

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

In order to provide services in the most efficient and effective ways, the City of Decatur maintains agreements with several different governmental and non-governmental entities. Effective ongoing coordination with these entities ensures maximum efficiency and quality of services for residents and businesses in Decatur. For these reasons, the comprehensive planning process includes intergovernmental coordination as an element for inventory and assessment.

This element provides local governments with the opportunity to inventory and to assess the adequacy and suitability of existing coordination for the current and future needs of Decatur. The Intergovernmental Coordination Element of the Decatur Comprehensive Plan consists of three (3) sections: the inventory of existing conditions, the assessment of current and future needs, and the intergovernmental coordination community vision and goals.

Inventory

Entities

The City of Decatur coordinates with several different local governments, governmental agencies, and private entities. In accordance with the Minimum Standards and Procedures for Comprehensive Planning, each entity that concerns the City of Decatur is included in this section. Each entity is described in terms of the existing coordination mechanisms, the parties or offices within the local government with primary responsibility for coordination, and the adequacy of the coordination mechanism.

Adjacent Local Governments

City of Atlanta

The City of Atlanta abuts the City of Decatur at southwestern and southern boundaries. Since part of the City of Atlanta is located in DeKalb County, the City of Atlanta is included in the DeKalb County Service Delivery Strategy. For this reason, the City of Decatur's coordination with the City of Atlanta is formally based on a Service Delivery Strategy. The Service Delivery Strategy must be updated at the same time that the community's plan is updated. However, no services are exchanged between the two governments. In addition, no formal agreements exist between the two governments. Coordination on current issues or concerns is handled on an as needed basis through City of Decatur staff.

DeKalb County

The City of Decatur's coordination with DeKalb County is based on a Service Delivery Strategy. Current services are listed in the State Programs and Activities section of this element. The City of Decatur maintains the 1999 Service Delivery Strategy with DeKalb County and is in the process of updating the document in 2005. No other formal coordination mechanisms exist.

School Boards

City Schools of Decatur, Board of Education

Regarding the coordination mechanism for the City of Decatur and the City Schools of Decatur (CSD), the City of Decatur maintains a relationship with the School Board through mutual agreements between the City Manager and the School Superintendent as well as the City Commission and the Decatur School Board. The City Manager and the School Superintendent have agreed to meet at least every other month to discuss current issues. Starting in 2003, the School Board and the City Commission have had a policy to hold a joint meeting annually to provide structured opportunities for general coordination. There have been two (2) annual joint meetings since 2003.

Development Authorities

Downtown Decatur Development Authority/

Citywide Decatur Development Authority

The Decatur Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was established in 1982 through State legislation. The creation of the DDA board was one of the first priorities recommended by the Decatur Town Center Plan that was adopted by the Decatur City Commission in 1982. The Downtown Development Authority focuses on the historic commercial downtown central business district and works to market a positive image for the city. The mission of DDA is to assure the long-term economic stability of downtown Decatur by maintaining the small town character of the district and supporting values that assure Decatur is a great place to live, work, play, invest and do business. Coordination is conducted by the Assistant City Manager for Community & Economic Development.

The Citywide Decatur Development Authority was also established by State legislation. The Citywide Development Authority was established in order to build on the success of the Downtown Development Authority. It is empowered to work with neighborhood business districts and other commercial zoning districts in the city to promote business and identify opportunities for business. The City of Decatur provides direct staff assistance to the DDA.

Decatur Housing Authority

The Decatur Housing Authority (DHA) manages public housing in the City of Decatur. Activities of the DHA are summarized in the housing element of the comprehensive plan. The DHA is an independent housing agency, having separated from the DeKalb Housing Authority in 2003 so that both agencies could operate more effectively.

The Decatur Housing Authority is governed by a six (6) member board. Five (5) members are appointed to a five (5) year term each and one (1) member is appointed to a one (1) year term. The Authority does not receive funding from

the City of Decatur. Funding sources include rent from residents of public housing, grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and revenues from DHA's programs and activities.

