; preserve and increase diversity; less construction, especially infill housing and teardowns; less tree cutting; more green-space; and more support of bicycle infrastructure, walkability and public transportation.

When asked what people would change about Decatur, if they could only choose

one thing, the answers ran the gamut. The issues raised included railroad crossings, traffic and parking, taxes, loss of trees, gentrification, housing options, improvements for walkability and biking, more greenspace, and overcrowded schools.

Respondents were asked how effective they think local government is at solving problems in the City. The mixed response included 15% believing it was Very Effective, 43% Effective, 35% Somewhat Effective, and 7% Ineffective. In spite of concerns, 85% said that they were satisfied with their experience in the City of Decatur.

One survey question asked for ONLY ONE thing they could tell someone who was thinking about moving to Decatur to convince them to move here. The answers to this question included great schools; great neighborhoods; great community; family friendly; walkability, including to great restaurants and shops; and a sense of community.

Final thoughts from respondents included more affordable housing, more bike lanes and pedestrian access, too much traffic, great neighborhoods, more greenspace, reduced number of trees removed by builders, lower property taxes, reduced school taxes for senior citizens, improved school infrastructure, and more police patrols.





A nighttime photograph of a city plaza. The foreground features a paved walkway with a pattern of light and dark tiles. To the right, there is a wooden bench with a black metal frame. In the background, there are several streetlights with glowing white globes, and a building with large windows and a glass entrance. The sky is dark with some clouds, and the overall atmosphere is illuminated by the streetlights and building lights.

# COMMUNITY VISION

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Across the process, Steering Committee and public meetings generated considerable ideas and recommendations which then informed the policy proposals that follow.

Implemented, these policies will further help meet the goals and fulfill the tasks of the 2010 Strategic Plan and successfully propel the City of Decatur's economy into the next decade. (Tasks in the 2010 Strategic Plan that directly tie to a proposed policy are listed in parentheses.)

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Municipally-supported economic development efforts serve to maintain a wide-ranging employment base so our local economy can endure fluctuations in the market and local revenues can adequately fund services and schools — a task the City of Decatur has successfully met over the past 10-year period of the Comprehensive Plan. Despite the interruption of the Great Recession, our local economy has recovered and continues to grow.

Of Decatur's property tax, which constitutes more than half of the general fund, approximately 85 percent of revenues come from residential properties, while only 15 percent come from commercial and other nonresidential properties. In many communities, this split is closer to 60/40. It should be noted here, that Decatur's two largest employment sectors are Government and Educational Services, both of which do not contribute to the property tax base, but contribute to the local economy in other ways.

The City of Decatur recognizes that major employment growth will be in services and retail trade. Health services, legal services, educational services, social services, membership organizations, and business / personal services, according to regional employment growth forecasts for 2040, are expected to be particularly strong as well.

The City has had success in satellite offices in the downtown area. Employment sectors requiring office space are desirable to the growth of Decatur's economy and efforts should be maintained to capture the potential future employment growth this represents. The City of Decatur has excellent transit access and a central location, but lacks direct highway access or a large inventory of Class A office space. Nevertheless, many companies are attracted to places with a high quality of life that share their values to provide their employees places to live and play.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY VISION

TO PROMOTE BUSINESS ACTIVITY THAT ATTRACTS DIVERSITY, CONTRIBUTES TO THE "LIVE-WORK-PLAY" ENVIRONMENT OF THE CITY, AND MAINTAINS A CAREFUL BALANCE BETWEEN LARGE AND SMALL-SCALE BUSINESS, LOCALLY-OWNED AND NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED BRANDS.

- Continue marketing to position Decatur as an active "Live, Work, Play" community in an urban setting with small town roots and sensibilities (Task 2B).
- Promote existing small businesses throughout the City (Task 2B).
- Encourage mixed-use development on underutilized commercially-zoned properties in downtown Decatur (Tasks 3B, 3C).
- Cultivate a wide variety of retail in the downtown area by encouraging and recruiting both small, locally-owned businesses and larger, nationally-recognized businesses (Task 2A).
- Support business start-ups and entrepreneurs by creating programs that help test markets and expand opportunities, such as Pop Up and Food Cart activities in commercially-zoned districts (Tasks 2D, 2E).
- Continue to market downtown Decatur as an ideal office location (Tasks 2A, 3B).
- Sustain the Downtown Development Authority and its work program in the following areas: general development, creation of downtown office space, the College Avenue Corridor activities, the Avondale LCI area activities, business retention, and business recruiting.

