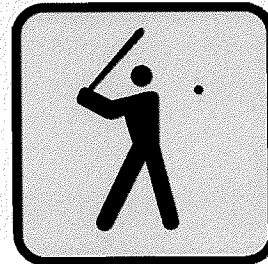




# Section 5

## Facility Assessments and Recommendations



# Facility Assessments and Recommendations

The Decatur Athletic Facilities Master Plan was initiated to provide a thorough inventory and analysis of the existing athletic facilities in the community. The involvement of public and private organizations was intended to identify opportunities where the community could benefit by shared use and development. As part of the master plan process, the planning team conducted site visits to facilities throughout the city, both public and private. These included city parks and facilities, City Schools of Decatur, Agnes Scott College, Columbia Theological Seminary, United Methodist Children's Home, Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club, Decatur-DeKalb YMCA and various churches and private schools around the community.

Site visits provided an opportunity to inventory the amenities that each organization possesses and also allowed the planning team to assess opportunities for additions and expansions. During each inventory, assessments were made regarding the age, condition, safety and accessibility of facilities.

One method used to evaluate the community's level of recreation opportunities was comparison with national standards. In 1995, the City of Decatur Comprehensive Master Plan used national standards to assess the needs of Decatur citizens for parks and recreation facilities. That assessment concluded that the only shortage was in available park acreage.

National standards were established by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) in the Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines manual written in 1995. These standards, originally developed in 1983, were meant to serve as a base line for communities to follow when determining needed park facilities. Recreation trends vary throughout the country, requiring individual communities to determine what standards best fit their needs.

As mentioned, the NRPA has developed a minimum standard to follow when considering an adequate number of dedicated parklands. Guidelines suggest that "a park system at a minimum, be composed of a 'core' system of parklands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population." The type of parks that can be included to meet open space standards can be a combination of the following classifications as determined by the NRPA:

- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- School Park
- Community Park
- Regional Park
- Special Use Park
- Private Park/Recreation Facility
- Natural Resource Area/Preserve
- Greenway

Critical to any park system is the provision of four general categories of parks: mini, neighborhood, community and regional. The existence of additional park types separates the average from the above-average systems.

The main characteristics that differentiate one type of park from another include the acreage, the service area, the type of facilities found within the park and how users access the park. The following gives a description of the different types of parks common to a system.

### **Mini Parks**

A common type of park found within a system is a mini park. The mini park is characterized by five acres or less of land developed for recreation. It is designed primarily to attract residents living within a quarter of a mile of the park. The residents served by a mini park are one thousand for every .25 to .5 acres. Because of the close proximity to the user group, there is usually no designated parking for vehicles.

The size of the mini park limits the facilities and programs that can be included. The uses vary and depend heavily upon the residents it will be serving. For example, a mini park located near housing designed for the elderly may contain several benches, walking paths, a small water feature and landscaping that is attractive to small wildlife. A mini park located in a neighborhood with young families would contain a playground with a picnic shelter and benches. A mini park is not developed to handle league games or community-wide events, regardless of the facilities included in the design.

#### **Mini Park Prototype**

**Average Size:** 1/3-5 acres (target size is 3 acres)

**General Concept:** A playground for children and a passive area for adults.

**General Purpose:** Passive use; serves neighborhoods during daytime hours within a ¼ mile radius.

**Programs:** No organized activities; landscape areas to be used for strolling and playing for all age groups.

#### **Proposed Park Facilities and Land Requirements:**

**Children's Play Area:** 1.75 acres

**Apparatus Area:** 1.75 acres

**Shelter:** 1,000 sq. ft.

**Game/Tennis Courts:** 1-2 acres

**Walking Trails:** Varies

**Landscaping and Fencing:** Varies

**Utilities:** Varies

### **Neighborhood Parks**

A park containing 5-20 acres would be characterized as a neighborhood park. A park of this size would typically have a service area of one half-mile. The concept behind neighborhood parks is to concentrate intense recreation and several facilities into a limited amount of space. Facilities might include playing fields, playgrounds, shelters and restrooms.

Parking is also considered necessary because of the increased area the park serves. The standard is a minimum of seven spaces for the first ten acres and one additional space for each acre thereafter, depending on the intended use of the park. If the park is to serve a higher density of users, as would be the case with a multi-sports complex that includes ballfields and a community center, then parking should be designed to meet the needs of those facilities as well as adhering to local zoning requirements and standards. It is also recommended that one to two acres be dedicated to a neighborhood park for every 1,000 residents-or one neighborhood park for every 10,000 to 20,000 residents.

### **Neighborhood Park Prototype**

**Average Size:** 5-20 acres (target size is 15 acres)

**General Concept:** Active recreational facilities supplemented with passive amenities.

**General Purpose:** Intense active recreation for daytime use within a half-mile radius.

**Programs:** Neighborhood league practice and play; spontaneous play; no large-traffic events should take place on a regular basis.

### **Proposed Park Facilities and Land Requirements:**

**Sports Fields:** 2-5 acres per field

**Soccer Fields:** 2 acres per field

**Football Fields:** 2 acres per field

**Running Track:** 5 acres

**Swimming Pool:** 1-2 acres

**Trail System:** Varies

**Shelters:** 2,000 sq. ft.

**Large Play Area:** 2 acres

**Tennis Complex:** 2 acres

**Game Courts:** 10,000 sq. ft.

**Walking Paths:** ½ to 1 mile

### **School Parks**

School park sites are an excellent way to combine resources and provide accessible recreation amenities to the community. Depending on the school type (i.e. elementary, middle, high school) the size of the park will be dictated by the land available adjacent to the school. Typically, middle and high schools are constructed with youth athletic fields to support team sports. These facilities provide the basis for developing a community park or at the very least, youth athletic fields for recreation programs.

The selection of school sites is determined by the school district and is located according to the county or citywide distribution of students. The school site selection criteria may or may not meet the needs for parkland distribution. When development of school parks is possible, guidelines for neighborhood/community parks should be followed to meet the needs of residents. When joint developments occur, features common to other parks in the city (i.e. signs), should be used to identify the property as a public facility.

### **Community Parks**

Within a parks system, community parks are essential to ensure that all users' needs and interests are included in the recreation facilities. This type of park serves multiple neighborhoods and sometimes several communities. The concept behind a community

park is to offer both active and passive environments and activities. This would include not only athletic fields and playgrounds, but also extensive walking trails, large natural areas and conserved, environmentally-sensitive areas, such as wetlands. A park of this sort usually covers 20-50 acres. The service area depends on the facilities located in the park; however, it should be oriented around a relatively small geographic area. This area can be determined using a fixed percentage of the population, a specific geographic region or a drive-time radius.

The community park typically serves 1,000 residents for every 5-8 acres. Community parks are usually designed to accommodate both day and night use and will serve all age groups. Large facilities, such as a sports complexes or aquatics centers, can be placed within a community park because there is adequate room for the facility itself, as well as support systems such as parking, easy access and large areas for buffering from surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Community Park Prototype**

**Average Size:** 20-75 acres (target 60 acres)

**General Concept:** Combined active and passive recreation facilities in a natural setting with large portions of the park remaining natural.

**General Purpose:** To provide a full range of services to the entire community for both day and night uses.

**Program:** Passive enjoyment of natural areas and environments, including lakes, wooded areas and landscaped areas; sponsoring of league play and large scale tournaments and exhibitions for all age groups.

### **Park Facilities and Land Requirements:**

**Lighted Adult Softball Complex:** 10-15 acres

**Lighted Youth Baseball Complex:** 8-10 acres

**Lighted Tennis Complex:** 2 acres

**Football Field:** 2 acres

**Soccer Complex:** 10-12 acres

**Basketball Courts:** 1-2 acres

**Picnic Area:** 10-15 acres

**Trails:** 1-2 miles

**Volleyball:** 2-4 acres

**Community Center w/Pool:** 2 acres

**Maintenance Area:** 1 acre

**Lake:** 1-4 acres

**Parking:** Varies

### **Regional Parks**

The largest park typically found within a parks system is a regional park. The size of the regional park varies from 50-250 acres, depending on the type and amount of use that will be included, and serves a radius of approximately one hour's drive time. The concept behind a regional park is to provide a large natural area that can be accessed through hiking, horseback riding, bicycling or winding roadway.

Acres is designated as a regional park to maintain a variety of historically significant buildings and sites, wildlife preserves or natural environments in the community,

including forested areas, open meadows, large grassy fields and wetlands. Programming associated with a regional park includes interpretive walks, educational programs and experiment stations. Because of the variety and uniqueness of a regional park, it is difficult to produce a prototypical setup.

### **Special Use Parks**

A park designed with one user or user group in mind is characterized as a special use park. This would include golf courses, botanical gardens, museums and complexes that focus on only one sport. These facilities can vary in size according to demand in the area. However, the more specialized or unique a park is, the greater the service area becomes because of the potential high demand. These types of parks also have the potential to be revenue generators if maintained and operated to fulfill the needs of the users.

Many of the parks found in Decatur could be classified as special use parks because they primarily serve one specific user. The four square mile area of Decatur bares many similarities to a large university campus in that parks are within walking distance to a large portion of city residents. The small land area of the city makes the approach to specialize facilities in specific parks less of a hardship in Decatur than would exist in a community where the land area and drive times are much greater. Parks located far from residential areas creates a greater need to provide a wide diversity of amenity offerings in those parks. In Decatur, this is not as critical due to the close proximity of one park to another.

### **Private Park/Recreation Facility**

The private park and recreation facility, as described by the NRPA, meets one of the two following characteristics:

- "Private Parks, such as swimming pools, tennis courts and party houses, are generally within a residential area developed for the exclusive use of residents and are maintained through a neighborhood association. They are not, however, a complete substitute for public recreation space.
- Private Recreation Facilities that are for-profit enterprises, such as health and fitness clubs, golf courses, water parks, amusement parks and sports facilities."<sup>1</sup>

These facility types can be entirely private or, in many cases, be a joint venture between a public entity and a private organization. Partnerships of this kind allow for the provision of facilities and programs at a reduced cost to the public sector.

### **Natural Resource Area/Preserve**

According to the NRPA, "Natural resource areas are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics/buffering. These lands consist of:

<sup>1</sup> Mertes, James D., Ph.D, CLP and James Hall, CLP, eds. Park, Recreation and Open Space and Greenway Guidelines. The National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, 1995.

- Individual sites exhibiting natural resources.
- Lands that are unsuitable for development but offer natural resource potential. Examples include parcels with steep slopes and natural vegetation, drainage ways and ravines, surface water management areas (man-made ponding areas), and utility easements.
- Protected lands, such as wetlands, lowlands and shorelines along waterways, lakes and ponds."

Acquisition of natural resource and preserve areas serves to enhance the quality of the community by maintaining a portion of its natural amenities.

## Greenways

The value of community greenways is immeasurable. Greenways serve to tie elements of the community such as parks, schools, neighborhoods, shopping centers and natural environments together into one cohesive system while offering safe movement of pedestrians. Typically 10-12 feet in width, greenways are paved trails that enhance the natural environment and provide users with the ability to move freely through those environments with minimal disturbance. Greenway corridors in which trails are located should be no less than 50 feet in width except in neighborhoods, where 25 feet may be acceptable.

When developing a greenway system, it is important to identify corridors that connect elements in the community and incorporate all the characteristics of the natural resource areas. Greenways can be located in a variety of settings and can be utilized for active and passive recreation activities. Julius Fabros, a professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Massachusetts, divides greenways into three categories: ecological, recreational and cultural.

- Ecological greenways are typically located through or along natural environments such as rivers, ridgelines and coastal areas. These greenway trails provide connections to nature, protect and maintain biodiversity, minimize development and provide for wildlife migration across natural and manmade boundaries.
- Recreational greenways link elements through areas of diversity and significant landscapes. These can be located in rural or urban settings and range in size from local trails to international systems.
- Cultural greenway trails connect historically or culturally significant elements. These types of trails include elements for tourism, education, recreation and transportation. Economic benefit can be gained from cultural greenways by connecting housing and neighborhoods with retail businesses, incorporating flood prevention elements and providing infrastructure for commuting, among many other possibilities.

## Facility Assessments

When completing the assessments of the recreation facilities located in the City of Decatur, the planning team not only took into account national standards for dedicated parkland and facilities, but also examined issues related to safety and accessibility. The participation in the master plan by the public school system also dictated the need to address issues related to Title IX, the law mandating equality in sports for males and

females. Assessments were completed at all recreation facilities belonging to the master plan partners as well as at the facilities of organizations who chose to participate in the planning process.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

One of the largest issues facing many public and private organizations is the ability to provide complete accessibility to handicapped citizens. Parks and recreation departments are not exempt from these requirements. Legislation requires provisions for access routes to primary park amenities for those who are physically impaired.

Primary access routes, as described in the Recommendations for Accessibility Guidelines: Recreation Facilities and Outdoor Developed Areas, by the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, are defined in the following manner:

Outdoor recreation access routes are the paths that connect the primary developed spaces and elements that are basic to the recreation experience being offered at the site. For example, the outdoor recreation access routes at a picnic ground are the paths linking the parking area, restrooms, picnic units and water hydrants. While many of these elements—parking area, restroom and water hydrant—are not the primary reason for a person to visit the site, they are the basic developed elements that serve all visitors.

