

**CITY OF DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1-1
a. History of Decatur	1-1
b. History of Planning in Decatur.....	1-2
c. 2005-2025 Decatur Comprehensive Plan Overview.....	1-3
d. Public Involvement Plan.....	1-4
e. Decatur's Vision for the Future.....	1-7
f. Quality Community Objectives	1-9
II. POPULATION.....	2-1
a. Inventory	2-1
i. Total Population	2-1
ii. Households	2-2
iii. Age Distribution	2-3
iv. Racial Composition	2-4
v. Educational Attainment	2-6
vi. Income	2-8
b. Assessment of Current and Future Conditions.....	2-9
III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	3-1
a. Inventory	3-1
i. Economic Base	3-1
1. Employment by Economic Sector	
2. Average Wages	
3. Personal Income by Type	
ii. Labor Force Characteristics	3-7
1. Employment by Occupation	
2. Employment Status	
3. Commuting Patterns	
iii. Local Economic Development Opportunities	
and Resources.....	3-10
1. Special or Unique Economic Activities	
2. Local Economic Development Resources	
3. Economic Development Programs and Tools	
4. Education and Training Opportunities	
b. Assessment of Economic Development Issues, Trends	
and Opportunities	3-16
c. Economic Development Community Vision and Goals.....	3-19
IV. HOUSING	4-1
a. Inventory of Existing Conditions	4-1
i. Types of Housing Units	4-1
ii. Age and Condition of Housing.....	4-3
iii. Owner and Renter Units	4-4
iv. Cost of Housing.....	4-5
v. Cost Burden Analysis.....	4-8
vi. Housing and Community Characteristics	4-9

b.	Assessment of Current and Future Housing Needs	4-10
c.	Housing Community Vision and Goals	4-11
V.	NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.....	5-1
a.	Natural Resources	5-1
i.	Natural Features	5-1
1.	Topography, Physiography and Drainage	
2.	Soils	
ii.	Environmentally Sensitive and Ecologically Significant Areas	5-2
1.	Water Supply Watersheds	
2.	Wetlands	
3.	Groundwater Recharge Areas	
4.	Floodplains	
b.	Assessment of Current and Future Needs	5-7
c.	Historic Resources	5-8
i.	Overview	5-8
ii.	Historic Preservation Commission	5-8
iii.	Decatur's Landmark Properties	5-9
iv.	Decatur's Preservation Alliance	5-12
d.	Assessment of Current and Future Needs	5-12
e.	Natural and Cultural Resources Vision and Goals	5-12
VI.	COMMUNITY FACILITIES	6-1
a.	Public Safety Inventory and Assessment	6-1
i.	Police	6-1
ii.	Fire Protection	6-1
iii.	Emergency Medical Service	6-2
b.	Library Facilities Inventory and Assessment	6-2
c.	Educational Facilities Inventory and Assessment.....	6-2
d.	Recreation Facilities Inventory and Assessment.....	6-6
e.	Public Water and Sanitary Sewer Inventory and Assessment.....	6-12
i.	Water Treatment and Distribution	6-12
ii.	Sewer and Wastewater Facilities	6-13
iii.	Future Water and Sewage Capacity.....	6-13
f.	Storm Water Management Inventory and Assessment	6-14
g.	Solid Waste Collection and Disposal Inventory and Assessment....	6-15
h.	General Government Inventory and Assessment.....	6-16
i.	Hospitals and Other Public Health Facilities Inventory and Assessment.....	6-17
j.	Community Facilities Community Vision and Goals	6-17
VII.	INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION.....	7-1
a.	Inventory	7-1
i.	Entities	7-1
ii.	Adjacent Local Governments	7-1
iii.	School Boards	7-2
iv.	Development Authorities	7-2
v.	Other Units of Local Government and Utility Companies ...	7-3

