

# POPULATION

## Inventory

### Total Population

According to the U.S. Census, the City of Decatur's total population in 2000 was 18,147 persons. This represented 2.7 percent of the total 2000 population of DeKalb County. Forecasts published by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) estimate the 2005 population of Decatur to be 18,693.

Table 2.1 – Decatur Total Population 1980-2005

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Persons	18,404	17,870	17,336	17,742	18,147	18,693

Source: U.S. Census

During the period between 1990 and 2000, Decatur's total population increased by 811 persons, an increase of 4.7 percent. Comparatively, for the same period (1990-2000), the total population in DeKalb County increased by 18 percent and for the State of Georgia by 20 percent (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 – Historic Population Trends of Decatur, DeKalb County and Georgia

	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1980-1990	% Change 1990-2000
City of Decatur	18,404	17,336	18,147	-5.8	4.7%
DeKalb County	483,024	545,837	665,865	13.0	18.0%
State of Georgia	5,484,527	6,522,645	8,186,453	18.9	20.3%

Source: U.S. Census

Decatur's increase in population during the last decade ended a trend of population decline that began in the 1970's. From 1970-1990, the City's population decreased by 21%. This decrease was largely a reflection of Decatur as a mature community with little vacant area available for growth. In addition, household size was decreasing across the nation. This played a significant role in the City's population shrinkage as family size became smaller.

The population increase of the 1990's can be attributed to the City's emphasis on higher density residential redevelopment. According to forecasts by the ARC detailed in Table 2.3, over the next 20 years the population is anticipated to increase by 5356 persons, or 29%. As almost 100% of Decatur's land area is developed, opportunities for growth during the next two decades will be limited to

these increases in residential densities, with high-density developments planned for downtown Decatur and medium density developments in specified corridors.

**Table 2.3 – City of Decatur Forecasted Population Trends**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
Persons	18,802	18,911	19,020	19,129	19,238	20,586	21,934	24,049

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

### **Households**

While Decatur's population has increased, household size has continued to diminish, dropping 7% percent between 1980 and 2000. However, the total number of households increased by over 500, or 7% during the same period. The decrease in household size is consistent with national trends and reflects a number of factors, including: a trend toward smaller families; an increase in single parent households which reflects the increasing divorce rate; and an increase in independent living by the elderly. Comparatively, while DeKalb County had a household size of 2.62 the State had an average of 2.65.

**Table 2.4 – Historic Household Trends, City of Decatur 1980-2000**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>
Households	7,529	7,573	7,617	7,834	8,051
Avg. HH Size	2.37	2.29	2.21	2.17	2.13

Source: Georgia DCA

Forecasts provided by the ARC call for an increase of households by 32%, reflecting the anticipated increases in total population. Household size is anticipated to continue declining by 4%. This size is consistent with the type of residential housing policy encouraged by the City, as high and medium density dwellings are more compatible with smaller family sizes.

**Table 2.5 – Forecast Households, City of Decatur 2005-2025**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>
Households	8,330	8,542	9,271	10,000	11,004
Avg. HH Size	2.11	2.09	2.07	2.04	2.03

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission  
City of Decatur

### Age Distribution

In general, Decatur is shifting towards a distinctly middle-aged population. Over the last twenty years, the number of persons in age groups 0-34 has decreased, while the number of persons aged 35-54 have increased (see Table 2.6). The median age in Decatur for 2000 was 36, compared to 32.5 for DeKalb County and 33.4 for the State of Georgia.

Decatur also has a larger share of seniors than the County or the State. Persons aged 65 and older accounted for 13.3% of the population in the City compared to 8% in DeKalb and 9.6% in Georgia.

These figures, along with average household size, support the conclusion that families in Decatur tend to consist of older parents aged 35-44 with few children. This mimics national trends of people in general waiting longer to start families and subsequently having fewer children. The high property values and lack of starter homes in Decatur tend to discourage younger and larger families as well.