Designers and managers, in consultation with users, must determine which of the developed activities and elements at a recreation site are basic to the recreation experience being offered. Further, they must secure that there is a comprehensive system of outdoor recreation access routes that connect all primary elements and spaces with each other and with accessible parking spaces and facility entrances. This determination should be based on visitor expectations as well as the level of development at the site.

The ADA regulations that govern design standards can be left up to some interpretation where athletic facilities are concerned; however, they are very specific in their requirements of restroom and pathway design. Before renovation of old facilities, or construction of new ones, the City of Decatur should seek the counsel of the city's legal department to interpret laws and develop a standard by which they will begin to create a system that is sensitive to the needs of all users. If one does not already exist, the City should adopt a parking standard for the number of handicap spaces that will be provided in a park. Standards should be based on the size of the park and the number of elements located in the park. This will be especially important as existing parks are renovated and access is improved thereby drawing a greater number of disabled park users.

### **Playground Safety Standards**

Another prominent problem within park systems is the non-compliance of playground equipment to safety standards developed by organizations such as the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and the International Play Equipment Manufacturers' Association (IPEMA). The standards proposed by these organizations are meant to serve as a



guideline to help create atmospheres that are safe and pose a minimal threat of injury. Studies show that the majority of injuries sustained on public playgrounds are to the head as a result of falls from the play structure to the ground. For this reason, consideration has been given as to what the critical fall height would be in which a fatal head injury might occur. Guidelines have been established measuring the impact performance of various materials. As with ADA issues, alternatives should be studied and a standard established for implementation of safe play environments throughout the city.

### **Title IX**

In recent years, school systems in Georgia that receive state funding have been faced with assessing and complying with the federal Title IX law. Although Title IX has been in effect since 1972, the passage of Georgia House Bill 1308 has placed an increased urgency on compliance. In the spring of 1999, House Bill 1308 was put before the Senate and House committees of the State of Georgia. The bill, entitled "Equity in Sports Act," was proposed to establish equality in sports "so as to prohibit discrimination based on gender in elementary and secondary athletic programs." The state established an official stance on sports equality and set penalties for school systems found to be out of compliance, allowing the bill to be adopted by the House and Senate in early March of 2000.

The regulations set forth in House Bill 1308 require that a school system found to be out of compliance must achieve compliance within a specified amount of time. If it is determined the system has failed to take adequate action to rectify the situation, the school system is prohibited from participating in any post-season athletic competitions. Further failure to comply could ultimately result in the loss of state funding to the school system until compliance has been achieved.

Compliance to Title IX is governed by three major categories: 1.) Accommodation of Interests and Abilities, 2.) Athletic Financial Assistance, and 3.) Other Program Areas. The segment of the Title IX law that could potentially be impacted by recommendations contained within this master plan are those contained in the "Other Program Areas." The "Other Program Areas" includes eleven elements which govern Title IX compliance. They are as follows:

1. Equipment and supplies
2. Scheduling of games and practice times
3. Travel and per diem allowances
4. Opportunity to receive academic tutoring
5. Opportunity to receive coaching, assignment and compensation
6. Locker rooms, practice and competitive facilities
7. Medical and training facilities and services
8. Housing and dining facilities and services
9. Publicity
10. Support services
11. Recruitment of student athletes

Impacts to compliance with Title IX will be affected as the city looks at improving its facility offerings for the school system. The city needs to be cognizant of the potential impacts that will occur as new facilities are built. For example, the new master plan for

the Decatur High School campus should be sure to incorporate all the necessary support amenities such as locker, weight training and medical training rooms equally for boys and girls athletic teams. The most cost efficient way to provide many of these facilities is through shared use.

When considering shared use, access to those facilities should be scheduled equally, taking into consideration preferred times for use. When teams are expected to travel off campus to athletic facilities, those facilities and methods of transportation to those facilities should be equivalent. The assessment of existing facilities has taken into account existing Title IX infractions as well as potential infractions with new development.

### **City of Decatur Park Standards**

The City of Decatur is unique in that its total land area covers only four square miles making many parks, schools and city services walkable for most citizens. Located within that area are 14 city parks, 10 elementary schools, one middle school and a high school. Also located within the city limits are Agnes Scott College, Columbia Theological Seminary, the Decatur-DeKalb YMCA, the Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club and several private swim, exercise and fitness centers. Located just outside the city limits is the United Methodist Children's Home, an organization that fosters troubled families and youths. Many churches are also located within the city limits-providing varying levels of athletic facilities and meeting space.

The high-density development and cost of land in Decatur make the achievement of a typical park system inclusive of mini, neighborhood, community and regional parks very difficult. Limited available land makes the development of new, large parks highly improbable in Decatur. The existence of large college campuses and strategically placed elementary, middle and high schools help to provide some of the open recreation spaces that many communities strive to achieve.

An inventory of existing amenities found at city park and school facilities, shown in **Figure 5.1**, reveals the current condition of the city in comparison to National Recreation and Parks Association standards. As revealed in the 1995 City of Decatur Comprehensive Master Plan, the major deficiency for the park system is in available acreage. According to national standards, with a year 2000 population of 18,147, the City of Decatur should have dedicated park acreage ranging from 114 acres on the low end (6.25 acres/1,000 population) to 191 acres on the high end (10.5 acres/1,000 population).

The existing park acreage is 56.5 acres, a deficiency of 58 to 134 acres depending on the range used. The City of Decatur Strategic Master Plan, completed in July of 2000, identified a total of 128 acres of non-park related open space. This total was derived from open space found around the public schools and other private open recreational areas. The Decatur cemetery adds another 43 acres to this total. While communities typically strive to meet acreage standards within public parks, the close working relationship between public and private agencies, organizations and institutions in the community provide many spaces for residents outside of public park spaces.



**NRPA Standards for Park Facilities (Based on Estimated Decatur Service Area Populations)**

	NRPA Recommendations	Existing Number of Park Facilities	2000 Facility Need based on a pop. of 18,147	2005 Facility Need based on a pop. of 19,351	2010 Facility Need based on a pop. of 20,555
Acreage	10.5/1000	56.5	190.5	203.1855	215.8275
Outdoor Basketball	1/5,000	6	3.6	3.9	4.1
Hand Ball	1/20,000	0	0.9	1.0	1.0
Tennis	1/2,000	11	9.1	9.7	10.3
Volleyball	1/5,000	0	3.6	3.9	4.1
Baseball/Softball	1/2,500	4	7.3	7.7	8.2
Football	1/20,000	1	0.9	1.0	1.0
Soccer	1/4,000*	2	4.5	4.8	5.1
Golf Course	1/50,000	0	0.4	0.4	0.4
Golf Driving Range	1/50,000	0	0.4	0.4	0.4
Trail System	1mile/5,000*	0.5	3.6	4	4
Swimming Pool	1/20,000	3	0.9	1.0	1.0
Running Track	1/20,000	0	0.9	1.0	1.0
Playground	1/2,500	15	7.3	7.7	8.2
Gymnasium	1/20,000	3	0.9	1.0	1.0
Community Center	1/50,000	2	0.4	0.4	0.4
Community Room	N/A	7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Indoor Pool	1/50,000	0	0.4	0.4	0.4
Indoor Roller Hockey	1/100,000*	0	0.2	0.2	0.2
Outdoor Roller Hockey	1/25,000*	0	0.7	0.8	0.8
Racquetball	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Inline Skating Court	1/25,000*	0	0.7	0.8	0.8
Picnic Pavilion	1/2,000	6	9.1	9.7	10.3

Figure 5.1

\*Standard developed by Lose & Associates, Inc.

A look at facility deficiencies and surpluses finds deficiencies in volleyball, baseball/softball, soccer, trails, picnic pavilions, an indoor swimming pool and a track. Other deficiencies for less common park elements, such as inline skating courts, roller hockey, handball and golf facilities, also exist. Surpluses in the community are found in the outdoor swimming pools, gymnasiums, tennis courts and community centers. Facilities located at the private recreation providers in the community (Figure 5.2) help to supplement some of the city deficiencies.

Several factors come into play when considering the achievement of national standards and availability of athletic facilities in a community. While comparisons to national standards show several amenity surpluses, the physical accessibility and condition of many facilities render them ineffective for use by the community. For example, a large majority of the playgrounds around Decatur do not offer accessibility to all users. The physical condition of the playgrounds is poor and does not meet accepted safety standards. In addition, playgrounds fail to provide a mix of activities for different age groups.

Private Facility Offerings	Agnes Scott College	Columbia Theological Seminary	United Methodist Children's Home	Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club	Dekalb-Decatur YMCA	Venetian Pool	Church of Decatur Heights	First Christian Church	Decatur First Baptist Church	Saint Thomas More Church	Friends School	Total
Outdoor Basketball											1.0	1.0
Tennis	6.0	3.0										9.0
Baseball/Softball			1.0						1.0			2.0
Soccer	1.0	1.0										2.0
Swimming Pool			1.0			1.0						2.0
Running Track	1.0				1.0							2.0
Playground									1.0		1.0	2.0
Gymnasium	1.0		1.0	1.0	1.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0		8.0
Community Center												0.0
Community Room	Yes			Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes			0.0
Indoor Pool	1.0			1.0	1.0							3.0

Figure 5.2

Another example is the city-owned tennis courts. While NRPA comparisons show a surplus, city tennis courts receive a high number of users between tennis associations and interscholastic teams. This high use could indicate a need for more courts than would be typically recommended for a community. In addition, tennis courts around Decatur remain locked 24 hours a day. Tennis users are required to retrieve a key from Glenlake Park to access any courts around the community. Once finished, the user must lock the gate and return the key to Glenlake. This practice has been implemented to eliminate vandalism of the courts; however, it prevents the convenient use of the courts for residents in the immediate vicinity.

Similar to the high use of tennis courts, is the high use of gymnasium space. Teams are constantly competing for practice time in the existing gymnasiums around the community. While NRPA statistics may suggest a surplus, high use indicates a deficiency.

Amenities provided by the various private organizations around the community help to supplement city deficiencies; however, public access is often on a limited basis according to the predetermined schedules of the users of that particular organization. Examples include the indoor pools located in Decatur. The national standard recommends one indoor pool for every 50,000 residents. Within the city limits of Decatur there are three indoor swimming pools, not including pools located within hotels. The indoor pool located at Agnes Scott College is currently the most accessible pool to city residents who do not pay membership fees. The pool is available on a limited basis dependent on scheduled activities within the facility.

Taking into consideration issues related to accessibility, safety, Title IX, national standards, availability of facilities and information received during the various public input phases of the master plan, the planning team completed assessments of existing facilities found in the community. The following represent assessments, as well as recommendations, for four categories of facilities found in the community. The four categories are:

1. City parks of Decatur
2. Schools of Decatur (public and private)
3. Churches and colleges/universities with athletic/recreation facilities
4. Private recreation providers

### **City Parks of Decatur**

**Figure 5.3** provides a location map of each of the city's 14 parks as well as the Decatur City Cemetery. The parks range in size from less than a half acre up to 17 acres and provide a variety of amenities common to parks including tennis and basketball courts, swimming pools, picnic pavilions, playgrounds, softball/baseball fields and soccer fields. The smaller parks in the system are primarily undeveloped and provide small open nature preserves within the high-density developments of Decatur. The cemetery accounts for an additional 43 acres and is used by many for walking and passive enjoyment of the outdoors. Also found within the city limits of Decatur is Dearborn Park, a DeKalb County park that provides passive recreation amenities. The following are assessments of each park listing size, classification, available amenities and recommendations for improvements.

