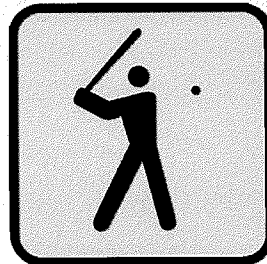




# Section 1

## Introduction



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Located six miles east of downtown Atlanta, the City of Decatur, Georgia maintains a highly desirable small town appeal within a much larger urban setting. Its success is attributable to the ability of residents to move freely around the city with all the necessary support amenities, such as schools, parks, shopping and restaurants, found within a four square mile area.

Home to Agnes Scott College and Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur provides a broad range of cultural and recreational opportunities. Residents of the city also enjoy accessibility to downtown Atlanta and other communities in the region via the MARTA commuter rail system, which has a terminal in the Decatur downtown business district.

The City of Decatur's history dates back to 1823 when it was founded at the crossroads of two Native American trails. Decatur is the county seat of DeKalb and is the second oldest municipality in the Atlanta metropolitan region. Named after United States naval hero Stephen Decatur, the city contains a historic cemetery and many structures that remind residents and visitors of an era long past.

While accessibility and proximity to a wide diversity of cultural and recreational activities have been contributors to the popularity of the Decatur community, the highly urbanized setting has also produced some negative effects. One has been the depletion of developable land within the city limits. Existing parks and school campuses represent some of the only remaining undeveloped open space within the community, limiting the ability of the city to expand recreation opportunities.

Within the city there are many recreation providers, including the Decatur Recreation Department, the City Schools of Decatur, Decatur-DeKalb YMCA, Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club, Columbia Theological Seminary, United Methodist Children's Home and Agnes Scott College. Each of these organizations provides varying levels of service from team sports to recreation centers and athletic fields that are available for use by students, members and outside groups. The limitations presented by a lack of open space around the city have placed hardships on many of the recreation providers to adequately meet the needs of existing programs. Furthermore, program expansion has been limited by the lack of available facilities.

Recognizing the hardships presented by the shortage of open space and facilities, several recreation providers, institutions and service agencies formed a steering committee to guide the development of a community-wide athletic facilities master plan. The purpose of the master plan was to "address the needs of the community at-large" by identifying opportunities for joint use of existing facilities and joint development of new facilities.

In the summer of 2001, a request for proposal was issued by the City of Decatur to identify consulting firms that could aid in the development of this citywide athletic facilities master plan. In the early fall, Lose & Associates, a landscape architecture and land planning firm, was selected based on their extensive background in athletic and recreation planning.

Guided by the partners of the athletic facilities master plan, the Lose & Associates team set a five month schedule for plan development, which included interviews with partners and interested citizens, a steering committee workshop, site-based assessments and open public meetings. Review of existing planning documents and master plans was also completed to develop an understanding of the community and provide insight into the goals and objectives of the various organizations involved in the master plan.

The following represents a summary of findings and input received through the master planning process as well as a parks and athletic facilities inventory, analysis and recommendations to guide the community over the next ten years. This report is intended to provide guidance and implementation strategies to help achieve the needed, identified improvements in Decatur's recreation opportunities, thereby creating a better community in which to live, work and play.