## POPULATION

Unlike its surrounding neighbors, the City has not had to struggle with the pains of managing explosive growth. Its 20% decline in population throughout the 70's and 80's allowed Decatur the unique opportunity to step back and redefine its future with some careful and thoughtful planning.

The City's relatively recent renaissance as an urban community with a highly successful mixed-use downtown is not a random happening. It is a direct result of proactive planning set forth decades ago. The increase in population seen during the 1990's reflected these plans coming into fruition. The City will continue to grow at a faster rate, but that growth is anticipated to be well managed within clearly defined areas and corridors.

As with any successful city, increases in property values and quality of services can also increase the risk of losing the diversity of population. Decatur is no exception. The City has been very successful in attracting older, more professional and wealthier residents in recent years. Heard throughout the public meetings was the desire by the community to increase diversity within the City's neighborhoods. Initial strategies were put in place with the adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance, which increases opportunities to create new housing options for those who earn less than Decatur's area median income of \$77,202.

## POPULATION COMMUNITY VISION

### TO PROTECT AND EXPAND DIVERSITY AMONG DECATUR RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AND VISITORS.

- Educate property owners, builders and developers of housing options allowed by the new Unified Development Ordinance (Task 5C).
- Encourage transit-oriented, walkable, and service-accessible development that allows for aging in place (Task 5A).
- Continue to support programs that help elderly, low-income residents remain in Decatur (Task 5E).
- Establish a Decatur Youth Council to engage local youth in community planning and learn how city government can best meet the needs of local youth (Task 7E).

## HOUSING

The City of Decatur has a vibrant residential life, but a decreasing stock of diverse available housing opportunities. Though housing is generally adequate and suitable for current and future needs, the inventory presents several issues which may be critical for long term housing adequacy. These issues involve housing affordability, and housing availability.

## HOUSING COMMUNITY VISION

**TO PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOUSING — INCLUDING WELL-PLANNED MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON WALKABILITY — FOR ALL LEVELS OF THE DECATUR WORKFORCE AND FOR RESIDENTS IN ALL STAGES OF LIFE, PARTICULARLY THOSE MAKING LESS THAN AREA MEDIAN INCOME.**

### AFFORDABILITY

- Support property tax relief for senior citizens, particularly those with low incomes (Task 5E).
- Enhance incentives for the creation of more life cycle dwelling units (Task 15D).
- Continue to explore and create more affordable housing opportunities to ensure that all those who work in the community have a viable choice or option to live here (Task 15B).
- Continue to support the activities of the Decatur Housing Authority in meeting the housing needs of Decatur's lower income residents (Task 15A).

### SUPPLY

- Encourage the preservation and/or the adaptive reuse of historic structures (Task 15E).
- Encourage higher density residential development at select locations in downtown Decatur and transit stations (Tasks 15C, 15E).
- Promote new housing types, including accessory dwelling units and cottage courts (Task 15B).
- Enhance the City's existing supply of housing by promoting conservation practices, supporting rehabilitation programs, and encouraging the replacement of dilapidated structures (Task 15C).
- Encourage visitability design guidelines for new construction of single-family homes.



## OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

The natural environment includes areas and resources which are vulnerable to the impacts of development and which require protection by the community. The conservation of environmentally sensitive and ecologically significant resources is becoming increasingly important, as their values to Decatur become better understood.