# City of Decatur, GA Athletic Facilities

## Master Plan

Existing Facilities

Figure 5.3



City of Decatur

 Cemeteries

1. Decatur Cemetery

 City Parks

2. Adair Park

3. Oakhurst Park

4. McKoy Park

5. Parkside Circle

6. Hidden Cove Park

7. Waddell Park

8. Sycamore Park

9. Mead Road Park

10. Oakview Road Park

11. Roy Moss Garden

12. Glenlake Park

13. Scott Park

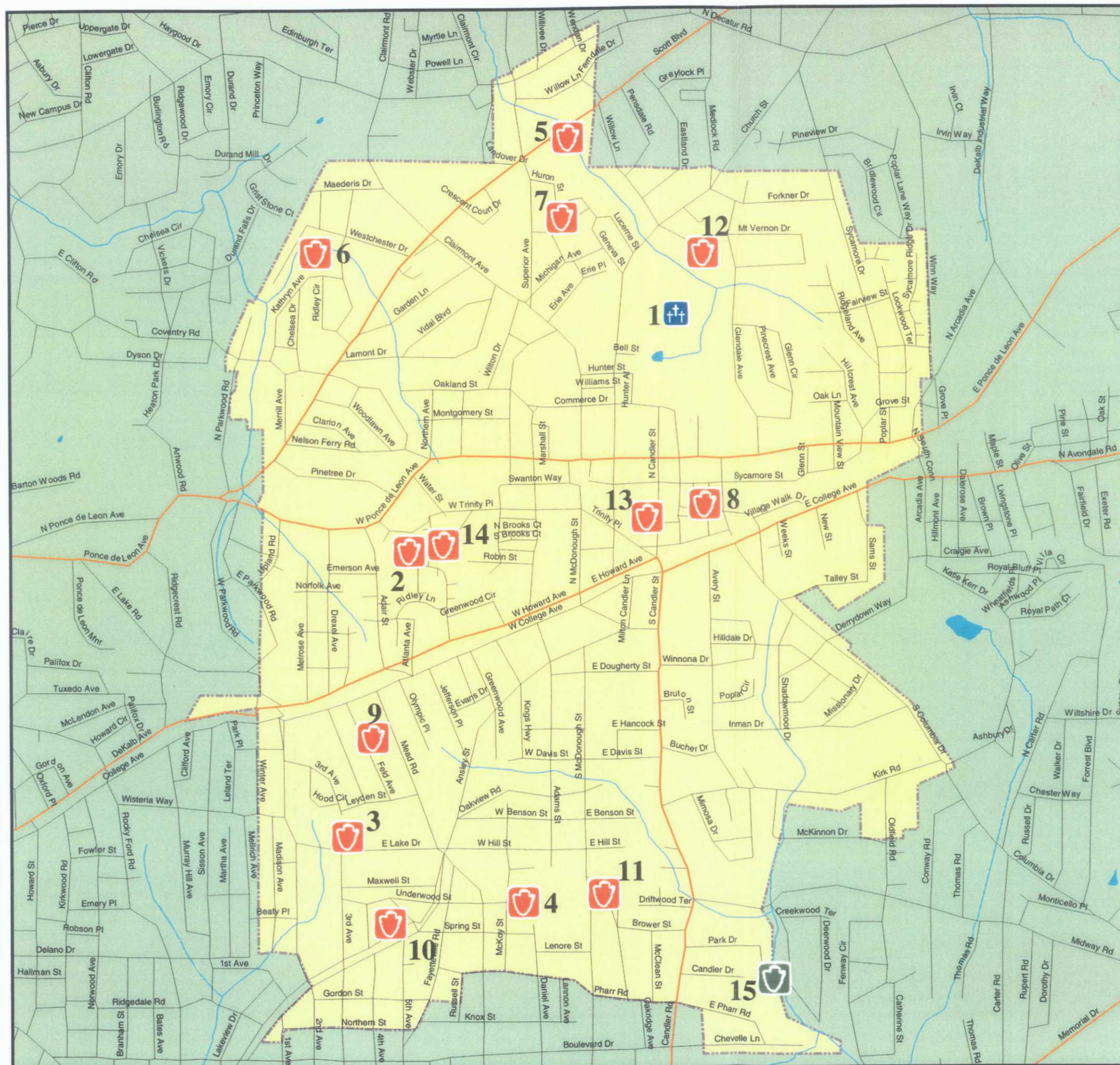
14. Ebster Park

 County Parks

15. Dearborn Park

0 0.5 1 Miles

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## Adair Park

Size: 4 acres  
Classification: Mini Park  
Contents: 1 Playground

### Assessment

This park is located in one of Decatur's historic neighborhoods and is used as a place for local residents to let their dogs run. The park is equipped with waste receptacles and baggie dispensers for residents who choose to bring their dogs to the park.

The playground at this park is constructed of wood and is beginning to rot in some places. A few of the playground structures are set in a base made up of wood chips and mulch. Others have nothing but grass under them, which is not compliant with safety standards.

### Recommendations

Enhancements made, including park amenities and a picnic pavilion, should be compatible to the historic area of this park. Department-wide park signage should be installed as described in the General Recommendations section of this document. The playground should be replaced to meet the abilities of multiple age groups and the regulations set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and safety standards set by the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM). Pedestrian access in the park will be included in these improvements to encourage a walkable community and provide disabled access.

A one-acre area of this park should be fenced to allow for safe dog running. To preserve the historical character of the neighborhood and protect the privacy of the adjacent neighboring property owners, a four foot tall black vinyl-coated fence should be placed no closer than one hundred feet from the property line. The recommended setback will provide a buffer, which should be planted with trees and shrubs to create a pleasant backdrop for both the dog park users and the adjacent property owners.

Although dog waste receptacles and baggie dispensers are already in place at the park, additional dispensers should be added inside the double fenced entry area. Other needs for this dog park include a water fountain for dogs, benches and a message board to post announcements and park rules. Park rules suggested by the Oakhurst Dog Park Committee include no unaccompanied children under the age of 12, all dogs must be licensed and vaccinated, no aggressive dogs and no unattended dogs. Suggested park hours are from sunrise to sunset eliminating the need for lighting and minimizing impact on adjacent properties. An announcement relinquishing responsibility of injuries from the city to the dog owners should also be posted. The Oakhurst Dog Park Committee is currently collecting funding and is interested in working with the city to create an official dog park in the City of Decatur.

## Oakhurst Park

Size:	8 acres
Classification:	Neighborhood Park
Contents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Playground</li> <li>2 Picnic pavilions</li> <li>2 Tennis courts</li> <li>2 Softball fields</li> <li>1 Concessions building with restrooms</li> <li>2 Basketball courts</li> </ul>

### Assessment

Located in the southwest sector of the city, Oakhurst Park serves as one of the city's athletic destination points. The Decatur High School (DHS) and Agnes Scott College softball teams play here, as well as other recreational teams including Little League and soccer. The fields are in good condition, except for the lighting that inadequately illuminates the playing surfaces. There are overgrown trees in the area of the fields that further reduce the efficiency of these light fixtures. The outfield fencing is temporary to allow for the outfields of these two fields to be combined and lined off to serve as a soccer field. This layout increases the wear on the turf and is not properly lit for soccer play. In addition, the field irrigation system is outdated and is often not operational.

The tennis courts here have been recently resurfaced and the lights around the perimeter replaced. The fencing is in good condition. The mature evergreen trees around the perimeter of the courts are problematic because they are hanging into the courts and the falling needles, if not appropriately maintained, can cause the court surface to prematurely deteriorate.

The playground, located behind the concession/restroom building, consists of a play structure constructed of tubular aluminum (typical blue and orange) with a tubular dome climbing structure placed in a wood chip mulch bed. The concession/restroom building is also the storage shed for some of the supplies and equipment that are used by the maintenance staff and serves as a changing room for the high school softball team. All of the concession, cleaning, maintenance equipment and supplies are stored in one room, behind the concession serving window. This combination is not safe and if not corrected, could become a liability for the city.

The two picnic pavilions are in good structural condition, but are in need of aesthetic improvements. There is evidence of rotting wood on the fascia boards and roofing shingles and the concrete floors are in poor condition, the result of poor drainage around the structure. One pavilion located in the park is complete with a stone fireplace. The fireplace is the location of frequent acts of vandalism, which require removal of glass and other debris.

### Recommendations

Oakhurst Park should be dedicated as a softball park for use by high school, college and softball recreational leagues. In order to achieve Title IX compliance, the softball field and all support facilities should be comparable to the baseball facilities at McKoy Park. The current softball field leg lengths are about 172 feet, but regulation size is



between 200 to 210 feet long. The field should be modified to try to extend the length within the space limitations of the park site. The second softball field at this park should also be dedicated for softball play. All fencing needs to be replaced with permanent, quality backstop and outfield fencing. All of the lights and poles should be replaced with safer, more modern fixtures set atop concrete poles. The existing concessions/restroom building should be replaced with a new field house to accommodate the needs of the athletes and spectators, including covered dugouts, bleachers, a press box, scoreboard, a public announcement system, restrooms, concessions and changing rooms. New fields recommended at the United Methodist Children's Home location should allow for the removal of recreation little league play thereby reducing the stress placed on existing turf from overuse.

Other park improvements include renovating existing picnic pavilions and bringing the existing playground up to modern safety standards and regulations set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM). Improvements to the pavilions should include repairs to the structure as well as fixing drainage problems and permanently covering the opening of the stone fireplace. Any trees that are obstructing the lighting fixtures, either on the tennis courts or baseball/soccer fields, should be trimmed back to allow for maximum illumination of the fields or courts. Department-wide park signage should be installed as described in the General Recommendations section of this document. Park amenities, including trash receptacles and benches, should be placed in appropriate areas of the park. Dog waste receptacles should be provided as a sanitary measure. Pedestrian access in the park should be included in the park improvements to encourage a walkable community and provide disabled access.

The high demand for a dog park in this location, directs a recommendation to consider locating dog park amenities in the detention basin found in the park. The basin, which often holds water, does not currently lend itself to this use, but modifications to the outlet drainage structure could eliminate current standing water problems. As with Adair Park, a fenced area should be included. Within the fence should be dog waste receptacles, a dog water fountain, benches and a message board for announcements and park rules.

## McKoy Park

Size:	9 acres
Classification:	Neighborhood Park
Contents:	1 Playground
	1 Outdoor swimming pool with bathhouse
	1 Picnic pavilion
	1 Baseball field
	2 Tennis courts
	1 Basketball court
	1 Walking trail (1,020 linear feet long)
	1 Amphitheater

### Assessment

In the southern half of Decatur, McKoy Park is nestled in a neighborhood setting behind College Heights Elementary School. This park is the location used by the Decatur High School (DHS) baseball team. Other teams from the community, such as adult softball leagues, use the facility when it is available. The dugouts are 3-sided block structures with corrugated steel roofing and chain-link fencing to protect the teams from foul balls.

During the summer months, the field is modified to accommodate softball. This requires maintenance staff to add and remove Bermuda sod depending on the season of play. The field is lit by old fixtures mounted on wooden poles and is irrigated by an underground irrigation system. The fencing around the field is in good condition and provides a distance of 330' in center field and 300' down the foul lines.

The concession building is set at the parking lot level and has a basement that opens up to the field 15' below the parking lot grade. This basement is used for equipment storage.

The picnic pavilion adjacent to the parking lot is heavily used and contains the restroom facilities for the park. This building is in good condition, but aesthetic enhancements are necessary. Behind the pavilion, a modular block retaining wall is being used, but blocks are often vandalized or stolen creating an unnecessary maintenance problem.

The two tennis courts at this park have not been in use for some time and therefore the court surface has deteriorated significantly. In order to use these courts for their intended purpose, much work would be needed to bring them up to regulation. Situated next to the courts is a shade structure, which after years of being exposed to the elements, is beginning to deteriorate.

The basketball court to the rear of the property is heavily used and in good condition. Adjacent to these courts is a small amphitheater used for a variety of educational purposes, mainly by the elementary school located past the outfield fences.

The pool at this facility is maintained by an outside contractor and is in need of renovations. Swimming lessons are given here annually.

The playground at this park consists of two tubular aluminum structures (typical orange and blue) set on chipped wood bases. Although heavily used, this playground does not meet accepted safety standards. There are drainage problems from the playground to the ball field that need to be addressed.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that McKoy Park be dedicated as a year-round baseball field. The field and all support facilities must be comparable to the softball facilities at Oakhurst Park to meet the regulations enforced by Title IX. The need for extensive renovations coupled with a surplus of public pools directs a recommendation to close McKoy Park Pool. Closing the pool should only occur once renovations at the other pools in the community have been completed.

Closing the pool will provide an opportunity to reorganize and expand the parking lot and to develop a field house with concessions building for the baseball field. The new support structure should accommodate the athlete and spectator needs including covered dugouts, bleachers, a press box, scoreboard, a public announcement system, restrooms, concessions and changing rooms. The new structure should replace existing structures currently serving these needs.

The removal of the swimming pool will require the addition of an interactive water feature to be used by area residents and summer camps which frequent the park. Interactive water features are popular alternatives to swimming pools which require staff and expensive operation budgets. The water feature requires no supervisory staff yet provides an interesting feature to the park that allows relief from the summer heat. The feature can be very simple or extremely complex in design depending on the desire of the city and its residents.

Other enhancements at McKoy Park should include redeveloping the playground area to meet the abilities of multiple age groups and the standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act and safety guidelines set by the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM). The drainage problems on the slope down from the playgrounds to the ball field need to be examined and repaired. Some of the natural picnic areas need to be made accessible, and wheelchair access needs improvement throughout the site. Exterior aesthetic improvements to the picnic pavilion should be made and the existing retaining walls should be replaced with a permanent material.

The tennis courts in McKoy Park are not serving a tennis need in their current condition. The high need for skate parks, both inline and skateboarding, could be met with improvements to the surface of the courts. The McKoy tennis courts should be modified to provide a skate park.

Skate Park development is a fast growing trend in the recreation field and provides an individual based recreation activity for users not involved in team sports. The underutilization of the tennis courts in the park provides the perfect opportunity for modified use as a skate park. Skate Park design takes on many levels from very simple flat paved surfaces with prefabricated elements to open bowls with many diverse eleva-

tions and landforms. Elements that may be included in a skate park are a mini ramp, fly box, grind rails, ledges, banks, spines, vertical ramps and pyramids. It will be necessary for the city to determine the level of park they are going to provide for area residents. Lack of involvement in the design process by the primary users could result in the failed success of a new park. The city should seek the help of a professional skate park designer to ensure proper design and construction and the ultimate success of the park. Safety precautions must be made by the city including proper design and equipment, limit of liability signs and park rules signs.