Table 2.6 – Historic Population Trends by Age, City of Decatur 1980-2000

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Ages 0 - 4	1,079	1,144	1,196	1,125	1,053
Ages 5 - 14	2,136	2,019	1,879	1,965	2,051
Ages 15 - 24	3,506	2,859	2,243	2,210	2,177
Ages 25 - 34	3,594	3,574	3,552	3,505	3,457
Ages 35 - 44	1,721	2,395	3,020	3,140	3,260
Ages 45 - 54	1,559	1,519	1,495	2,013	2,530
Ages 55 - 64	1,671	1,447	1,238	1,218	1,198
Ages 65 +	3,138	2,913	2,713	2,567	2,421
<b>Totals</b>	<b>18,404</b>	<b>17,870</b>	<b>17,336</b>	<b>17,742</b>	<b>18,147</b>

Source: U.S. Census  
Atlanta Regional Commission  
Georgia DCA  
City of Decatur

Forecasts for the City project a continued decrease in children and young adults aged 0-24, with a significant increase in adults aged 34-54. These trends are

consistent with the decrease in household and family size forecast by the ARC and the residential policies encouraged by the City. The senior population aged 65 and older is anticipated to remain fairly stable.

Table 2.7 – Forecast of Age Distribution, City of Decatur 2005-2025

Year	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Ages 0 - 4	1,050	1,047	1,044	1,041	1,038
Ages 5 - 14	2,036	2,021	2,007	1,992	1,978
Ages 15 - 24	1,965	1,753	1,582	1,411	1,274
Ages 25 - 34	3,424	3,391	3,358	3,325	3,293
Ages 35 - 44	3,940	4,620	5,583	6,547	7,912
Ages 45 - 54	2,942	3,354	3,900	4,446	5,170
Ages 55 - 64	1,111	1,023	949	874	811
Ages 65 +	2,274	2,127	1,998	1,868	1,755

Source: Georgia DCA  
City of Decatur

### Racial Composition

Decatur's population is fairly diverse. Almost two-thirds of the population is white with about one-third African-American. Hispanics account for approximately 2% of the City's population, as do Asian Americans. Compared with the 2000 U.S. Census figures for Decatur, DeKalb County and Georgia, the County has a considerably larger share of African-American and Hispanic populations. The City's racial composition closely matches that of the State, with the exception of the Hispanic population.

Looking towards future trends, it is anticipated that racial composition will remain fairly stable throughout the twenty-year planning period. It was identified through the public involvement process that diversity is a priority for Decatur residents. The City intends to continue, to enhance, and to adopt policies that encourage a mix of ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds.

Table 2.8 – Total Population by Race, City of Decatur

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
White	10,527	10,457	10,386	11,146	11,906	12,626
African-American	7,666	7,191	6,716	6,124	5,532	5,388
Hispanic	196	191	186	245	304	350
Asian/Pacific Islander	82	119	155	230	304	445
Other Races	117	83	48	82	115	138
Total*	18,588	18,040	17,491	17,826	18,161	18,947

Source: U.S. Census  
Georgia DCA  
City of Decatur

\*The total may add up to more than the total population for that year because individuals may report more than one race.

Table 2.9 – Percent of Population by Race 2000,  
Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia

Area	Decatur	DeKalb County	Georgia
White	66%	36%	65%
African-American	31%	54%	29%
Hispanic	2%	8%	5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	4%	2%
Total*	101%	102%	101%

Source: U.S. Census

\* The total may add up to more than 100% of the population because individuals may report more than one race.

## Educational Attainment

As illustrated by Table 2.10, approximately 56% of Decatur's population in 2000 had a Bachelor's degree or higher. This figure is considerably higher than that of the County, the Atlanta MSA or the State for the same year. Decatur also had the lowest percentage of high-school dropouts.

Table 2.10 – Population by Educational Attainment, 2000,  
All Persons, Age 25 and Older –  
Decatur, DeKalb County, Atlanta MSA, and Georgia Comparison

Area	Decatur		DeKalb County		Atlanta MSA		Georgia	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
No H.S. Diploma	1,584	12.2	64,260	14.9	421,317	16	1,111,349	21.4
High School Diploma	1,660	12.8	87,359	20.3	641,817	24.4	1,486,006	28.7
Some College	1,979	15.2	96,268	22.4	574,165	21.8	1,058,692	20.4
Associate Degree	491	3.8	26,005	6	150,338	5.7	269,740	5.2
Bachelor's Degree	3,757	28.9	97,769	22.7	568,478	21.6	829,873	16
Graduate Degree	3,509	27.0	58,320	13.6	274,683	10.4	430,305	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,980</b>		<b>429,981</b>		<b>2,630,798</b>		<b>5,185,965</b>	

Source: U.S. Census

Considering the figures listed in Table 2.11, there has been a significant shift towards a more educated population. The percentage of those individuals with less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education has decreased considerably since 1980. The percentage of the population holding Bachelor's or graduate degree has doubled.