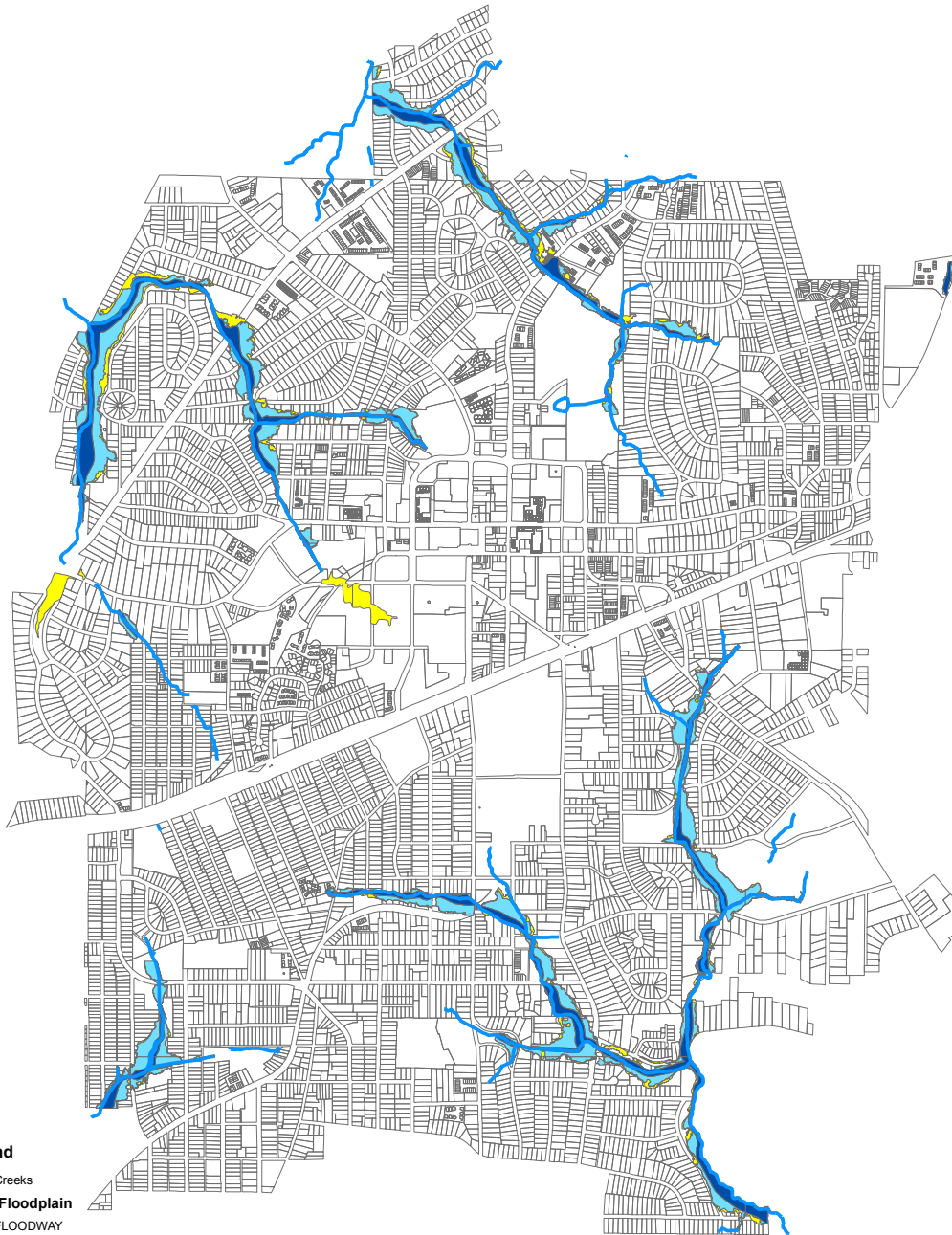
The natural environment places certain opportunities and constraints on the way land is used. Factors such as soil characteristics, topography and flooding frequency affect where development can safely and feasibly occur. Areas particularly vulnerable to developmental impacts receive appropriate measures of protection, such as stream buffers. Although these may be considered development constraints, there is an opportunity to provide limited passive recreation within conservation areas.

The community expressed significant interest in new parks, both pockets parks throughout the city and a downtown park. The community also expressed a strong desire to fulfill the goals developed in the Decatur Greenway Plan to connect neighborhoods and parks with sidewalks, trails, and bike facilities.

## OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

### POLICIES

- Protect natural resources from development which would create significant negative environmental or economic impacts.
- Continue to plant 50 trees each year in the City.
- Preserve stream buffers and floodplains as permanent open space whenever feasible.
- Protect and improve air quality in the City of Decatur.
- Continue to promote compact land development that allows for walking and other non-vehicular transportation.
- Investigate feasibility of connectivity as identified in Decatur Greenway Plan, and identify new park locations.