McKoy Park also needs additional lighting, designated and accessible pedestrian access from College Heights Elementary School and improved maintenance of the natural areas. All fencing should be removed from the perimeter of the park. The shade structure should be replaced. Department-wide, park signage should be installed as described in the General Recommendations section of this document. Park amenities including trash receptacles and benches should be placed in appropriate areas of the park. Dog waste receptacles should be provided as a sanitary measure. Pedestrian access in the park should also be included in park improvements. A park master plan should be completed to address the skate park, accessibility, field house and parking needs of the park.

## Glenlake Park

Size:	17 acres
Classification:	Neighborhood Park
Contents:	1 Playground
	1 Outdoor swimming pool with bathhouse
	1 Picnic pavilion
	5 Tennis courts
	1 Soccer field (small size)
	1 Baseball field
	1 Basketball court

### Assessment

Located in northwest Decatur, north of the Decatur cemetery, Glenlake Park holds many highly-used recreation facilities. The outdoor pool is very popular because it is the only pool in Decatur that has a shallow end for young children. Problems associated with the pool include aesthetic and support amenities. The Glenlake bathhouse is in need of extensive renovation. The location of the pool directly on Church Street makes it a very unappealing environment. Parking and circulation is problematic and inadequate for park users at peak use times.

The baseball field was at one time used for competitive play, but because the neighboring residents were often disturbed by the noise of games, this field is no longer in use as a baseball facility. Because this is a fenced-in open site, residents bring their dogs here to run and play.

There is a ten-foot grade change that separates the park. Stairs lead to an open field that is used for soccer. Surrounded by four-foot fencing, this field is not irrigated or properly graded. Both the fencing and the field are in poor condition. Located adjacent to the field, there is a small gravel parking area that is accessible from a street in the adjoining neighborhood. The remaining areas of the park are wooded and undisturbed.

Glenlake Park is also the location of Decatur's largest tennis complex. Five courts complete with a pro shop are located near the pool. The courts were recently resurfaced providing a good playing surface however interviews with recreation staff revealed the courts have had problems in the past with severe settling. Parking during peak use times at the tennis complex and swimming pool prove problematic for visitors and recreation department staff.

A picnic pavilion found in Glenlake Park is in poor condition and in need of renovation. In addition, the proximity of the pavilion to park basketball courts creates problems for visitors. Retaining walls located near the pavilion are also in poor condition and are hazardous to families with small children.

### Recommendations

To best meet the needs of Decatur residents, Glenlake Park needs to have a master plan completed that addresses the following ideas: the outdoor pool that is located at the park's main entry needs to be relocated to the location of the current baseball field in

the park; the current location of the pool deters future enhancements because there is no space to make the necessary improvements; moving the pool to the more open area of the park will allow for a nice, family-oriented facility to be constructed.

The new pool area should include an outdoor swimming pool that is accessible by the disabled with a zero depth entry. The master plan should explore the possibilities of including a separate diving area, a children's pool and an area for therapeutic aquatic exercise. A new bathhouse should be constructed with an entry from inside the pool area and a separate restroom facility for park users. Near the pool area, a playground should be placed that allows children of multiple age groups and abilities to play safely while meeting the standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and safety guidelines set by the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM).

With the removal of the current pool, additional space would be open for two new tennis courts for a total of seven. The remaining space near the entry of the park could be used for additional parking. Because the new pool area will change circulation throughout the site, the existing parking lot should be expanded and redesigned. Due to the existing flood plain, current regulations will need to be examined to determine if new tennis courts and parking can be constructed in the existing pool location.

The existing natural areas of the park should be undisturbed and preserved. The fencing around the current small soccer field needs to be removed and the field should be graded and maintained, free of holes and rocks, to be used as an open playing field for recreational use. A portion of this area of the park should be dedicated as a dog park. As in Adair Park, black, vinyl coated fencing with a landscape buffer should be included to minimize the impact on adjacent residents. Amenities in the park should include benches, a water fountain and message board. The new park master plan should study the locations of the existing basketball courts and pavilion to determine the most appropriate placement of these highly used park elements.

Department-wide park signage should be installed as described in the General Recommendations section of this document. Park amenities including trash receptacles and benches should be placed in appropriate areas of the park. Dog waste receptacles should be provided as a sanitary measure. Pedestrian access in the park should be included in the improvements to encourage a walkable community and provide disabled access.

## Scott Park

Size:	4 acres
Classification:	Mini Park
Contents:	1 Playground
	2 Tennis courts
	1 Community garden
	Recreation center

### Assessment

Located nearest to the "downtown" section of Decatur on Sycamore Street, Scott Park holds the Decatur Recreation Center with the Recreation and Community Services Department offices, a large gymnasium, several activity and meeting rooms, and a cafeteria-style kitchen.

This 4-acre site has a playground that is not well-suited for the age groups that use it the most. Located adjacent to the library, Scott Park gets a lot of use from young children. The two tennis courts are well-maintained and lighted. The community garden is very beautiful and well-maintained by the Scott Park Garden Club. This plot contains many different types of plants including herbs, perennials, annuals and various grasses and sedges. It serves as a nice transition between the recreation-based nature of the tennis courts to the passive park environment that encompasses the remainder of the park.

### Recommendations

The Recreation Center is nearly 50 years old and is not meeting the complete needs of Decatur citizens. A master plan needs to be conducted to assess these needs and determine how to best fulfill them. Issues that need to be considered in the master plan include: improved reception and customer service areas, multiple office spaces, rest-room size and accessibility, locker rooms, meeting rooms, space for cardiovascular fitness machines, aerobics and martial arts space, major systems improvements including upgraded and expanded HVAC, electrical and plumbing, new doors and windows, expanded building security, additional storage and roof improvements. This master plan should also address what kind of retrofitting and expansion is needed and possible at this site.

The cafeteria-style kitchen is used during games for concessions and also for teaching home economics to after school and summer camp participants. This area could prosper as another fabulous Decatur restaurant. This café-on-the-corner could be leased out to a restaurateur to serve the recreation center users, parents waiting for children or people who want to enjoy a cup of coffee amongst the energy of the recreation center. This restaurateur could also serve as the responsible party for the concessions. If it is determined that this is a viable use for the existing concession space, a small kitchen should be incorporated into the building expansion to accommodate after school and summer camp class needs.

Exterior improvements to the Recreation Center should include: improved accessibility, lighting and outdoor security, landscaping, drainage and storage. The playground should be replaced with a structure that is appropriate for preschool age children since



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this age group is the primary user in the park. The playground should meet all safety and accessibility guidelines as set by the regulating authorities including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM). The tennis courts are in good condition and are well lit.



## Ebster Park

Size:	5 acres
Classification:	Neighborhood Park
Contents:	1 Playground
	1 Outdoor swimming pool with bathhouse
	1 Picnic pavilion
	2 Basketball courts
	1 Soccer field/ backstop
	Community center

### Assessment

Located west of the downtown, Ebster Park is an important recreational provider in the City of Decatur. The irrigated soccer field at this park is well kept and very heavily used by the community. Because there is a shortage of open playing fields in the city, any unscheduled play on this field promotes additional, unneeded wear. The Recreation and Community Services Department staff locks the goals up to the perimeter fencing to prevent theft. Often the locks holding the goals to the fences are cut and the goals are drug out onto the field, which causes damage to the goals and field surface. This problem is becoming increasingly more difficult to regulate and is resulting in poor turf conditions. Currently, the field is equipped with two sets of aluminum bleachers, which are not enough for spectators of a soccer game. There is no disabled access to the field nor any concessions.

An outside contractor maintains the pool at this facility. The pool is in good condition, but the entry and pool deck area need aesthetic improvements. The picnic pavilion, situated between the pool and soccer field, is well used and well maintained. The existing playground needs to be updated with proper surfacing and safety zones.

The recreation center needs rehabilitation work because it is part of an older building and underutilized by the community. The center is used to house the Summer and Big Kids programming, community rooms, art studios and a community theater. In the morning there is no programming, but free gym play is offered. Restroom facilities located in the center are very poor.

### Recommendations

Upkeep of park amenities and a picnic pavilion should be continued. Department-wide park signage should be installed as described in the General Recommendations section of this document. The playground should be replaced to meet the abilities of multiple age groups and the regulations set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and safety standards set by the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM). An alternate location for the playground should be studied, as the current location is susceptible to frequent flooding. Dog waste receptacles should be provided as a sanitary measure. Pedestrian access in the park should be included in the improvements to encourage a walkable community and provide disabled access.

As part of the overall city concept, the soccer field at Ebster Park is recommended for use by the Renfroe Middle School and Decatur High School athletic teams. Utilization of the field for existing recreation leagues and expanded team sports such as lacrosse is

also recommended. Spectator areas should be expanded and six foot fencing and signage should be added to eliminate use of the fields by unauthorized athletic teams. In addition, the City of Decatur Public Safety Department should aid in policing the area to help control unauthorized use of the field.

In 1996, a landscape plan was created to improve the aesthetics of the park. It is strongly suggested that physical improvements be made to this park to create a more inviting atmosphere for park users. Special attention should be placed to the entry and deck space of Ebster pool and along the property lines to soften the edges.

A master plan to assess the needs and uses of the recreation center located at Ebster Park should be completed to make the best use of this existing park facility. Possible uses of the refurbished center include changing rooms, permanent storage for the athletic equipment, janitorial storage space, a small kitchen, practice area for performing arts and art lab space. Currently, the recreation center houses local artists, whose talents are great assets to the citizens of Decatur. Opportunities for classes taught by these artists and programmed through the Recreation Department should be explored.

### **Passive Parks**

All parks described in this section are passive in nature with few or no recreational facilities. These parks should be preserved as greenspace dedicated to meet the goals established by Governor Barnes' Greenspace Initiative. Department-wide park signage should be installed as described in the General Recommendations section of this document. Improvements to these parks should be minimal to preserve the natural surroundings. Any park amenities, including trash receptacles, benches and dog waste receptacles should be placed in the parks, if desired by neighboring residents. Once the level of improvements is determined, the city should support the neighboring residents' wishes by determining if a pedestrian access in the park may or may not be necessary.

#### **Hidden Cove Park**

This three-acre park located at 758 Scott Boulevard is positioned directly behind Westchester Elementary. This natural park contains native plantings and a natural trail along the creek. Efforts made by the city to improve this park should be done in partnership with the Westchester community and elementary school. Opportunities to link this trail to a citywide system should be explored.

#### **Mead Road Park**

Three-fourths of an acre in size, Mead Road Park is located near Oakhurst Elementary School. Existing playgrounds were recently replaced however other renovations in the park remain to be completed. Additional improvements should include renovations to the two existing picnic pavilions and one basketball court and improvements to the path connecting the park to Oakhurst School.

#### **Oakview Road Park**

This quarter-acre site is located along Oakview Road next to Fifth Avenue Elementary. Any improvements to this park should be in coordination with the neighboring school and meet all accessibility and safety standards.

### **Park Side Circle**

Where Scott Boulevard intersects with the looping Park Side Circle, this two-acre passive park is the front door of several north Decatur residences. Coordination with these residents will ensure appropriate maintenance and preservation of this open space.

### **Roy Moss Garden**

Similar to Park Side Circle, Roy Moss Garden is a plot of land located between Garland Avenue and Griffin Circle beginning where the two intersect with South McDonough Street. This two-acre park is an open greenspace for neighboring residents to enjoy. Coordination with these residents will ensure appropriate maintenance and preservation of this park.

### **Sycamore Park**

This one-acre greenspace is part of the Stone Mountain Atlanta Trail that begins in Atlanta, runs through Decatur and out to Stone Mountain Park. Improvements should be made to enhance the trail experience through the City of Decatur. Because this park is located near the MARTA station, adding site amenities including benches, dog waste receptacles and trash receptacles, would serve the community well.

### **Waddell Park**

A half-acre nature park located in the Great Lakes neighborhood, Waddell Park offers a nature and walking trail. Native plantings and birds are assets to this small Decatur treasure.

## **City Schools of Decatur**

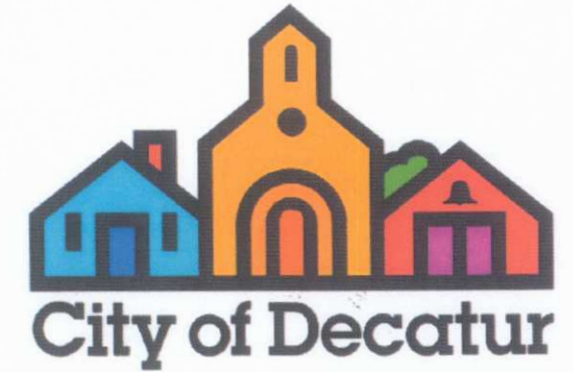
Figure 5.4 shows the location of the city's 13 public and private schools. The City Schools of Decatur are strategically located around the community with Decatur High School and Renfroe Middle School ideally situated in the center of the city. Each of the public schools provides open space for the neighborhoods in which they are located. The elementary schools are equipped with playgrounds and community rooms which are utilized by the schools, as well as the Recreation and Community Services Department, for after school programs. Four private schools are also located in Decatur. They are Lullwater School, Friends School of Atlanta, Saint Thomas More Catholic School and Waldorf School of Atlanta. The following provides assessments of the elementary schools, middle school, high school and the private schools.