vi.	Other Organizations (Regional and State)	7-3
1.	Atlanta Regional Commission	
2.	Georgia Department of Transportation	
3.	Georgia Department of Community Affairs	
4.	DeKalb Chamber of Commerce	
5.	Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority	
vii.	State Programs and Activities	7-5
1.	Service Delivery Strategy	
2.	Governor's Greenspace Program	
3.	Water Planning Districts	
b.	Assessment of Current and Future Needs	7-8
c.	Intergovernmental Coordination Community Vision and Goals	7-9
VIII.	LAND USE	8-1
a.	Introduction	8-1
b.	Inventory of Existing Land Uses	8-1
c.	Existing Land Use Assessment	8-5
i.	Historic Factors	8-5
ii.	Land Use Patterns and Denisities	8-5
iii.	Redevelopment Areas	8-5
iv.	Environmentally Sensitive Areas	8-6
v.	Other Land Use Issues	8-7
d.	Future Land Use Demand	8-7
e.	Future Land Use Narrative	8-8
f.	Land Use Community Vision and Goals	8-11
IX.	TRANSPORTATION	9-1
a.	Introduction	9-1
b.	Inventory of Existing Conditions	9-2
i.	Functional Classifications of Roadways	9-2
ii.	Number of Lanes, Volume and Capacity	9-4
iii.	State Routes	9-5
iv.	Evacuation Routes	9-5
v.	Bridge Inventory	9-5
vi.	Signalized Intersection Inventory	9-6
vii.	Bike and Pedestrian Trails	9-8
viii.	Sidewalk Inventory	9-8
ix.	Parking Inventory	9-9
x.	Public Transportation	9-10
xi.	Railroad Inventory	9-14
xii.	Programmed STIP Improvements	9-15
xiii.	Accident Frequency Data	9-15
c.	Assessment of Current and Future Needs	9-16
i.	Assessment of the Road Network	9-16
1.	Existing Level of Service on Roadways	
2.	Modal Split and Vehicle Occupancy	
ii.	Assessment of Public Transit Facilities	9-18

iii.	Projected Overall System Levels of Service (LOS) and System Needs	9-20
iv.	Means of Optimizing Existing Facilities	9-20
v.	Transportation Requirements for Non-Attainment Areas	9-21
1.	Ozone	
2.	PM-2.5	
d.	Transportation Community Vision and Goals	9-27
X.	IMPLEMENTATION.....	10-1
a.	2005-2009 Short-Term Work Program	10-2
b.	Report of Accomplishments	10-4
XI.	APPENDIX OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES	

**CITY OF DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
TABLE OF MAPS**

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1-1
Map 1.1 – Decatur and the Atlanta Region	1-1
II. POPULATION.....	2-1
III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	3-1
IV. HOUSING	4-1
V. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.....	5-1
Map 5.1 – Decatur Floodplain and FEMA Drainage Map.....	5-6
Map 5.2 – Decatur Historic Districts and Properties Map.....	5-11
VI. COMMUNITY FACILITIES	6-1
Map 6.1 – Decatur Educational Facilities Map	6-5
Map 6.2 – Decatur City Parks	6-10
VII. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION.....	7-1
VIII. LAND USE	8-1
Map 8.1 – Existing Land Use Map	8-4
Map 8.2 – Future Land Use Map	8-10
IX. TRANSPORTATION	9-1
Map 9.1 – Decatur Roadway Functional Classification Map	9-4
Map 9.2 – Decatur Signalized intersections Map	9-7
Map 9.3 – Decatur Sidewalk Map	9-8
Map 9.4 – MARTA Stations and Bus Routes	9-10
Map 9.5 – Decatur Railroad Map	9-14
Map 9.6 – Atlanta Region Non-Attainment Boundaries	9-24
Map 9.7 - Georgia PM2 Non-Attainment Areas	9-25
X. IMPLEMENTATION.....	10-1