**Legend**

- Creeks
- FEMA Floodplain**
- FLOODWAY
- 0.2 PCT ANNUAL CHANCE FLOOD HAZARD
- 1 PCT ANNUAL CHANCE FLOOD HAZARD
- Parcels

Reflects FEMA D-FIRM effective 12/18/2014

## CONSISTENCY WITH REGIONAL WATER PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING CRITERIA

The City of Decatur development regulations include policies that are consistent with state environmental planning criteria. These criteria include the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning district plans and Part 5 Environmental Planning Criteria of the Georgia Planning Act.

### Water Supply Watersheds

The area of Decatur north of the CSX Railroad drains into the Chattahoochee River via Peachtree Creek at a point below both the DeKalb County and City of Atlanta water intakes, and the area south of the CSX Railroad drains to the South River which is not used as a water supply source. Thus, the City is not required to develop water supply watershed protection regulations.

### Groundwater Recharge Areas

Recharge is the process by which precipitation infiltrates soil and rock to add to the volume of water stored in pores and other openings within them. Aquifers are soils or rocks that yield water to wells. While recharge takes place throughout practically all of Georgia's land area, the rate or amount of recharge reaching underwater aquifers varies from place to place depending on geologic conditions.

The Georgia DNR has mapped all of the recharge areas in the State and the entire City has been identified by DNR as a possible significant groundwater recharge area and has been identified as having low pollution susceptibility.

### Floodplains

Flooding is the temporary covering of soil with water from overflowing streams and by runoff from adjacent slopes. Water standing for short periods after rainfalls is not considered flooding, nor is water in swamps. Floodplains in their natural or relatively undisturbed state are valued for three main purposes: natural water storage and conveyance, water quality maintenance, and groundwater recharge. Unsuitable development can destroy their value. Floodplains in the City are generally narrow, level land found along the various tributaries of Peachtree Creek and the South River.

### Wetlands

Federal law defines freshwater wetlands as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. According to data compiled through the National Wetlands inventory, there is only one wetland area located within the City of Decatur – a small pond located in the middle of Decatur Cemetery. The cemetery is unlikely to become involved in wetland development and permitting issues, therefore no specific regulatory actions are being recommended at this time.