### **Elementary School Assessments**

The City of Decatur School System comprises seven elementary schools: Clairemont, College Heights, Fifth Avenue, Glennwood, Oakhurst, Westchester and Winnona Park. Each school property provides open space and playgrounds adjacent to the school. Three schools, Westchester, Oakhurst and College Heights, are located adjacent to or in close proximity to a city park. Many of the school properties are primarily wooded with some sloping topography; however, Westchester and Winnona Park provide open space with a terrain that is conducive for active recreation play.

The seven elementary schools were each constructed with an interior activity space used for eating, school assemblies and general school activities as well as the after school program sponsored by the Decatur Recreation and Community Services

# City of Decatur, GA Athletic Facilities Master Plan Existing Facilities Figure 5.4



 Schools of Decatur

## Public Schools of Decatur

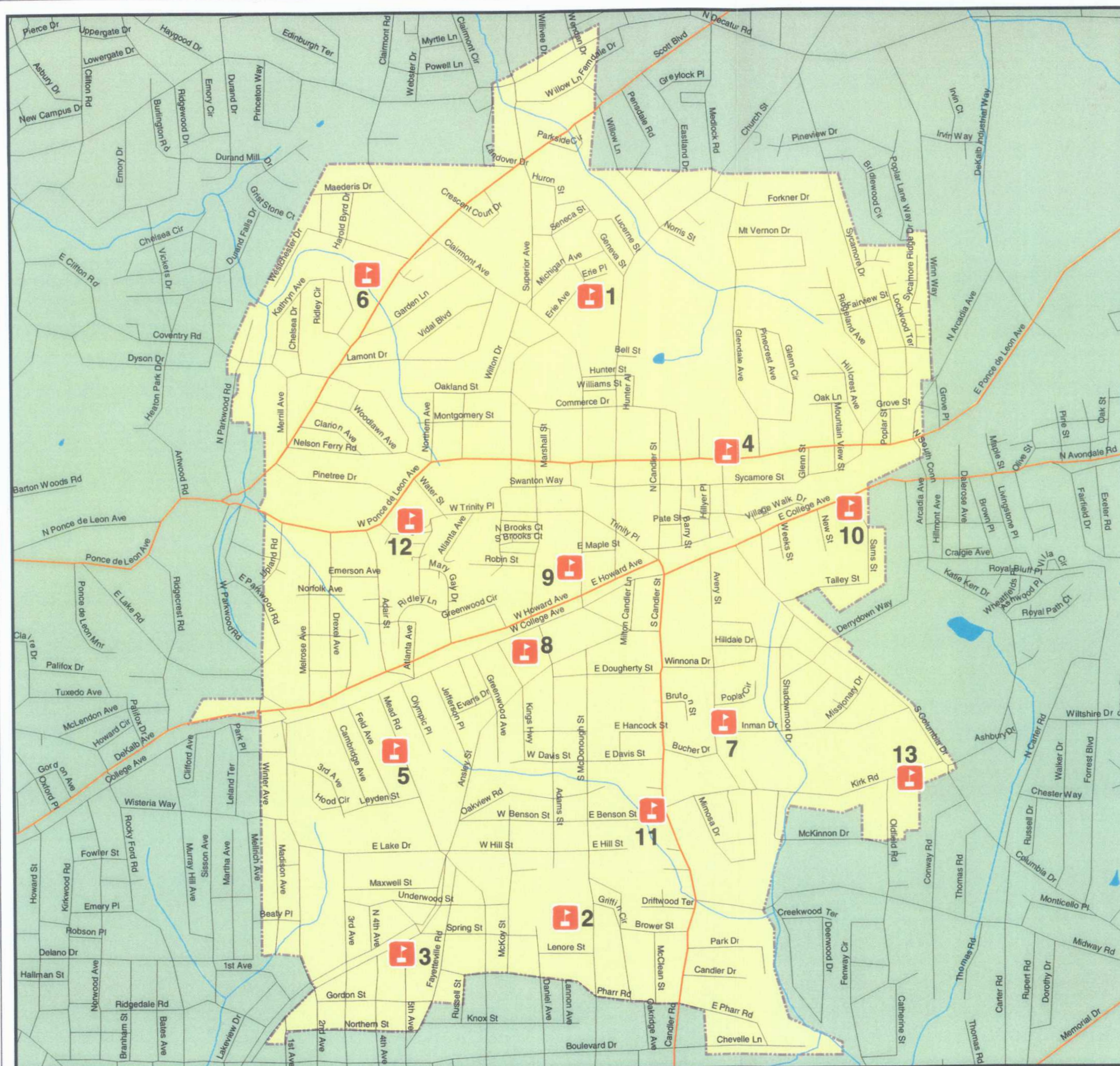
1. Clairemont Elementary
2. College Heights Elementary
3. Fifth Avenue Elementary
4. Glennwood Elementary
5. Oakhurst Elementary
6. Westchester Elementary
7. Winnona Park Elementary
8. Renfroe Middle School
9. Decatur High School

## Private Schools of Decatur

10. Friends School of Atlanta
11. Lullwater School
12. Saint Thomas Moore School
13. Waldorf School of Atlanta

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Department. The relationship between the City Schools of Decatur and the Recreation and Community Services Department is very good, much to the benefit of the community. Although the relationship with the school system is very good, the use of the activity space located in the schools by the after-school programs often conflicts with school sponsored activities. Storage in the facility is also at a premium with the schools and the Recreation and Community Services Department competing for valuable space.

Input received during the public input phase of the master plan revealed a desire by citizens to see the development of multi-purpose recreation rooms at the schools that could be used for neighborhood-based recreation programming. In addition, the success and growth of the after-school programs have created a need for additional space for those programs to eliminate conflicts that currently exist with the schools. Additional space would also be a valuable asset for the schools to be utilized during the day for physical education or other activities. Site assessments and interviews also revealed that playgrounds found on school campuses are in poor condition and do not meet current accessibility and safety standards.

### **Elementary School Recommendations**

The completion of site visits to the elementary schools revealed that open space around the schools does not provide opportunities for athletic field development. The current use of Westchester and Winnona Park for unorganized recreational play and practice play should continue. The space should be regularly maintained to ensure it is free of any kind of safety hazards such as holes, rocks, tree roots and debris. A playground maintenance program adopted by the city and the school system will be necessary to ensure that all playgrounds in the city are safe, accessible and practical for various age groups.

Open space located around the elementary schools should be preserved for future building expansion projects. These improvements should include space to meet the needs of the after-school programs as well as expanded community recreation programming.

### **Renfroe Middle School Assessment**

Renfroe Middle School is located in central Decatur and serves grades six through eight. Existing amenities at the school consist of a gymnasium and open practice space around the school. Site visits and interviews revealed the gymnasium is not large enough for the activities held there. In addition, the lack of athletic fields around the school has limited the ability to expand the middle school programs.

### **Renfroe Middle School Recommendations**

Recommendations contained within this master plan and outlined within the Decatur High School campus master plan will help to meet the needs of the middle school. As new facilities are constructed, existing facilities will be freed up to allow the expansion of the middle school athletic programs.

### **Decatur High School Assessments**

The Decatur High School (DHS) campus currently has a football field with an open stadium and locker rooms, a gymnasium with locker rooms, and a weight room. Batting cages were recently completed for use by the baseball and softball teams. The existing

condition of facilities is very poor and does not meet the needs of the teams that utilize them. The high school gymnasium is undersized and therefore requires the use of the gym at the Decatur Recreation Center for all games. Other athletic teams, such as wrestling, baseball, softball, swim and track, utilize non-school facilities for games and practice. Field sport teams, such as soccer and football, compete with each other and the high school band for time on the single athletic field located on campus.

Off-campus facilities used by athletic teams include McKoy and Oakhurst Parks, Agnes Scott College, Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club and space at the Church at Decatur Heights. McKoy Park serves as the dedicated boys baseball field. Interviews and assessments of the facility revealed a newly-renovated field with new fencing and dugouts. Needed improvements, as identified in the coaches interview, included higher quality lighting, batting cages, additional fencing to accommodate older participant play and a field house with offices, locker rooms and storage.

Oakhurst Park serves as home to the girls softball team. The two fields located in the park also serve as the softball facilities for Agnes Scott College and recreation softball, baseball and soccer leagues. A temporary fence is utilized during the softball season which is then removed to accommodate soccer play. As in McKoy Park, Oakhurst was originally designed to meet the needs of recreation league play. High school and college teams that utilize the field do not have locker rooms for changing prior to practice and games. Visiting teams are required to change into their uniforms prior to arrival at the field or on the bus in the parking lot. Other needs are for covered dugouts, a press box, scoreboard, PA system and functioning irrigation. In addition, neither field is regulation size. The game field is approximately 25 to 35 feet short of being regulation.

The high school swim team utilizes space at Agnes Scott College which is available for practice from 6:30-7:15 in the morning. The swim team also utilizes the indoor pool at the boys and girls club for practice. The track team does not host any home track events. They primarily participate in regional meets at other locations. The wrestling team has secured an agreement with the Church at Decatur Heights for use of their gym facility for practice. Meets are held at the high school requiring the team to transport the wrestling mats back and forth between the two facilities.

### **Decatur High School Recommendations**

The high school has developed a master plan that will accommodate the interests of soccer, football, basketball, volleyball and wrestling. New facilities will include a football stadium, soccer field, a double gymnasium, wrestling room and support amenities such as locker and weight training rooms.

The Decatur High School plan does not include any new facilities to accommodate the needs of softball, baseball, track and field, and swimming. The Citywide Athletics Facilities Master Plan is addressing athletic and recreational needs that are not met on Decatur High School grounds and can be found in the specific facility and overall city concept recommendations.

### **Private School Assessments**

Four private schools exist in Decatur. They are the Friends School of Atlanta, Lullwater School, Saint Thomas More Catholic School and Waldorf School of Atlanta. Each school provides an opportunity for joint development and collaboration with the community.

The Friends School of Atlanta is located among a series of warehouses and buildings that are owned by the school. A covered outdoor basketball court provides the only existing recreation amenity on the property; however, an undeveloped parcel of land in the middle of the campus provides an opportunity for the future development of an athletic field.

Lullwater School does not currently have any built athletic/recreation facilities; however, an existing underdeveloped field behind the school provides future opportunities for a practice baseball field development. A property not owned by the school, but located adjacent to it, should be explored for greenspace preservation and future passive or nature trail development.

Saint Thomas More School is currently constructing a new gymnasium. Future partnerships with agencies in the community may offer opportunities for improvements to the gym in exchange for use.

The Waldorf School of Atlanta did not participate in the Master Plan; therefore, information regarding facilities and opportunities for partnerships is not available.

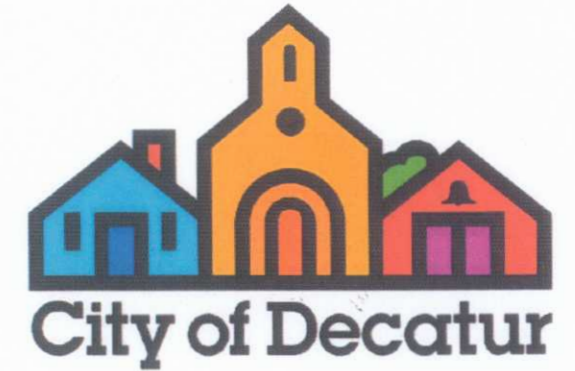
### **Private School Recommendations**

The city concept recommendations have defined locations for athletic game facilities. As the community recreation and school athletic programs continue to grow, the available open spaces and gymnasiums provided at private schools will be critical for practice facilities. The city should continue to build relationships with these institutions to allow future partnerships to be formed for the joint development and use of facilities.

### **Decatur Institutions**

Agnes Scott College, Columbia Theological Seminary and four churches in the community participated in the athletic facilities master plan. The church locations are shown in **Figure 5.5** and include Church at Decatur Heights, First Christian Church, Decatur First Baptist Church and Saint Thomas More Church. Each institution provides a variety of amenities from gymnasiums and community rooms to an indoor pool and tennis courts. In addition to facilities, there are large expanses of open space that are highly valued by the community. The following are site assessments and recommendations for each institution.