CITY OF DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TABLE OF TABLES

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1-1
II. POPULATION.....	2-1
Table 2.1 – Decatur Total Population.....	2-1
Table 2.2 – Historic Population Trends.....	2-1
Table 2.3 – Forecasted Population Trends.....	2-2
Table 2.4 – Historic Household Trends.....	2-2
Table 2.5 – Forecasted Households.....	2-2
Table 2.6 – Historic Population Trends by Age.....	2-3
Table 2.7 – Forecast of Age Distribution.....	2-4
Table 2.8 – Total population by Race.....	2-5
Table 2.9 – Percent of Population by Race.....	2-5
Table 2.10 – Population by Educational Attainment.....	2-6
Table 2.11 – Years of School Completed.....	2-7
Table 2.12 – Decatur Student Performance Characteristics.....	2-7
Table 2.13 – Income Comparison.....	2-8
Table 2.14 – Distribution of Households by Income Grouping.....	2-9
III. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	3-1
Table 3.1 – Employment by Sector.....	3-3
Table 3.2 – Employment by Sector Comparison.....	3-4
Table 3.3 – Average Weekly Wages for Selected Industry Sectors.....	3-5
Table 3.4 – Personal Income by Type.....	3-6
Table 3.5 – Personal Income by Type in Dollars.....	3-7
Table 3.6 – Employment by Occupation.....	3-8
Table 3.7 – Employment Status by Percentage.....	3-8
Table 3.8 – Unemployment Rates in Neighboring Areas.....	3-9
Table 3.9 – Labor Force by Place of Work.....	3-10
Table 3.10 – Decatur Employment by Sector.....	3-16
Table 3.11 – Increase or Decrease in Employment by Sector.....	3-17
IV. HOUSING.....	4-1
Table 4.1 – Types of Housing Units.....	4-2
Table 4.2 – Types of Housing Units by Percentage.....	4-3
Table 4.3 – Housing Construction by Era.....	4-4
Table 4.4 – Owned Units and Rented Units.....	4-5
Table 4.5 – Housing Value.....	4-6
Table 4.6 – Median Housing Value and Rents.....	4-6
Table 4.7 – Cost Burdened Residents by Tenure.....	4-9
Table 4.8 – Forecasted Population Trends.....	4-9
Table 4.9 – Forecasted Households.....	4-9

V. NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.....	5-1
VI. COMMUNITY FACILITIES	6-1
Table 6.1 – Park Amenities.....	6-8
VII. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION.....	7-1
Table 7.1 – Services Provided by DeKalb County	7-5
VIII. LAND USE	8-1
Table 8.1 – Existing Land Use	8-3
Table 8.2 – Future Land Use	8-9
IX. TRANSPORTATION	9-1
Table 9.1 – Street and Highway Classification.....	9-2
Table 9.2 – Number of Lanes, Volume and Capacity	9-5
Table 9.3 - Signalized Intersections.....	9-6
Table 9.4 – Heavy Rail Stations.....	9-10
Table 9.5 – Age Distribution of MARTA Patrons.....	9-13
Table 9.6 – Income Distribution of MARTA Patrons.....	9-13
Table 9.7 – Gender Distribution of MARTA Patrons	9-13
Table 9.8 – Ethnic Distribution of MARTA Patrons	9-14
Table 9.9 – Residency Distribution of MARTA Patrons.....	9-14
Table 9.10 – Roadways with the Highest Accident Frequency	9-16
Table 9.11 – Level of Service Definitions.....	9-17
Table 9.12 – Most Congested Roadways.	9-17
Table 9.13 – Means of Transportation to Work.....	9-18
Table 9.14 – Vehicles Available by Tenure.....	9-20
X. IMPLEMENTATION.....	10-1

INTRODUCTION

History of Decatur

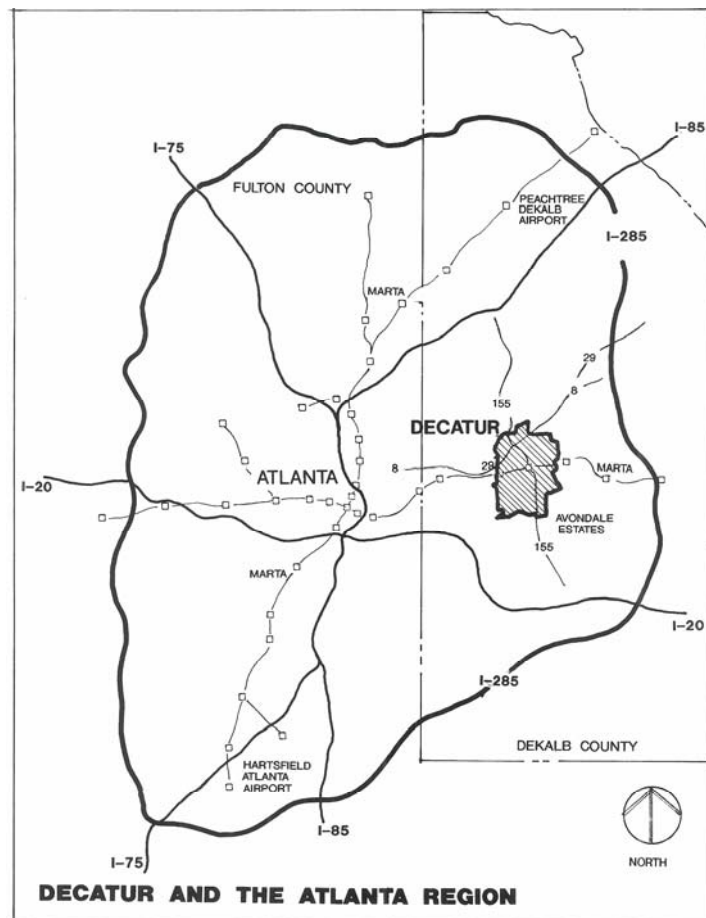
The City of Decatur is located in the central portion of the Atlanta Region, six miles from the City of Atlanta's central business core. It was incorporated in 1823, as the county seat of a newly formed DeKalb County. It is the second oldest municipality in metropolitan Atlanta and was named for Stephen Decatur, the popular American naval hero of the early 1800's.