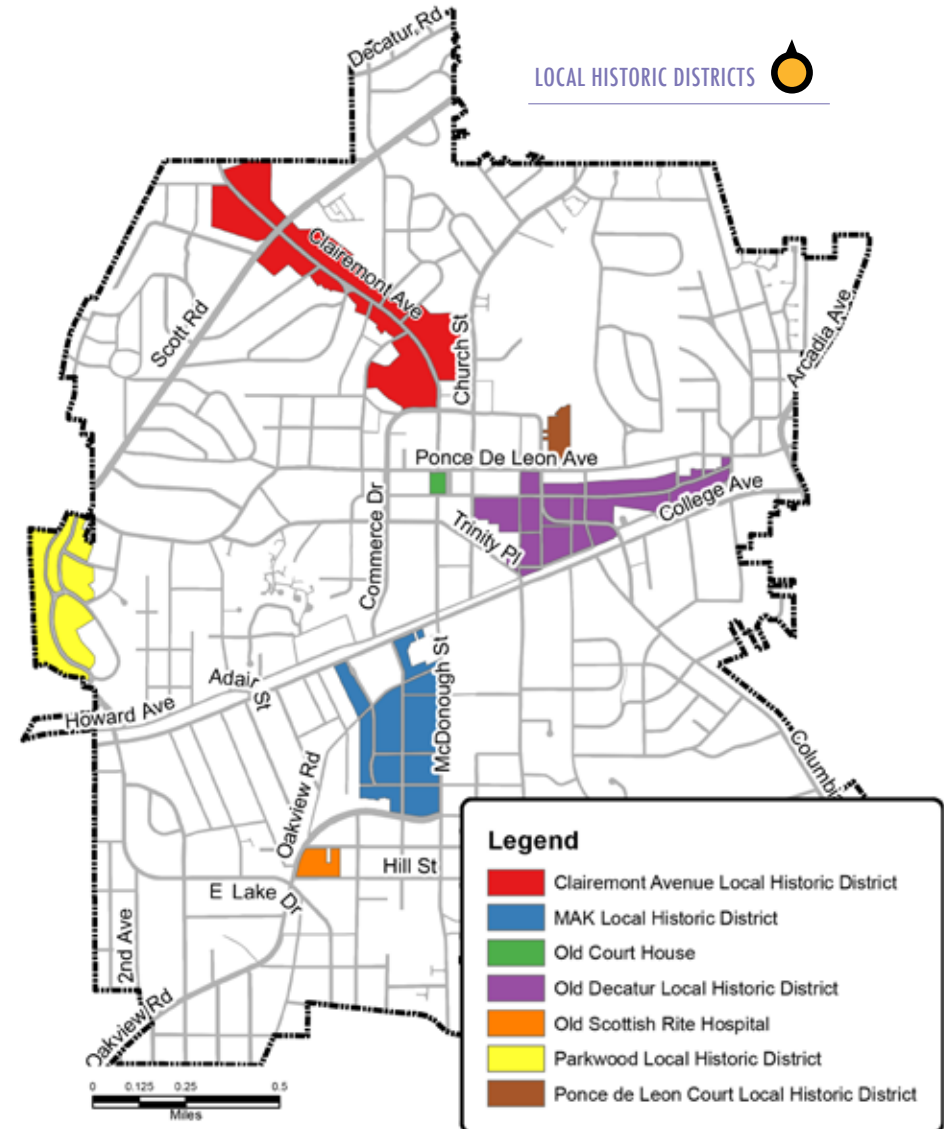
## CULTURAL RESOURCES

As the first city in DeKalb County and the second oldest city in the Atlanta region, incorporated in 1823, Decatur is home to some of the oldest buildings in the region, many with local or national significance. Decatur recognizes its historical, cultural, and aesthetic heritage and the need to preserve its neighborhoods and commercial areas. The Decatur City Commission adopted the ordinance creating the Decatur Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in May 1990 with responsibilities to maintain an inventory of the City's historical and architectural resources, provide educational programs, recommend local designations, and provide project review for locally-designated properties.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES COMMUNITY VISION

TO EMPHASIZE IN ALL CITY PLANNING ACTIVITIES THE PROTECTION OF ITS HISTORIC BUILDINGS, BOTH RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL.

- Preserve and protect Decatur historic resources for the education and enjoyment of current and future City residents and visitors (Task 4E).
- Educate and encourage property owners to place eligible buildings and districts on the National Register of Historic Places (Task 4D).
- Educate property owners about historic preservation tax credits (Task 4C).
- Explore a transfer of development rights ordinance for commercial properties to guide development to areas where impacts to cultural resources are minimized (Task 4F).