Though the City does not provide funding for the DHA, appointments to the Board are made by the Mayor of Decatur. Coordination between the City of Decatur and the DHA is provided through the Director of the DHA and the Decatur City Commission.

Other Units of Local Government and Utility Companies

Utility Companies

The City of Decatur maintains franchise agreements with a number of utility companies including Atlanta Gas Light Company (natural gas), Bell South (telephone), Georgia Power Company (electricity), and Comcast (cable television). Coordination is conducted through the City Manager on an as needed basis.

Other Organizations (Regional and State)

Atlanta Regional Commission

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the 10-county metro Atlanta area including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties, as well as the City of Atlanta. Though the City of Decatur utilizes the ARC directly, the City is officially represented at the ARC by DeKalb County.

The ARC is also the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and is responsible for programming and prioritizing transportation projects. In its role as the MPO, the Atlanta Regional Commission administers a program known as the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI). Established in 1999, the LCI Program provides transportation funds to local ARC communities improving mobility and enhancing livability. The fundamental concepts of the program include connecting homes, shops and offices, enhancing streetscapes and sidewalks, emphasizing pedestrian amenities, improving access to transit and other transportation options, and expanding housing options.

The City of Decatur benefited from the LCI Program in 2002 when it received a grant to develop a comprehensive development strategy and master plan around the Avondale MARTA station. The Decatur Avondale Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) is a plan that builds upon the success of the City's ongoing revitalization efforts. The City used this chance to further define the quality and character of its community while creating a new neighborhood centered around the Avondale MARTA station. The LCI program has provided multi-million dollar grants for capital improvements at the Decatur MARTA Station and the Avondale Station.

Georgia Department of Transportation

The Georgia Department of Transportation is responsible for the operation of the state and federal highway system in Georgia. Portions of the following state and federal highways run through the City of Decatur: State Route 8 (U.S. Route 78 and U.S. Route 29) Scott Boulevard, State Route 155 (U.S. Route 23) Clairemont Avenue-Commerce Drive-South Candler Street), and State Route 10 (U.S. Route 278) East Lake Drive-East and West College Avenue.

The Georgia Department of Transportation provides funding for local road improvement projects. The City of Decatur coordinates with the Georgia Department of Transportation on these routes and would be required to work closely with the Department if a future transportation planning project were initiated.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has helped the City complete several streetscapes and pedestrian improvements through Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding.

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was created in 1977 to serve as an advocate for local governments. The City of Decatur benefits from the programs that the DCA provides to local governments including comprehensive planning guidance, dissemination of building codes, solid waste reduction efforts, and technical assistance. In addition, the DCA operates a host of state and federal grant programs and serves as the state's lead agency in housing finance and development.

DeKalb Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber promotes businesses in DeKalb County and administers economic development initiatives of its members. There is minimal collaboration or coordination with the City of Decatur or the Decatur Development Authority.

Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA)

MARTA provides rail, bus, and paratransit service in the City of Decatur. In addition to the countywide sales tax which partially supports MARTA, the City has formal agreements regulating the use of the pedestrian mall at the Decatur Station and local roads. Coordination between the City of Decatur and MARTA is conducted on an as needed basis by the municipal staff member associated with any given issue or project. Recent examples of successful coordination between the City and its departments and MARTA include the successful relocation of the MARTA bus area from Church Street to Swanton Place and the upcoming redevelopment of the MARTA rail station entrance on Church Street.

State Programs and Activities

Service Delivery Strategy

Georgia cities maintain an agreement known as a service delivery strategy to maintain legal, administrative, and cooperative agreements with the County to which it belongs. The City of Decatur agreed to the present service delivery strategy which was authorized in August 1999. Other parties in this service delivery strategy include DeKalb County, the Decatur Downtown Development Authority, City of Atlanta, City of Avondale Estates, City of Chamblee, City of Clarkston, City of Doraville, City of Lithonia, City of Pine Lake, City of Stone Mountain, Decatur-DeKalb Housing Authority, and the DeKalb Development Authority.