Map 1.1 – Decatur and the Atlanta Region

The construction of the Georgia Railroad in 1845 played a strong role in the development of the City. Anecdotaly, it is said that residents rejected a proposal by the Western and Atlantic Railroad to make Decatur a major stop on its new line because citizens did not want the noise, smoke, dirt, and confusion. The railroad thus moved seven miles west to a small settlement named Terminus, which became Marthasville, and then Atlanta.

Decatur was content to remain a small courthouse town. In contrast with its larger neighbor to the west, Decatur's population had only grown to 1,418 by 1900, its first 77 years of existence. The City's greatest growth occurred during the period between 1900 and 1940, when the city limits were extended and the population grew eleven-fold to 16,561. Over the next five decades, Decatur's population reached a high of 22,026 in 1960, remained stable at 21,943 in 1970, and then slowly declined to 17,336 in 1990. The decade ending in 2000 showed the first net gain of population since 1960, with the City having a population of 18,147. Net population growth during the last 55 years has been less than 1,000 persons.

Presently, the City of Decatur covers 4.2 square miles or about 2,700 acres. Its historic pattern of development began with a small town center for government and commerce that has gradually been surrounded by residential



neighborhoods. Heavy rail public transit facilities (MARTA) were added in the 1970's. In more recent years, the downtown area has evolved into a vibrant, family-oriented entertainment and commercial district with a high-density residential component.

Widely known as the "City of Homes, Schools and Places of Worship," as graphically depicted in the City's colorful logo, Decatur's best-known features are its historic single-family neighborhoods, thriving town center, and exceptional neighborhood-based school system. It has been the goal of the City Commission throughout Decatur's history of planning to retain the character and integrity of these resources, while encouraging managed growth.

History of Planning in Decatur

As early as 1925, City ordinances were approved which enacted limited zoning restrictions. Decatur's first general zoning plan was established in April 1937. Comprehensive development plans of 1958 and 1972 describe the City's early efforts to manage growth. Accompanying these efforts are special plans related to development of the MARTA transit system, revitalization of downtown Decatur and the Oakhurst business district, neighborhood traffic control, rehabilitation of parks and recreational facilities and similar studies. The Town Center Plan has served as the vision for the central business district since its adoption in 1982.

In 1988, the City Commission approved a recommendation by the Decatur Planning Commission to adopt a comprehensive land use and zoning plan. This plan zoned most properties in the City to reflect their current use, encouraging preservation of City's established neighborhoods and revitalization of its commercial districts.

In 1990, minimum planning standards and procedures for the development of comprehensive plans were established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and ratified by the General Assembly. The City created its first Comprehensive Plan in 1995 according to those standards and procedures.

Since the development of the 1995 Comprehensive Plan, the City has embarked on several important planning efforts including the Decatur Preservation Corridor Master Plan, the Storm Water Master Plan, Athletic Facility Master Plan, Avondale MARTA Livable Centers Initiative, and the Downtown Decatur MARTA Plaza Redevelopment Plan. The most profound and extensive effort was the 2000 Decatur Strategic Plan. The vision and policies for Decatur's growth and continued vitality set forth in the Strategic Plan have created a foundation for the community vision and goals section of this comprehensive plan.

The State of Georgia mandates that comprehensive plans must be updated every ten years in order for a local jurisdiction to retain its local qualified government status (QLG). This status allows the City to collect state and federal assistance funds. In January 2004, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs adopted a revised set of minimum standards for the development of the local comprehensive plan. In this same year, the City began the ten-year update

of the 1995 plan. The 2005-2025 City of Decatur Comprehensive Plan has been prepared according to these revised standards and procedures.