## LAND USE

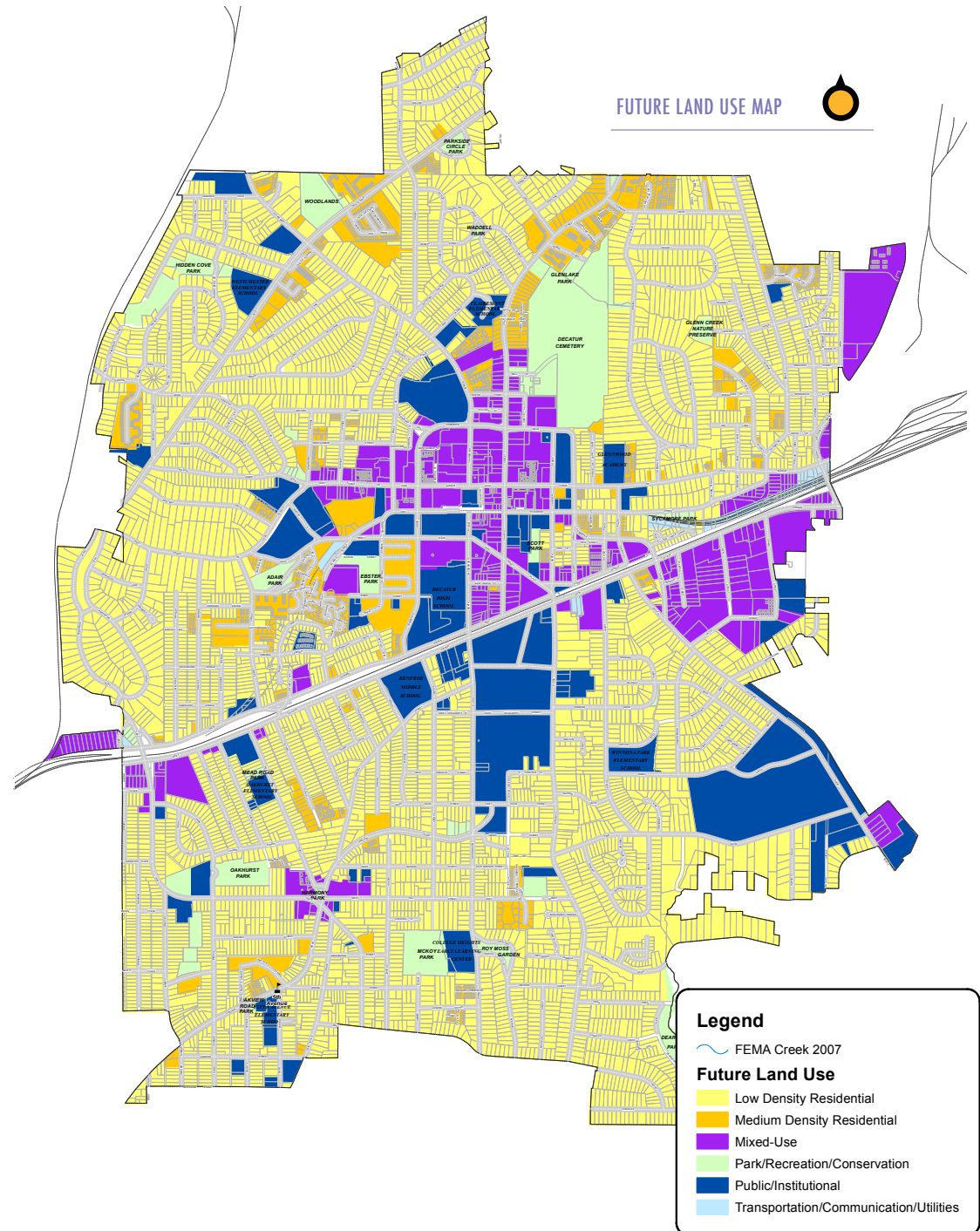
As previously stated, land use in Decatur is clearly not the result of haphazard and random development. Development patterns today are the result of plans and policies set in motion decades ago. The City has taken great care in encouraging managed growth in identified areas and corridors. Future land use, as depicted on the accompanying map and narrative, is a continuation of these efforts.

Considering Decatur's build-out conditions, the Future Land Use map closely resembles the current Existing Land Use map. As such, future land use policies closely mirror present policies. The City will continue preservation efforts of its existing residential neighborhoods. While small amounts of infill housing will continue to occur, significant opportunities for growth will be directed to the redevelopment of previously identified downtown properties, nearby commercial properties, and surrounding corridors. This is illustrated in the Future Land Use map.

Areas in need of redevelopment, as identified by the City, include:

### Commerce Drive

The redevelopment of downtown Decatur began in the area around the historic courthouse and then moved east and west along Ponce de Leon Avenue, and northward along Clairmont Avenue. While located just two blocks to the north, Commerce Drive has not benefitted from the same level of redevelopment, and has some of the most underutilized properties in Decatur. Current uses include surface parking lots, fast food restaurants, and a variety of non-historic smaller buildings. Some of these buildings are vacant and boarded up. On the whole, this area lacks the vibrancy and the architectural interest found in most of downtown Decatur. Development types appropriate for this area would include mixed-use high-density housing, convenience retail, and multi-story office.



## East Lake MARTA Station

Similar to the implementation of a mixed-use project at the Avondale MARTA Station, an opportunity exists for the redevelopment of existing parking lots at the East Lake MARTA Station. According to MARTA, the East Lake station is the second most underutilized transit station, with less than 40% of its 600+ parking spaces left empty. Under-parking asphalt could be re-envisioned with a parking deck wrapped by apartments, condominiums, and ground level retail on the 8-acre site. Since the site is located adjacent to the Decatur boundary, the City will work with the City of Atlanta to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses, which includes existing neighborhood-oriented businesses.

## OTHER LAND USE ISSUES

### Annexation Study

Due to rising enrollment of children into city schools, annexation is an ever evolving issue for the City and for the Board of Education of the City Schools of Decatur. The City of Decatur adopted an annexation plan in 2014; however, the City Commission and the Board of Education met in 2016 to begin discussions about how to approach annexation in the coming years. The Board of Education has requested that the City not accept any additional annexation applications from single-family residential properties until policies and plans are developed and adopted by the City Commission and Board of Education. School and City management teams are working on developing metrics to measure the impact of annexation on the City and on City Schools for the Board of Education and the City Commission to consider. Additionally, it is their intent to determine if a plan can be developed that satisfies the metrics adopted by the City and Board.