The City of Decatur and DeKalb County provide services to residents and businesses in Decatur. The following table provides a list of the services provided by DeKalb County in the left column and the exact language of the Service Delivery Strategy in the right column.

Table 7.1 – Services Provided by DeKalb County in Decatur

Government Service	The Agreement for Delivery of Service
Elections	Provided by Intergovernmental Agreement with DeKalb County and partially provided by Decatur
Sheriff/Jail and Evictions	Provided by DeKalb County
Emergency Medical Service	Provided by DeKalb County
Emergency Management	Provided jointly by DeKalb County and the City of Decatur and by DeKalb County independently
Community Development Block Grant Program	Provided jointly by DeKalb County and the City of Decatur
Water Treatment and Water Distribution/ Wastewater Collection and Treatment	Provided by DeKalb County as an enterprise fund paid by user fees. There are no fee differentials between customers living in incorporated cities and customers in unincorporated DeKalb County.
Libraries	Provided by Intergovernmental Agreement with DeKalb County
Storm Water Management	Provided jointly by DeKalb County and the City of Decatur
Traffic Engineering	Provided by DeKalb County

Source: Service Delivery Strategy

Like other municipalities in Georgia, the City of Decatur maintains relationships with neighbor jurisdictions and other municipalities to provide emergency services for extraordinary events. This cooperation is known as “reciprocal

emergency service.” Such agreements have been established by the City Commission and administered through the Decatur Fire and Police Departments.

In addition, a significant part of the existing service delivery strategy is the Summary of Land Use Agreements. The document includes several agreements between DeKalb County and its municipalities including the following:

- 1) A statement of understanding that there are no “incompatibilities or conflicts between the land use plans of local governments identified in the process of developing the 1999 service delivery strategy.”
- 2) For the “process that will be used to resolve disputes when a county disagrees with the proposed land use classification(s) for areas to be annexed into a city, the present Service Delivery Strategy states the following:

“Prior to initiating any formal annexation activities that would involve land use or zoning classification changes, the City of Decatur will notify the County and all contiguous property owners of the proposed annexation and of the schedule for public hearings. The County may review and provide comments and must raise any bona fide land use classification objections at this time. If the County does not object, the City may proceed with the annexation. If the County does not object, the City may proceed with the annexation. If the County does object, the City and County agree to either (a) implement the County’s conditions and remove the objection; (b) stop the annexation; or (c) initiate a 30-day negotiation period. If the City proceeds with the annexation, a vote by the County on whether or not to authorize the annexation (pursuant to O.C.G.A. Section 36-36-70) constitutes final resolution, provided however that the County cannot refuse to authorize an annexation due to a bona fide land use classification objection if the objection was resolved or not already raised in accordance with these procedures.”

Due to changes in state law, this must be amended in the new Service Delivery Strategy.

- 3) For policies and/or processes established by local governments to ensure that new extraterritorial water and sewer service will be consistent with all

applicable land use plans and ordinances, the Service Delivery Strategy states the following:

“The County provides water and sewer service in the entire County and therefore ensures that all service is consistent with all applicable land use plans and ordinances.”

Service Delivery Strategy Update

The Service Delivery Strategy must be updated concurrent with the comprehensive plan update. As of October 2005, the City and the County have agreed to extend the existing Service Delivery Strategy agreement for a period of one year. By October 31, 2006 discussions and negotiations between the City and the County for the update will conclude. All parties agree that pending issues will be resolved by the established deadline.

Georgia's Greenspace Program

The following section provides information about the City's greenspace activities and participation in the State of Georgia's Greenspace Program. In Decatur, the Greenspace Commission is an advisory and advocacy group for greenspace protection and enhancement in the city. The Commission is responsible for developing and implementing a greenspace preservation strategy for the city, advising the City Commission on greenspace-related issues, and administering the State's Greenspace Program locally.