2005-2025 Decatur Comprehensive Plan Overview

At its heart, the 2005-2025 Decatur Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document guiding the growth and development of the City for the next twenty years. To the City's staff and elected officials, it provides a framework for decision and policy making. To the citizens of Decatur, it symbolizes a unified vision. For the City as a whole, it is a blueprint for success.

The preparation of a comprehensive plan requires a great deal of data collection to provide an inventory of current conditions. This inventory forms a basis of analysis that assesses how well these conditions meet the need of citizens now and in the future. To complement the technical track associated with the inventory and assessment portions of the comprehensive planning process, a public involvement program was designed to solicit input. An annotated outline of the City of Decatur 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan is included below. Details of the public input program are included under separate heading in subsequent pages.

The plan consists of ten chapters, each addressing a specific element of the plan:

- **Introduction** – This chapter provides a history of Decatur, an overview of the Comprehensive Plan and details of the Community Vision.
- **Population** – This element identifies and examines trends in population growth and in the demographic characteristics of the City.
- **Economic Development** – In this chapter, the economic base, labor force characteristics and local economic development opportunities and resources are inventoried and assessed.
- **Housing** – The inventory in this element details the existing housing stock and its condition, occupancy and affordability characteristics. An assessment follows that analyzes the City's ability to serve current and future populations.
- **Natural and Cultural Resources** – Natural and environmentally sensitive, and historic and cultural resources are included in this element. The element also includes an assessment of whether current protection measures for these resources are adequate.
- **Community Facilities** – In this element, public facilities and services are inventoried and their adequacy for serving present and future needs is assessed.
- **Intergovernmental Coordination** – This element examines the mechanisms and processes Decatur shares with other local governments and the City's level of satisfaction with each.

- **Land Use** – The land use element examines existing land use patterns and trends and includes a Future Land Use map and narrative designed to guide future patterns of growth.
- **Transportation** – This element inventories aspects of the transportation network in Decatur and provides an assessment on how well the system meets current and future needs.
- **Implementation** – This chapter includes the “2005-2009 Short Term Work Program” detailing the projects the City will undertake over the next five years to carry out the vision and goals of this plan. Also included is a status report, “The Report of Accomplishments,” for the previous 5-year “2000-2004 Short-Term Work Program.”

In addition to the inventory and assessment portions of each element, the Community Vision and specific goals relevant to each element are included in each chapter.

Public Involvement Plan

The basic strategy of the 2005-2025 Decatur Comprehensive Plan public involvement process was to involve elected and appointed leaders, City staff, community stakeholders, residents, and business leaders of Decatur in the comprehensive planning process. The plan called for two types of involvement: regular meetings of a Steering Committee, including a Joint Commission Session of resident boards and commissions, and a series of public meetings designed to elicit feedback from the general public.

Steering Committee: City and project staff considered several options for the development of a Steering Committee, and determined that the City’s Planning Commission would be the appropriate group to help guide the project process. The Planning Commission, established by local ordinance, meets monthly to conduct public hearings on land use and zoning changes, proposed subdivisions of property and proposed planned unit developments, and to recommend actions for consideration by the City Commissioners. It also reviews and recommends changes in zoning regulations and future land-use plans.

Project Team staff met with the Planning Commission five times during the development of the draft 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan. Meeting dates and the general presentation items are described below:

- **January 6, 2005:** Present project overview.
- **March 10, 2005:** Present update on plan, results of public meeting and comments received to date.
- **April 7, 2005:** Present March 28 Joint Planning Commission and Planning Forum results and other comments received to date.
- **May 5, 2005:** Present draft Comprehensive Plan.

- **June 9, 2005:** Present findings of May 31, 2005 public hearing and receive final comments on draft Comprehensive Plan.
- **Potential sixth and seventh meetings in August and September are anticipated to review the ARC's and Georgia DCA comments.

Joint Commission Session: In addition to feedback from the formal Steering Committee, the project team also desired meaningful input from various other appointed commissions and elected officials. To facilitate a concise and efficient means of gathering insight from a number of different groups, the Project Team held a Joint Commission Work Session. Members of the following groups participated: Decatur City Commission, Greenspace Commission, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Decatur Housing Authority, Zoning Board of Appeals, Waste Management Advisory Board, and the Board of Education. The joint session was a landmark opportunity, the first in City history, bringing together different perspectives from Decatur's various resident commissions and boards to work collaboratively on planning for the future.