# City of Decatur, GA Athletic Facilities Master Plan Existing Facilities Figure 5.5



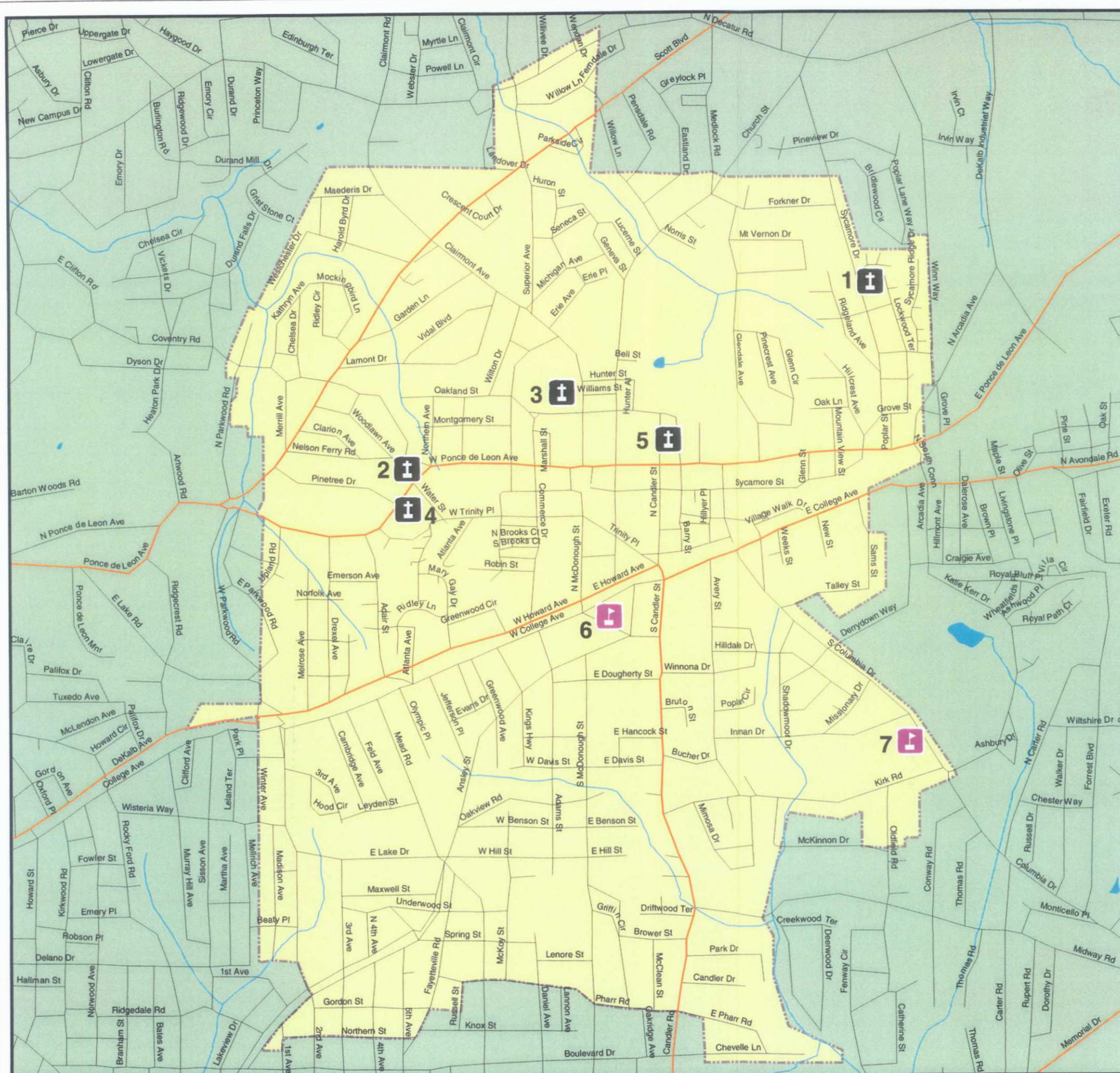
## Churches with Athletic/Recreation Facilities

- 1. Church at Decatur Heights
- 2. First Christian Church
- 3. Decatur Baptist Church
- 4. Saint Thomas More Church
- 5. Decatur First United Methodist Church

## College/Universities

- 6. Agnes Scott College
- 7. Columbia Theological Seminary

0 0.5 1 Miles





## Agnes Scott College

Size: 100 acres (approximate)  
Contents: 400m track - rubberized surface  
Bermuda grass soccer field (NCAA reg.)  
Competition swimming pool  
Gymnasium  
6 Tennis courts  
Weight training facilities (2)  
Training room  
Mirrored dance studio  
Locker room facilities

### Assessments

Agnes Scott College provides a recreation amenity upon which the community is highly dependent. Recreation and high school swim teams as well as residents of the community use the indoor aquatic center. Other amenities which are available on a more limited use include a track, soccer field and gymnasium. The remaining facilities are accessible by only students and faculty. The athletic facility lacking on the Agnes Scott College campus is a women's softball facility. Limited space on campus will prevent the construction of such a facility. The college currently relies on the softball field located in Oakhurst Park.

Site-based assessments and interviews with coaches revealed many high-quality athletic facilities. An NCAA regulation soccer field, which is widely used by the college and Decatur High School, is immaculately maintained and has attracted such users as the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team and the Atlanta Beat professional soccer team. Additional elements that would make this already-successful facility more so would be the construction of stadium-style seating, concessions and press areas.

The Atlanta Beat organization has approached the college about construction of support facilities for the soccer field. In return for building this stadium, the team would use the facility for all of its practices and home games. Not only would this bring additional revenue into the college, but the collegiate administration feels that the additional exposure would serve to benefit the school.

Surrounding the soccer field is a rubberized track which has been heavily used since its construction. The surface of the track has outlived its original lifespan and is in dire need of resurfacing.

The indoor swimming pool serves as a location for the college's physical education classes and as a competition venue for both the college and high school. Currently, the natatorium is only capable of seating 200 people and is not built to handle the increased usage by the college, high school and recreation leagues.

According to athletic department staff, the existing gymnasium is perfect for the college's variety of uses. The acoustics and bleacher space are perfect for assemblies and athletic events. Currently, the gym is used not only for the collegiate basketball teams

but also for the college and high school volleyball teams. The only addition that the staff felt was necessary for this facility was that of automated bleachers. This would allow extension and utilization without the assistance of the maintenance department.

Storage for athletic equipment is a challenge with the current state of facilities on campus. There is one main storage room located near the locker room, but it is overloaded and in dire need of improvement. The college staff showed examples of how they have had to improvise when storing large items to the extent of storing pool equipment in stairwells - a blatant fire hazard.

The locker room facilities are adequate but not conducive to a team environment. It is also questionable as to whether they properly meet ADA requirements. Also, the room currently used for the training is becoming cramped with the addition of ice tanks and other therapeutic equipment. Plans are in motion to move the training room down the hall to the existing dance studio. By moving it to this location, the athletes and trainers will have more space and be located close to the weight room.

The downstairs weight room features some of the most advanced equipment available, but does not have sufficient space. This not only makes using the space more difficult, but creates an unsafe exercising environment. The workout area upstairs, adjacent to the pool and gym, is sandwiched to the side of the main hallway, separated only by a temporary 3' fence. This layout is unsafe and makes moving about the equipment difficult.

The six-court tennis center is the newest addition to the campus having been completed in the last year. Limited funding for the center forced the school to omit lighting, a pro shop with concessions, and restrooms that were originally planned.

### **Recommendations**

The largest need for Agnes Scott College is a softball facility. The City of Decatur, City Schools of Decatur and Agnes Scott College should partner to complete renovations and improvements recommended for Oakhurst Park. In addition, the need for track facilities to be utilized by the high school creates another joint opportunity for shared improvement costs. Through a joint funding venture, the City Schools of Decatur and Agnes Scott College should partner to resurface and/or maintain the track. Use agreements should be formed that give first priority use to the college followed by the high school and open public access. Other opportunities may include the city or school system funding lighting for the new tennis courts in exchange for shared use of the new college tennis facility. Other improvements to athletic facilities on the campus should be completed as funds are made available.

## Columbia Theological Seminary

Size: 57 acres  
Contents: Playfield (non regulation)  
3 Tennis courts

### Assessments

The Columbia Theological Seminary (CTS) Campus is one of the larger open spaces in the community. An open playfield serves as a soccer field to a variety of leagues including the CTS students and staff, the YMCA soccer programs and the Waldorf School. The seminary does not have the means to maintain the field as an athletic field and only sees it as an open space where recreation takes place. As a result, the field is not in excellent condition but is still playable to an extent. Whenever the field is not occupied by one of these user groups, it is open for community use. Adjacent to the field entrance is a half-court basketball court, which is frequently used by students, staff and members of the community. Although this field is not a formal ball field, there is a backstop situated in the back corner of the property that allows use by the community and the school for intramural games.

The tennis courts on the school grounds are used by CTS students and staff, and temporarily by the Agnes Scott College team until their new courts are completed. Although they are on the school campus, they are available to the community whenever left open with the exception of Sundays before 1:00 in the afternoon. The courts are heavily used throughout the season.

The seminary staff has expressed a great interest in the construction of a new athletic/wellness center on their campus. A school master plan was created that outlined the need for a gymnasium, weight room, swimming pool and jogging track. Other priorities identified in the master plan will have greater emphasis in the near future, with construction of an athletic center coming much later.

### Recommendations

The first priority of the seminary is education. Their willingness to allow community groups to utilize open space and facilities makes them a valuable partner in the master plan. Should the development of an athletic/wellness center take greater precedence in the near future, the city should evaluate the benefits of joint development. Until that time, the community should continue to take advantage of open practice space that is available on the campus property.

## Community Churches

### Church Assessments

The four churches involved in the master plan provide varying levels of athletic and recreation spaces. The Church at Decatur Heights provides a gymnasium/multi-purpose room with a concrete floor for use by the community. This gym is the current location utilized by the Decatur High School wrestling team. Future plans by the church include the addition of weight and exercise equipment in an existing loft area of the gym. As with other organizations, the church will make the facility open to the public.

First Christian Church in Decatur has a very community-oriented congregation that provides community rooms for use by such organizations as the Georgia Center for Children, Decatur Fine Arts, Alcoholics Anonymous and various other groups. In addition to classrooms, the church has a stand-alone gymnasium. Needed renovations are planned for the restrooms and gymnasium which due to their poor condition are not utilized by the church.

Decatur First Baptist Church is probably the largest recreation amenity provider of any of the churches in Decatur. Facilities include classrooms, a gymnasium, softball field, playground and open space. The church primarily targets members of the congregation for programming and facility use.

Saint Thomas More Catholic Church is currently undergoing a building construction project that includes a new gymnasium. As with First Baptist Church, the focus of Saint Thomas More is with its own congregation.

### **Church Recommendations**

The churches in Decatur provide valuable community outreach and programming space. The city and churches should continue to work together to offer joint programming and community services. Collaborations between the city and churches that directly benefit the community should continue to be nurtured for the positive impacts they have on Decatur residents.

### **Private Recreation Providers of Decatur**

Private recreation providers (shown in **Figure 5.6**) identified in the community include the Decatur-DeKalb YMCA, the Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club, the United Methodist Children's Home and Venetian Pool.

### **Decatur-DeKalb YMCA**

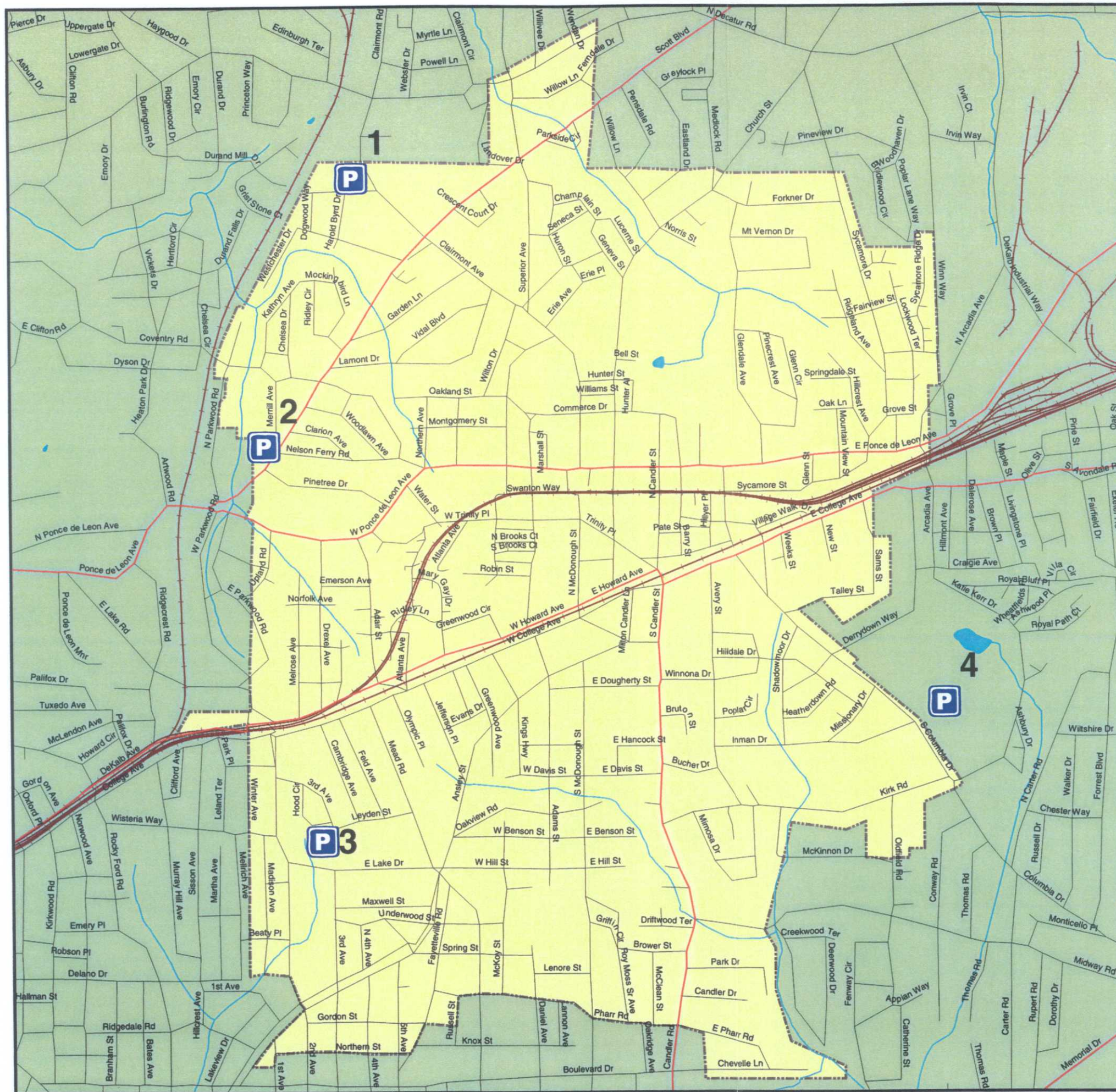
Size:	Not Available
Amenities:	Swimming pool
	Workout room with nautilus machines
	Workout room with cardio machines
	Workout room with free weights
	2-sided gymnasium
	Indoor running track
	Men's, women's, boys' and girls' locker rooms
	Aerobics/dance studio

### **Assessments**

Indoor swimming offered at the Y is extremely popular and often draws users who wait in line prior to the facility opening. Although the pool is long enough to accommodate competitive swim, an inadequate number of lanes limits the number of swim competitions that are held in the facility. Consequently, the facility is primarily used for child and adult learn-to-swim programs and for open swimming. Recently, through the help of a lift, the center has been able to institute therapeutic swim classes to those suffering from arthritis and other debilitating ailments. With this addition, the pool can now serve nearly all user groups throughout the city.