Table 2.11 – Years of School Completed All Persons, Age 25 and Older,  
City of Decatur

Year	1980		1990		2000	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Less than 9th Grade	1,832	15.7	957	8.0	559	4.3
9th to 12th Grade (No Diploma)	2,038	17.4	1,510	12.6	1,025	7.9
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	2,510	21.5	2,279	19.0	1,660	12.8
Some College (No Degree)	2,069	17.7	1,964	16.4	1,979	15.2
Associate Degree	NA	NA	429	3.6	491	3.8
Bachelor's Degree	1,467	12.6	2,660	22.2	3,757	28.9
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,767	15.1	2,201	18.3	3,509	27.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,683</b>		<b>12,000</b>		<b>12,980</b>	

Source: U.S. Census  
Georgia DCA

Table 2.12 details the performance characteristics for Decatur High School students for the years 2000-2004. Decatur High School students have outperformed the State's average for SAT scores by at least 80 points for the last three years. The school consistently has a high percentage of seniors continuing onto post-secondary education.

Table 2.12 – Decatur Student Performance Characteristics

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Dropout Rate	4.8	3.2	5.9	1.4	****
Average SAT Score	1041	1047	1066	1084	1069
% Continuing Post-Secondary Education	86%	89%	85%	73%	86%

Source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement  
Georgia Department of Education  
City Schools of Decatur

\*\*\*\*not available at the time of publication

## Income

In 2000, Decatur's average household income was higher than the State's by almost 20%. Per capita income was approximately 29% higher. Looking at other economic indicators, Decatur had a lower percentage of families below the poverty level (7%) compared with the State (10%). It is expected that the higher levels of income and lower percentage of families living in poverty are related to the higher levels of educational attainment in the City.

Table 2.13 – Income Comparison, City of Decatur & State of Georgia

Area	City of Decatur		State of Georgia	
	Per Capita Income	Avg. HH Income	Per Capita Income	Avg. HH Income
1980	7,087	N/A	N/A	N/A
1985	11,581	N/A	N/A	N/A
1990	16,075	35,558	13,631	36,810
1995	22,719	50,332	17,393	46,718
2000	29,363	67,678	21,154	56,625

Source: Georgia DCA

Table 2.14 details the distribution of households by income group for the year 2000. From this detail, the median household income can be calculated. Median household income is often more representative than average household income due to a mean's sensitivity to extremes. Median household income for the City in 2000 was \$47,395. While the City had a high percentage of households earning \$75,000-\$99,000, it also had a large percentage of households in the income groups "Less than \$10,000" and "\$20,000-\$29,000." This may be attributable to household size, the number of elderly residents in Decatur, and the percentage of the population in the City's public housing community.



Table 2.14 –2000 Distribution of Households by Income Grouping,  
City of Decatur

Income Group	Households	
	Count	%
Less than \$10,000	838	10.5
\$10,000 - \$14,999	366	4.6
\$15,000 - \$19,999	448	5.6
\$20,000 - \$29,999	835	10.4
\$30,000 - \$34,999	456	5.7
\$35,000 - \$39,999	445	5.6
\$40,000 - \$49,999	743	9.3
\$50,000 - \$59,999	724	9.0
\$60,000 - \$74,999	688	8.6
\$75,000 - \$99,999	957	12.0
\$100,000 - \$124,999	549	6.9
\$125,000 - \$149,999	402	5.0
\$150,000 and above	554	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>8005</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Georgia DCA

## Assessment of Current and Future Conditions

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 the City the unique opportunity to step back and redefine its future with some careful and thoughtful planning. Its 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 is the start of these plans coming into fruition. The City will continue to grow at a faster rate, but growth is

anticipated to be well managed within clearly defined areas and corridors.

With any successful city, as property values and the quality of services increase, so does 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. Looking at the distribution of incomes, it is apparent that strategies must be put in place to ensure housing options for those who earn less than \$30,000. Located throughout the elements of this plan are strategies to encourage a diversity of ethnic and economic backgrounds including those to provide a variety of housing options, promote a mix of businesses, and encourage more diversity at community events.