

The City of Decatur, considered one of the best examples of walkable urbanism and progressive governing in Georgia, is guided by a citywide Ten-Year Strategic Plan. This plan embodies the broad vision for the city's future, based on community priorities, and includes specific policy directions to achieve that vision.

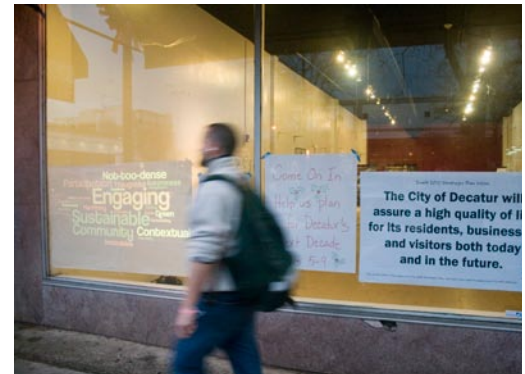
In 2010 a team led by TSW was retained by the City of Decatur to craft a new strategic plan that would reflect current community needs and guide the city for the next decade. Due in part to the success of the previous plan at making Decatur a desirable place to live, this effort focused on addressing emerging issues including loss of diversity, increased environmental awareness, rising residential taxes, and a need to create a more balanced tax base, 85% of which comes from residential properties. Also included was an analysis of existing zoning entitlement and its impacts on the emerging plan.

Building on a public outreach effort that had started in early 2010, the TSW team embarked on planning process that would become the most extensive in Decatur's history. This included a series of educational "Community Academies," web-based outreach, round table discussions, and interactive workshops.

These led to the creation of principles that make up the heart of the plan:

- Principle A focuses on allowing growth compatible with what Decatur values most, while also expanding local retail offerings so that more shopping needs can be met within walking distance.
- Principle B brings issues of diversity and engagement to the forefront, in ways that allow for new methods of communication, new housing types, and a more creative culture.
- Principle C strives to grow the tax base without negatively impacting existing residents, businesses, or the environment.
- Principle D focused on enhanced mobility, services, and housing to serve the needs of people of all ages and promote healthy living.

Each principle encompasses specific goals that will become the basis for specific strategic plan action items when the plan is completed in early 2011.



top: Innovative outreach techniques allowed Decaturites from all walks of life to shape the plan  
 above: A vacant storefront was temporarily converted to open house space to solicit public input  
 below: Strategic Plan goals and principles



### Principle A: Manage growth while retaining character.

Accommodate commercial and residential growth while retaining a small town character within an urban environment.

- Goal 1** Retain and enhance the character of existing commercial districts.
- Goal 2** Encourage a diversity of business types with particular focus on small businesses and businesses that provide daily needs.
- Goal 3** Protect existing neighborhoods while promoting growth in desired areas and adopting standards that guide future growth.
- Goal 4** Protect and encourage the reuse of historic buildings, structures, and places.



### Principle B: Encourage a diverse and engaged community.

Protect and expand diversity among Decatur residents, businesses, and visitors while promoting an innovative, engaged, and informed community.

- Goal 5** Maintain and encourage diversity of race, ethnicity, income, culture, age, family type, and other kinds of diversity.
- Goal 6** Strengthen communication and involvement in and among neighborhoods, city government, institutions, community organizations, and Decatur as a whole.
- Goal 7** Support and expand programs, services, events, and opportunities that respond to diverse interests, encourage community interaction, and promote a stronger sense of community.
- Goal 8** Promote a culture of creative innovation and expression.



### Principle C: Serve as good stewards of all community resources.

Practice fiscal, environmental, and organizational stewardship to make efficient use of finite resources through collaboration and conservation.

- Goal 9** Expand and diversify the city's property tax base.
- Goal 10** Continue to provide quality services within fiscal limits acceptable to the community.
- Goal 11** Assure the efficient use of all community facilities by strengthening public-private partnerships throughout the city.
- Goal 12** Foster environmental sustainability in all aspects of city life and government practice.



### Principle D: Create a healthy, lifelong community.

Assure that housing, mobility, and support services exist to provide everyone at every age a high quality of life.

- Goal 13** Enhance mobility options within and to Decatur.
- Goal 14** Expand the variety of high quality housing options to meet the needs of a diverse community.
- Goal 15** Provide programs and services that support and enhance a safe, healthy, and active lifestyle.