# City of Decatur, GA Athletic Facilities Master Plan

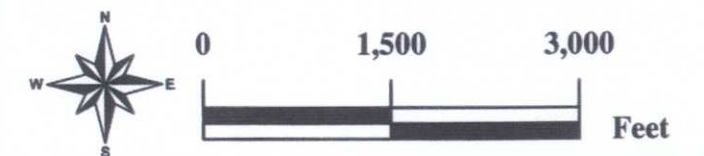
Existing Facilities  
Figure 5.6



**P** Private Recreation Providers

1. Dekalb-Decatur YMCA
2. Venetian Pool
3. Samuel L. Jones Boys & Girls Club
4. United Methodist Children's Home

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The nautilus room at the Y has some of the most advanced machines available today, and all are interconnected through a computer system that can track the workout and progress of registered users and keep a record of their workout history. This room is very popular and, according to YMCA staff, is constantly overcrowded.

According to YMCA staff, the cardio-room here is one of the most heavily used areas of the center. With roughly 25 lifecycles, elliptical trainers and stair climbers, the room has enough machines to meet the needs of its users. Each machine is appropriately placed in relation to others around it and there is ample room in the walkways for people to move about freely.

The free weight room is also heavily used, but with the current trends leaning towards machine-based weight training, the center is seeing free weight use drop slightly.

The gymnasium at the Y is ample for the activities offered. It is big enough to be divided into two full-size basketball courts or volleyball courts through the use of a retractable curtain down the middle of the room. Situated above the gym floor is a running track that is very heavily used by the center's members.

The locker room facilities at the Y are the one element in the center that could use upgrading. The rooms themselves are big enough and there are enough lockers, but those lockers have seen their share of wear and tear. With the replacement of the lockers, this facility would have some of the nicest accommodations in the city and would be able to better serve its members.

Interviews with Y staff revealed the biggest need for the center is outdoor athletic field space. The Y currently operates a popular soccer league that is having trouble finding fields for practice and games. They utilize space wherever they can find it including fields at Columbia Theological Seminary and around the county.

### **Recommendations**

The recent closing of an indoor pool at a local YWCA had displaced a large senior population that used the facility for therapeutic and recreational swimming. Interviews revealed that swim time is available during the daytime hours that could accommodate the senior swimmers. The YMCA should look to provide dedicated time for this user group.

A recommendation of the planning team is for the joint development of a community soccer park within Decatur. The City of Decatur and the YMCA should work together to fund the development of a complex that can be shared between the two entities. An agreement should be structured that outlines a use schedule and maintenance duties and expectations.

## Samuel L. Jones Boys & Girls Club

Size:	Not Available
Amenities:	Sports playfield Indoor pool w/men's and women's locker rooms Gymnasium

### Assessments

Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club has a mission to "provide a quality developmental program which empowers metro Atlanta youth, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to become productive adults." The Boys and Girls Club of Decatur achieves this mission through a facility that provides classrooms, a computer lab, gymnasiums, a swimming pool and athletic field.

The sports play field is currently utilized by the Club as a venue for its flag football program. The recent award of a Community Development Block Grant and Safeco funding has allowed the athletic field to receive needed renovations. As a result, the Boys and Girls Club and the Recreation Department have established a joint use agreement to utilize the field for soccer and other field sports. There are picnic tables adjacent to the field for use by spectators or picnickers. The Club Staff has indicated that they are very much in favor of any programs that would increase the number of recreational opportunities offered to the city's youth.

The indoor pool at the Club is another element that is under-utilized although recent agreements have brought the Decatur High School Swim teams into the pool for practice. The pool is primarily used during the after school hours and in the summer months, most days it sits empty for the better part of the day. Despite the fact that the Club is open in the early morning, no one uses the pool for any kind of morning swim program. The pool itself is in excellent condition having just been refurbished this past year.

The gymnasium is by far the most heavily used element at the Club. Basketball programs are run during the winter months and are very popular with the local youth. The court is large enough to allow for up to two full-court games to go on at a time, or one full-court game with bleachers for spectators and players. The gym is usually open during the morning and early afternoon, which creates an excellent opportunity for cooperative use throughout the community. The gym is currently being used on Saturday mornings by the YMCA for indoor soccer.

### Recommendations

While the Boys and Girls Club currently serves 600 to 650 youths in the community, the facilities located at the Club are primarily under-utilized. The City of Decatur's high need for indoor swim facilities, athletic fields and gymnasium space make opportunities for partnerships excellent with the Boys and Girls Club.

The Decatur Recreation Department and the City Schools of Decatur should pursue a joint-use agreement that allows use of the swim facilities at the Club for the competitive and recreation needs of the community. An agreement should be crafted that appropriates a fixed fee to the Club from the schools and Recreation Department.

The athletic field located at the Club should continue to be utilized by the community as a valuable open space and play field.



## United Methodist Children's Home

Size:	100 acres
Amenities:	Gymnasium
	Outdoor pool
	Sand volleyball court
	Baseball field
	Pond
	Open space

### Assessments

The United Methodist Children's Home has been in existence since the close of the Civil War when it was founded as an orphanage for children who had lost their families. Over the years, the Home's focus has changed to one of service and support for children and families in need of assistance.

The Children's Home campus is 100 acres in size with approximately 45 acres undeveloped. The developed campus consists of offices, living quarters, a gymnasium, outdoor swimming pool, baseball field and sand volleyball court. The gymnasium on the campus is very heavily used and includes a game and movie room within the structure. The gym is large enough to accommodate all of the Home's needs and is in use during all of its operational hours.

During the summer months, the pool, which is adjacent to the gymnasium, is extremely well used and very popular with all of the kids that live on the campus. According to staff, the kids often decorate the pool area and have pool parties on a regular basis. The pool itself was just recently renovated and expanded and therefore is accommodating the needs of the Home very well.

Next to the pool is the area containing the baseball field and volleyball court. The baseball field is an informal playing surface located on a level open space. It consists of a backstop, home plate, bases and a perimeter fence down the left and right field lines. The field is in poor condition and needs to be renovated to meet a higher standard. The volleyball court adjacent to the baseball field is also heavily used, but unlike the ball field, it is in good condition. This is most likely due to the lack of equipment associated with the sport. The court is cut out from the surrounding turf and the sand is in good shape and, according to staff, replaced annually.

The campus that makes up the Children's Home sits on enough acreage to accommodate any kind of recreational activity or facility. The important thing is that the Home has not infringed on any of the natural woodlands surrounding the campus. There are many possibilities for using the land that the campus sits on, and the Home is willing to partner with other organizations throughout the city. A lake, located on the rear of the property, is often utilized by local citizens for fishing. The lake sits adjacent to a historic building that was once part of the original farm on the property.

### Recommendations

The primary focus of the United Methodist Children's Home is the children and families they serve. The recreation facilities located on the campus adequately meet the

needs of children and families who live there. Interviews with representatives of the Home revealed an improvement to the service they provide would be for children of the Home to attend a more structured environment found within the Decatur City school system. Children of the Home are currently bussed to schools located in the county. Bringing children into the City School system would have an impact of approximately 50 to 70 students. (70 is maximum capacity of the Home.)

In exchange for allowing students to attend the City School system an agreement could be crafted that would allow the development of much needed recreation amenities on the undeveloped portion of the Children's Home campus. The development of sports fields and passive nature trails through the natural, wooded areas of the campus would provide valuable amenities not currently available anywhere else in the community.

## **Venetian Pool**

Size: Not available

Contents: Outdoor swim facility

### **Assessments**

Although an actual site assessment was not completed at Venetian Pool, residents at public meetings identified the facility as a highly desired recreation amenity. Reports from citizens revealed Venetian Pool currently has a five-year waiting list for new members. The popularity of the pool was thought to be due to the higher quality amenities and surrounding aesthetics over city pools.

## Citywide Athletic Facilities Concepts

The initiation of a Citywide Athletic Facilities Master Plan between a variety of public and private agencies, organizations and institutions has created the unique opportunity for Decatur to be a model community for partnerships between public and private sectors. The participation by the various partners of the master plan has resulted in a city concept that can begin to broaden the athletic and recreation offerings. The following provides a description of the planning teams recommendations for an overall concept that, without the cooperation of the entire community, would not be possible.

The completion of interviews, public meetings and a steering committee workshop revealed community needs tied to interscholastic and intercollegiate athletic teams, general community recreation needs and service provider needs. A new Decatur High School master plan will begin to meet some of the interscholastic needs; however, athletic teams such as swim, softball, baseball, track and tennis will be required to find facilities elsewhere.

The largest need for Agnes Scott College is to provide a softball facility for their women's softball team. The inability to accommodate this use on campus requires them to explore alternative locations. Needs identified by the Recreation Department, and others not linked to a specific organization, include such uses as community programming space, fitness facilities, aquatics, dog parks, skate parks, athletic fields and gym space. Needs of other organizations are also tied to shortages in athletic field space in the community.

Based on interviews with participating organizations, a citywide concept has been developed that begins to address the needs of various groups around the community. **Figure 5.7** shows proposed locations of the major athletic/recreation facilities recommendations. These concepts will require continued support and cooperation to make the master plan a success for the community and everyone involved.

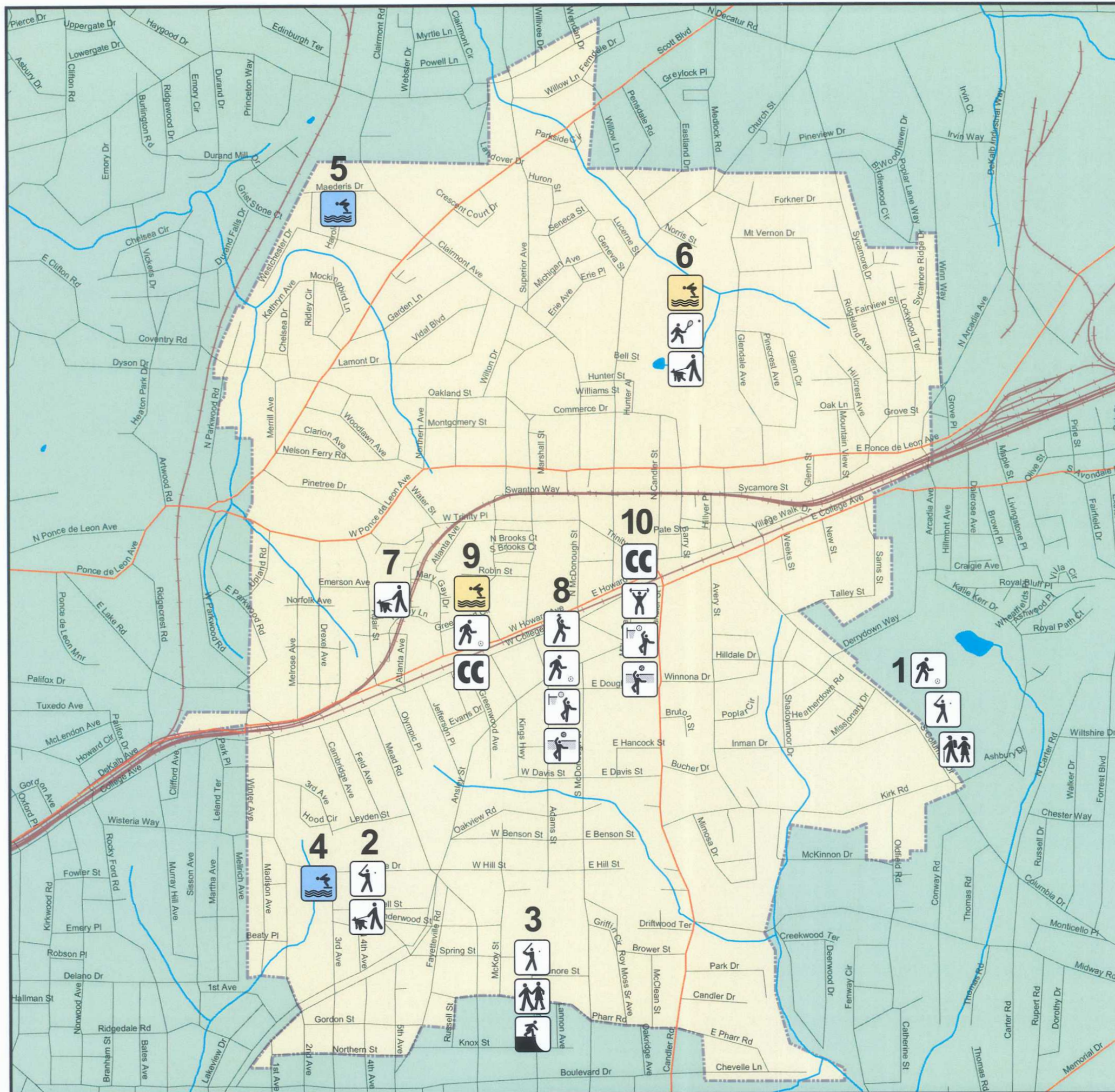
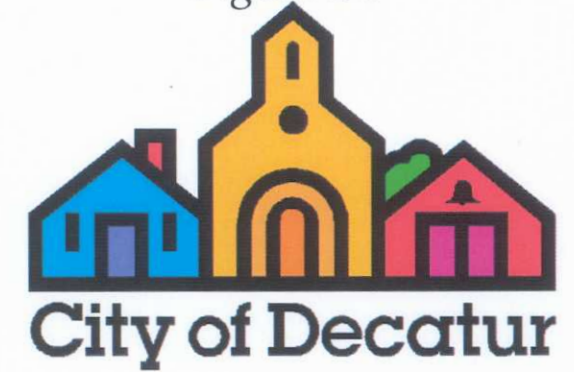
As mentioned in the site-based assessments and recommendations, dedicated athletic fields are recommended for McKoy and Oakhurst Parks. Improvements at McKoy Park should be completed to provide adequate facilities for baseball. Similarly, Oakhurst Park should become a dedicated softball complex for use by recreation leagues, the high school and Agnes Scott College. A newly renovated field at the Boys and Girls Club provides a much needed soccer field for recreation leagues. In addition, Ebster Field and Glenlake Park will provide other soccer facilities.