With the exception of minor pending standard administrative activities, the City has completed the program in accordance with state procedures. The City of Decatur elected to use the entire \$187,047 program land protection funds for three (3) land acquisitions and one (1) conservation easement.

The Greenspace Commission is staffed by the Planning Services Officer of the City of Decatur. The Planning Services Officer is the official point of coordination between the Greenspace Commission and the City of Decatur.

Water Planning Districts

Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District

As a municipality of DeKalb County, the City of Decatur is part of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District (MNGWPD). The MNGWPD was created by state law on April 5, 2001. The general purposes of the District are to establish policy, create plans, and promote intergovernmental coordination for all water issues in a 16-county area including Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Forsyth, Gwinnett, Hall, Henry, Paulding, Rockdale and Walton Counties.

It is the primary purpose of the District to develop regional and watershed-specific plans for storm-water management, wastewater treatment, water supply, water conservation, and the general protection of water quality. Responsibility for implementation will be by local governments in the district. Through a two-year planning effort, the Districts have developed a District-wide Watershed Management Plan to address the Atlanta Region's stormwater management issues. The City of Decatur, as well as other jurisdictions in the 16-county district will be responsible for implementing the provisions of the Watershed Management Plan.

The Watershed Management Plan is designed to address all aspects of stormwater management including water quality, water quantity, and maintenance issues. Each local government is required to develop and implement its own storm water management program which should be coordinated with the DeKalb County government. Aspects of the storm water management program include adoption of model ordinances, operation and maintenance requirements, total maximum daily load (TMDL) requirements, enforcement of associated State programs and requirements, rehabilitation efforts in impaired watersheds, land use planning provisions, and public education. In 2004, the City of Decatur completed the Storm Water Master Plan. The Stormwater Master Plan includes an inventory of the stormwater system and an assessment of the condition of the system. The City will utilize the plan to improve maintenance and upgrade operations and prioritize capital improvements.

Assessment of Current and Future Needs

As a relatively small municipality, the relationships and coordination described in the inventory are important for service delivery. The City of Decatur finds that existing mechanisms and agreements are generally adequate for each of the entities and programs/requirements in the inventory. However, based on the inventory provided in this section, the assessment of intergovernmental coordination has resulted in the following findings.

Regarding a specific issue with DeKalb County, the City would like to negotiate with DeKalb County on the definition of a sewer tap in regard to high-density residential development.

Regarding other governments, the inventory of coordination mechanisms did not result in new issues regarding growth and development in nearby municipalities.

Regarding land use issues, no specific land use conflicts or lack of information about DeKalb County or City of Atlanta land use were identified. As stated previously, the City of Decatur has acknowledged that minor changes to the Summary of Land Use Agreements will be necessary to reflect changes in state legislation since 1999. The City will have the opportunity to update the

Summary of Land Use Agreements during the 2005 Service Delivery Strategy update process.

Regarding services to residents and businesses, the City of Decatur will continue to work with DeKalb County to obtain a satisfactory delivery of services so that no service redundancy appears to exist.

Regarding other plan elements, no other specific problems or needs were identified in any of the comprehensive plan sections that would benefit from improved or greater intergovernmental coordination.

The intergovernmental coordination element concludes with a community vision and a set of goals. These items reflect the inventory for intergovernmental coordination and the findings of the assessment.

Intergovernmental Coordination Community Vision and Goals

Community Vision for Intergovernmental Coordination

The City of Decatur vision for intergovernmental coordination reflects the need for strong and sound relationships and the highest level of coordination with DeKalb County, the City of Decatur Schools, and other governmental entities, and agencies. The vision recognizes relationships between the City of Decatur and other entities should maximize services to residences and businesses and minimize inefficiency and redundancy.

Goals for Intergovernmental Coordination

- Update the Service Delivery Strategy and monitor the relationships within the agreement during its five-year period.
- Resolve sewer service tap fee disagreements with DeKalb County in a way that is favorable for high-density residential development.
- Maintain quality services for residents and businesses through effective intergovernmental coordination with other governmental entities and agencies in the area.