## LAND USE COMMUNITY VISION

TO PROVIDE FOR PROJECTED LIMITED FUTURE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CITY IN A MANNER THAT ENHANCES AND BUILDS UPON THE CITY OF DECATUR'S EXISTING "SMALL TOWN CHARACTER."

- Maintain a small town quality of life and small town character while accommodating medium and high-density redevelopment in appropriate areas (Task 3A, Task 15C).
- Maintain and improve the individual character and identity of established neighborhoods and commercial centers (Task 1D).
- Limit future commercial development to the downtown area or to already established neighborhood commercial centers (Task 3B).
- Locate higher density residential developments either in previously identified commercial or transition areas adjacent to other higher density uses or in areas adjacent to rapid transit stations (Task 3B).
- Revisit residential infill design guidelines to ensure compatibility of new construction with existing resources (Task 4B).

## TRANSPORTATION VISION

TO ESTABLISH A SAFE AND EFFICIENT MULTI-MODAL SYSTEM THAT MAXIMIZES AND ENHANCES DECATUR'S VEHICULAR AND NON-VEHICULAR RESOURCES – EMPHASIZING "COMPLETE STREETS," A MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK THAT PROVIDES SAFE AND EFFICIENT MOBILITY TO ALL USERS THROUGH IDENTIFICATION OF PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLIST, PUBLIC TRANSIT, AND VEHICLE MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS.

By encouraging residents, commuters, and visitors to use alternative forms of transportation other than motor vehicles, the City of Decatur promotes activities which collectively contribute to improved air quality.

- Increase transit use with the co-location of mixed-use and higher density residential developments with transit facilities (Task 15E).
- Study mobility and connectivity Citywide (Task 16A).
- Create and maintain a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community (Tasks 14B-14E).
- Design innovative parking options for the downtown central business core (Task 14I).
- Increase connectivity between the Oakhurst and Downtown business districts.
- Identify and prioritize improvements to pedestrian facilities through a citywide sidewalk assessment.
- Support the continued operation of Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association's CCTMA-Decatur Shuttle (Task 14E).

This vision and goals will be the focus of the Community Transportation Plan Update.









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# DECATUR 360 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## APPENDIX

2010-2015 SHORT TERM WORK PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE	PROJECT STATUS				[Reflects 5-Year Work Program as listed in previous Comprehensive Plan]
TASK OR PROJECT	COMPLETE	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	OUTSTANDING	STATUS NOTES
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>					
Implement Community Transportation Plan					Estimated completion date: 2016
Oakhurst Village Streetscape Improvements					
Phase 4 Downtown Streetscape Improvements					
Phase 5 Downtown Streetscape Improvements					
Clairemont/Commerce   Church/Commerce Intersection Design					Final Draft Design under review by GDOT
Church Street Bicycle Lane Design					Final Draft Design under review by GDOT
Revise Parking Standards					
Continued Support for Safe Routes to School					
<b>GROWTH AND LAND USE</b>					
Adopt Unified Development Ordinance					
Implement Annexation Plan					Partial plan completed and implemented: Future annexation efforts anticipated, in coordination with City Schools of Decatur

2010-2015 SHORT TERM WORK PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE	PROJECT STATUS				[Reflects 5-Year Work Program as listed in previous Comprehensive Plan]
TASK OR PROJECT	COMPLETE	UNDERWAY	POSTPONED	OUTSTANDING	STATUS NOTES
<b>GROWTH AND LAND USE CONT.</b>					
Amend Future Land Use Plan to Reflect 2010 Strategic Plan					
Expand Special Pedestrian Area Zoning Overlay					
<b>HOUSING</b>					
Construction of Apartments at 233 East Trinity Place					
Redevelopment of Allen Wilson Terrace (Phases 2, 3 and 4)					Phase 2 and 3 complete; Phase 4 in planning stage
Continued Affordable Housing Initiatives					
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES</b>					
Renovation of Fire Station Number 1					
Renovation of Decatur Recreation Center					
Implement Storm Water Master Plan					
Renovation of Public Works Facility					