A community park should be constructed at the Children's Home that maintains the safety and security of residents at the Home and also provides for community use of little league baseball fields, interpretive nature trails, picnic facilities, playgrounds and support amenities including parking, signage, restrooms and a maintenance building. The park should address all the safety and accessibility standards that have become standard design elements of new park construction.

The issue of indoor and outdoor swimming has been identified as a high priority in the community. With a total of three indoor and four outdoor pools in Decatur, it is not a recommendation of the planning team to institute a large indoor and outdoor pool construction program at this time. Rather, use agreements should be crafted to take advan-

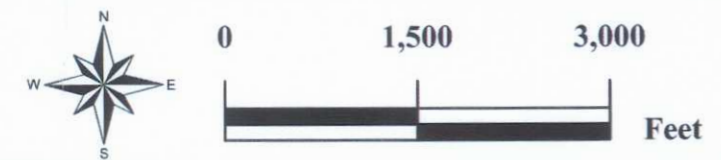
# City of Decatur, GA Athletic Facilities Master Plan

Proposed Facilities  
Figure 5.7



- |  |                  |  |                   |
|--|------------------|--|-------------------|
|  | Soccer           |  | Softball/Baseball |
|  | Indoor Swimming  |  | Dog Park          |
|  | Outdoor Swimming |  | Football          |
|  | Tennis           |  | Fitness Center    |
|  | Basketball       |  | Community Center  |
|  | Volleyball       |  | Stake Park        |
|  | Trails           |  | Inline Skating    |

1. United Methodist Children's Home
2. Oakhurst Park
3. McKoy Park
4. Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club
5. DeKalb-Decatur YMCA
6. Glenlake Park
7. Adair Park
8. Decatur High School
9. Ebster Park
10. Decatur Recreation Center



The need for an outdoor track, which ranked high on the steering committee priority list, has been addressed through a joint capital improvement agreement between Agnes Scott College and the city schools of Decatur. The agreement would involve funding of renovations by the schools in exchange for use of the facility for school track teams and public use. Priority use would belong to the college with secondary use granted to high school track teams and public access. In addition, the school system should enter into a long term agreement that shares maintenance and operations costs associated with the track.

The soccer field located at Ebster Park should continue to serve a recreation need; however, its close proximity to the high and middle school make it an excellent candidate for additional practice space for the schools, as well as a possible expansion field for programs such as lacrosse.

New construction on the high school campus will alleviate some of the gymnasium conflicts that exist today. As those additions are complete, the Decatur Recreation Center will have open time that could be utilized by middle school or other recreation-based teams or activities.

Tennis teams at the high school and recreation-based leagues should continue to utilize courts at Glenlake and other park site locations. Additional courts recommended for Glenlake will help to alleviate some scheduling problems and provide opportunities for hosting tournament play. A new policy should be initiated that provides better access to the neighborhood-based tennis courts around the community. Courts should remain open during daylight hours with increased patrol by maintenance and police staff. If courts are to remain locked, keys should be more readily available at alternate locations around the city.

Existing churches, the Columbia Theological Seminary and private schools in the community should continue to be utilized as they are today. The seminary provides valuable open space that is available for resident use while churches are instrumental in the provision of outreach and family wellness programs. As programs and need continue to grow, cooperative partnerships with these institutions should be fostered to make use of potential facility developments and improvements. **Figure 5.8** provides a look at existing and proposed facilities in the City of Decatur based on the planning teams preferred citywide facilities concept.



	Gymnasium	Soccer Field	Baseball Field	Softball Field	Tennis Court	Track	Outdoor Pool	Indoor Pool	Basketball	Volleyball	Trails	Football	Inline Skating	Skate Park	Picnic Pavilion	Playground	Dog Park	
<b>Existing Public Park Facilities</b>																		
Adair Park																1		
Oakhurst Park				2	2				2						2	1		
McKoy Park			1		2		1		1		1				1	1		
Parkside Circle																		
Hidden Cove Park																		
Waddell Park																		
Sycamore Park																		
Mead Road Park															2	2		
Oakview Road Park																		
Roy Moss Garden																		
Glenlake Park		1	1		5		1		1						1	1		
Scott Park					2											1		
Ebster Park		1					1		2						1	1		
Dearborn Park																		
<b>Existing Private Facilities</b>																		
Agnes Scott College	1	1			6	1		1										
Columbia Theological Seminary		1			3													
United Methodist Children's Home	1		1				1											
Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club	1							1										
Dekalb-Decatur YMCA	1							1										
Venetian Pool							1											
Church of Decatur Heights	1																	
First Christian Church	1																	
Decatur First Baptist Church	1			1													1	
Saint Thomas More Church	1																	
Friends School									1								1	
Lullwater School																		
<b>Existing City Schools of Decatur Facilities</b>																		
Clairemont Elementary																	1	
College Heights Elementary																	1	
Fifth Avenue Elementary																	1	
Glennwood Elementary																	1	
Oakhurst Elementary																	1	
Westchester Elementary																	1	
Winnona Park Elementary																	1	
Renfroe Middle School	1																1	
Decatur High School	1											1					1	
<b>Proposed New Facilities</b>																		
Adair Park																		1
United Methodist Children's Home		3	1							1						2	1	1
McKoy Park														1	1			1
Oakhurst Park																		1
Glenlake Park					2													1
Decatur High School	2	1										1						1

Figure 5.8

The previous recommendations represent what the planning team believes to be the most achievable for the community. However, other alternatives do exist. The following represent alternates that could be initiated if joint agreements are not possible or the community does not support the recommendations.

Alternate #1: Dependent on funding and an agreeable contract, the city could purchase the Boys and Girls Club to operate as a community center. Swimming for recreation and competition would then be a function of the Recreation Department.

Alternate #2: If the community determines that a city-owned-and-operated indoor aquatic facility is necessary, and the Boys and Girls Club can not be purchased, then an indoor pool should be added to the existing Decatur Recreation Center. A master plan and feasibility study should be completed to look at the function of a pool, as well as fitness/wellness facilities, on the recreation center site.

Alternate #3: If developable space at the United Methodist Children’s Home is limited and the YMCA should decide they do not need soccer fields within the City of Decatur, then recreation soccer fields should be developed in alternate locations. Interviews with recreation staff determined that three fields would be sufficient to meet city recreation soccer needs. The three recommended field locations are the existing field at Ebster Park, a newly renovated field at the Samuel L. Jones Boys and Girls Club and utilization of the small field in Glenlake Park.

## **General Recommendations**

Additional recommendations that are not specific to a facility but that should be considered for implementation throughout the city include:

- Park amenity standardization
- Park sign standards
- Community sidewalk and trails program
- Maintenance program
- Park adoption program

### **Park Amenity Standards**

As new parks are developed and existing parks are renovated, the city should begin to incorporate a consistent look among public recreation and athletic facilities. Standards should be developed that adopt a consistent look among benches, signs, trash receptacles, picnic tables, light fixtures and other elements common in a park. Especially important to this concept is the consistent look of building structures such as pavilions, field houses, maintenance buildings and concession/restroom buildings. Parks should also incorporate the historic nature for which Decatur is known.

### **Park Sign Standards**

Throughout the public input phase of the master plan, it was common for residents to admit they were not aware of an existing park. When completing site assessments, many parks were difficult for the planning team to find. The City of Decatur should adopt a sign standard that identifies all city-owned parks as such. A master plan should be completed that identifies locations around the community where directional signs for parks should be located. These signs should be consistent in design with the City of Decatur signs that are found around the community.

### **Community Sidewalk and Trails Program**

One of the highest priorities identified in the public input process was the need for bike/walking/nature/exercise trails. Another priority was for the construction of city-wide sidewalks and bike paths. Review of the City of Decatur Strategic Plan revealed there are approximately 16 miles of streets in Decatur without sidewalks (83,500 linear feet) and approximately two miles (10,000 linear feet) of sidewalks that need to be replaced. In addition, the plan identified two regional bicycle paths between Atlanta and Stone Mountain that intersect in Decatur and another quarter mile off-street bike path. Recommendations in the strategic plan call for the development of dedicated bike lanes on city streets - complete with striping and signage. Sidewalks are recommended to, at a minimum, connect residents to schools, institutions, commercial areas and green space.

Recommendations for bike paths and sidewalks contained within the strategic plan should be implemented as funding permits to improve alternative means of transportation in the community. The city should work with organizations such as PATH that have been instrumental in the implementation of bicycle and greenway trail routes in the metro Atlanta area. Nature trails should continue to be constructed as the city is able to acquire additional green space. A proposed trail at the new community park at the United Methodist Children's Home as well as a Greenspace Corridor Plan currently under development will also help to fill this need in the community.

### **Maintenance Program**

A critical issue facing the city and its partners is the maintenance of athletic fields and facilities. A high priority identified through public input was the need to improve maintenance practices in existing parks. The city should look to develop a dedicated park maintenance crew that is responsible for the general upkeep of city parks. These responsibilities should include, at a minimum, trash removal, regular playground inspections and repairs, park structure repairs and upkeep, landscape installations, maintenance and improvements, and other general duties associated with day-to-day upkeep of the parks.

Implementation of this work crew should accompany a work order system whereby the Recreation and Community Services Department can submit daily work order needs and requests as revealed through inspections and calls received from the public. Members of the park crew should achieve playground safety certification and have a general knowledge of construction and materials with experience in landscape and plant maintenance a plus.

Maintenance of athletic fields around the community should be placed under the responsibility of a turf maintenance contractor. The contract should include mowing, fertilization, trimming, irrigation maintenance, aeration and all other duties associated with a proper turf management program. Placing all athletic fields under one contract will promote cost savings to the various master plan participants as well as ensure a consistent level of quality for all athletic fields in the community. Mowing, trimming and regular maintenance of grounds outside of athletic fields should continue to be maintained under current operations. However, if it is determined that cost savings over existing procedures would be possible with a contract maintenance company, the city should explore this alternative for schools, parks and other publicly-owned properties.

### **Capital Replacement Program**

Common practice for most city and county governments is the implementation of a capital replacement program whereby computers, office equipment, trucks, cars and other daily use items are scheduled for replacement within a predetermined period of time. Site based park assessments revealed that many standard park elements such as playgrounds have exceeded what would be considered a reasonable life expectancy and have since fallen into disrepair. The city should work to implement a park capital replacement program that builds into the budget funding for regular replacement of highly used park elements.



### **Park Adoption Program**

An interesting component of the Decatur community is the existence of many organized neighborhood associations. Some homeowners of these associations have expressed interest in an adopt-a-park program that allows the homeowners to take a personal responsibility for the upkeep, monitoring and beautification of parks in their neighborhoods. The Decatur Recreation and Community Services Department is currently working with several associations to facilitate park improvements. Efforts should continue to expand the adopt-a-park program and allow homeowners to take an active role in landscape and park improvements as well as provide assistance with locking and opening park facilities and overseeing proper park safety and use.