Meeting participants were divided into four groups, dispersing members of the various commissions as equally as possible. Following a short presentation on the current conditions in Decatur, participants were asked to participate in a facilitated session where they responded to the question, "As we look towards the next 20 years, what areas or issues does Decatur need to focus on to remain on top?". Through a consensus-building process, the top five issues were selected from each group. Process results closely mirrored the comments heard from the general public, and are included in the Community Vision and Goals section.

Public Meetings: The Project Team also worked actively to inform, involve, and elicit input from the general public on the comprehensive plan update. In that regard, the project team held three public meetings: a kick-off meeting, a planning forum highlighting recent past planning efforts, and a public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan update. Additionally, the City web site was updated regularly with project information and an e-mail box was set up to receive comments from the public throughout the project process. Details of these efforts are outlined below:

- **January 26, 2005 – Comprehensive Plan Update Kick-Off Meeting:**
This meeting served to kick off the Comprehensive Plan Update and included a brief presentation on the Comprehensive Plan requirements, elements and schedule. It also included an overview of Decatur with specific emphasis on trends in population, development, transportation, and historic & natural resources. Following the presentation, the meeting was opened to the public for comments and questions.

This meeting, held at the Maud Burrus-Decatur Library on Sycamore Street, was advertised by various methods, including flyers distributed through the school system, a front page article in the Decatur Focus, e-mails to the Decatur Neighborhood Alliance – an umbrella organization for 40 neighborhood groups - and a legal advertisement run in The Champion, DeKalb County's legal organ, on January 6th and 13th.

Fifty-four people attended the meeting, 30 oral comments were made, with 10 written and 4 e-mailed comments received.

- **March 28, 2005 – Planning Forum:** The Planning Forum presented an opportunity for the public to review planning projects that led up to the Comprehensive Plan update. The City's significant planning projects included the Storm Water Master Plan, Preservation Corridor Master Plan, 2000 Strategic Plan and others. City and consultant staff were on hand to answer questions and take comments. The purpose of the open house format was to allow the public to familiarize themselves with City planning initiatives and policies and speak one on one about their concerns.

In addition, there were several avenues available during the Forum for the public to express comments on the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. The Decatur 2005 Existing Land Use map was prepared and presented at the meeting. Participants were invited to post comments concerning any community planning issue or concern. The vision, principles and goals adopted through the 2000 Decatur Strategic Plan process were also used as the basis for an interactive visioning exercise. The statements were presented on a 4' x 8' banner. Participants were asked to comment on how valid and applicable the 2000 vision and goals were to the 2005 comprehensive planning process by posting their comments and additional goals directly on the banner. A comment card was also provided.

This meeting, held in the Decatur Recreation Center on Sycamore Street, was advertised by various methods, including: flyers posted throughout Decatur, an article in the Decatur Focus distributed to 10,000 residents and businesses, the City's website, and e-mails to various groups and the project mailing list.

Forty-five people attended the planning forum, with 13 participating in the land-use exercise and 28 participating in the visioning exercise. Three written comments were received and seven people submitted e-mail comments.

- **May 31, 2005 – Public Hearing:** The public hearing presented an opportunity for the public to review and comment on the Draft Update Plan. The plan itself was summarized in a PowerPoint presentation with

special attention to the Community Vision and Goals section. Following the presentation, attendees were invited to ask questions and make comments. The comments received were incorporated into the preparation of the final draft of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan.

The meeting was held at the Maud Burrus-Decatur Library on Sycamore Street and was advertised by various methods, including citywide flyer distribution, e-mails to neighborhood associations and the project mailing list, and a legal advertisement run in The Champion, DeKalb County's legal organ, on May 12th and May 19th.

Twelve people attended the meeting. Approximately twelve oral questions and comments were voiced at the meeting and two written comments were received.

Summaries of the public meetings, copies of advertising materials, and submitted written comments are located in the Appendix section of this document.