2016-2020 SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM	SCHEDULED TIME FRAME					
TASK OR PROJECT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	RESPONSIBILITY AND COSTS
<b>GROWTH AND LAND USE</b>						
Evaluate Commercial Sign Regs / Amend UDO as necessary	■	■	■			City Admin. / Staff Time / General Fund
Evaluate Commercial Design Standards / Amend UDO as necessary	■	■	■			City Admin. / Staff Time / General Fund
Evaluate Residential Infill Guidelines	■	■	■			Staff Time
Explore Public Spaces and Pocket Parks	■	■	■	■	■	City Admin. / General Fund
Amend Future Land Use Map to Reflect 2010 Strategic Plan	■					City Admin. / \$2,000 / General Fund
<b>HOUSING</b>						
Work with Developers towards Affordable Housing Options	■	■	■	■	■	City Admin., Private Interests / Staff Time / Private Funds
Cottage Court Construction, 230 Commerce Drive		■				DDA, Private Interests / \$1,200,000 / Private Funds
Amend UDO to Further Support Cottage Courts	■	■				City Admin. / Staff Time / General Fund
Explore Inclusionary Housing		■	■			City Admin. / Staff Time / General Fund
Establish Land Trust for Affordable Housing		■				City Admin. / \$325,000 / General Fund
Continue Affordable Housing Initiatives	■	■	■	■	■	City Admin. / Staff Time / General Fund

2016-2020 SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM	SCHEDULED TIME FRAME					
TASK OR PROJECT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	RESPONSIBILITY AND COSTS
<b>COMMUNITY FACILITIES</b>						
Athletic Facilities and Greenspace Master Plan			■	■		City Admin., Consultant / \$80,000 / General Fund
Update Downtown Parking Survey; Prepare Solutions			■	■		City Admin. / \$12,000 / General Fund
Stormwater Master Plan Update	■	■				City Admin., Consultant / \$500,000 / General Fund
<b>NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>						
Implementation of Cemetery Master Plan	■	■	■	■	■	City Admin., / \$1,800,000 / Private Funds
Explore TDR Program for Commercial Districts		■	■	■		City Admin. / Staff Time / General Fund
Explore NR Designations for Eligible Historic Properties		■	■	■	■	City Admin., Consultant / Staff Time / General Fund
Update Historic Resources Survey				■		City Admin., Consultant / \$40,000 / General Fund, CLG

2016-2020 SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM	SCHEDULED TIME FRAME					
TASK OR PROJECT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	RESPONSIBILITY AND COSTS
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>						
Implement 2007 Community Transportation Plan	■					City Admin. / \$25,000,000 / General Fund, GDOT
Update Community Transportation Plan		■				City Admin., Consultant / \$25,000 / General Fund
Implement Phase 4 of Downtown Streetscapes	■	■				City Admin., Consultant / \$1,500,000 / General Fund, GDOT
Clairemont/Commerce   Church/Commerce Intersection Design	■	■	■	■		City Admin., Consultant / \$4,000,000 / General Fund, GDOT
Church Street Bicycle Lanes	■	■	■	■		City Admin., Consultant / \$3,000,000 / General Fund, GDOT
Commerce Street Bicycle Lanes			■	■		City Admin., Consultant / \$1,000,000 / General Fund, GDOT
Atlanta Avenue Crossing				■	■	City Admin., Consultant / \$5,000,000 / General Fund, GDOT
Complete sidewalk inventory, prioritize project list	■	■				City Admin. / Staff Time / General Fund
Continue Support For Safe Routes to School	■	■	■	■	■	City Admin. / \$500,000 / General Fund

2016-2020 SHORT TERM WORK PROGRAM	SCHEDULED TIME FRAME					
TASK OR PROJECT	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	RESPONSIBILITY AND COSTS
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>						
East Lake MARTA Station LCI Study Area		■	■			City Admin., Atlanta, ARC / \$50,000 / General Fund, DDA
Office and Retail Business Recruitment Plan	■	■				City Admin., DBA / Staff Time / General Fund, DDA
Vending and Food Cart Policy and Ordinance	■	■	■			City Admin., DBA / \$12,000 / General Fund, DDA
Implement EcoArts District			■			City Admin., DAA / \$60,000 / General Fund, DDA
Continue Marketing to Support and Enhance the "Decatur Brand."	■	■	■	■	■	City Admin., DDA / \$250,000 / General Fund, DDA, DBA