Decatur's Vision for the Future

The 2005-2025 Decatur Comprehensive Plan's "Community Vision for the Future" builds upon the existing vision and principles statements adopted by the City through the development of its 2000 Strategic Plan. In accordance with the Georgia DCA's standards, it is also based on additional public input, the inventory and assessment portions of this plan, and consideration of the regional and state planning goals as expressed through the Georgia DCA's Quality Community Objectives.

The City chose to utilize the efforts of the 2000 Strategic Plan as a basis for the Community Vision for several reasons. Primarily, the process by which the Strategic Plan was developed closely mirrored the comprehensive planning process, utilizing much of the same research and analysis of Decatur's physical, economic and social aspects. Secondly, the public involvement process was extensive and broad reaching, encompassing an inclusive collaboration of residents, governments, business and institutional leaders. Finally, many of the projects listed within the Strategic Plan to support the stated vision and goals have already been put in place. For these reasons, the City remains committed to the vision and goals set forth by the plan.

The process by which the Strategic Plan Goals and Principles were incorporated into the 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan included a two-part validation process. First, the data used to formulate the goals was compared with recently available data to ensure that it still reflected an accurate picture of Decatur in 2005. Secondly, a "check in" with the public at the March 28th Planning Forum was held to make sure the goals were still applicable and to receive input on additions of any new issues or concerns.

The validation process revealed two conclusions: 1) the conditions in Decatur had not changed considerably since the 2000 Strategic Plan; and 2) the public was still very much committed to the goals adopted by the plan. Based upon these findings, it was concluded that the Strategic Plan's vision and goals were valid and could be utilized for the 2005-2025 Decatur Comprehensive Plan.

Once validated, the vision and goals were compared to the inventory and assessment portions of this plan and also the State's planning objectives to ensure consistency. A discussion of the how the vision addresses the objectives follows this section. Input from the public was added appropriately. The following outlines the resulting City of Decatur's Community Vision for the Future.

VISION

The City of Decatur will assure a high quality of life for ALL of its residents, businesses & visitors, both today and in the future.

The principles and goals identified by the community to support this vision are:

Principle A: Manage Growth While Retaining Character – Accommodate commercial and residential growth while retaining a small town character within an urban environment.

Goals:

- Retain and enhance the existing character of commercial districts.
- Encourage a diversity of business types with particular focus on local businesses.
- Protect existing neighborhoods while identifying the potential for selected growth and adopting standards to guide future growth.
- Develop residential design guidelines to ensure the compatibility of infill and redevelopment with existing resources.

Principle B: Encourage Community Interaction – Determine methods to maximize communication and connections between residents, businesses, institutions and government.

Goals:

- Maintain and encourage racial, ethnic, economic, cultural and other types of diversity.
- Reinforce neighborhoods and develop connections between neighborhoods.
- Strengthen communication and connections throughout the community.

Principle C: Provide Quality Services Within Fiscal Limits – Provide housing, transportation, environmental quality and public services to Decatur's residents and workers.

Goals:

- Increase opportunities for economically diverse housing for persons who live or work in Decatur.
- Enhance vehicular and non-vehicular mobility in and throughout Decatur.
- Continue the commitment to environmental quality, especially the preservation of green space and storm water management.
- Continue to provide quality City and education services within fiscal limits acceptable to the community.

This Community Vision and associated goals will be met through current and envisioned City initiatives. These initiatives demonstrate the City's strong commitment to:

- Affordable and life-cycle housing options
- High-density residential and mixed-use developments in central business core
- Promotion of transit oriented development around MARTA stations
- Marketing strategies to encourage and support local and diverse businesses
- Preservation and enhancement of existing green space and historic resources through the 2004 Preservation Corridor Plan
- Maintenance and creation of bike and pedestrian pathways
- Implementation of the 2005 Storm Water Master Plan
- Continued coordination with City Schools of Decatur, DeKalb County and regional and state agencies

More detail on these initiatives along with additional strategies and more specific goals identified through the public involvement process and Joint Commission Session are included under each of the related elements.

Quality Community Objectives

As part of the Community Vision and Comprehensive Plan development process, the DCA's Quality Community Objectives must be incorporated and reflected. The following objectives are supported by this Decatur Community Vision and 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan document.

Economic Development Objectives

Decatur has achieved a successful downtown central business core of government, office, service and professional, specialty retail and restaurant related businesses, as well as a high-density residential community. The City will continue to support these types of opportunities while exploring other avenues of appropriate growth. Decatur has a strong history of growth preparedness and proactive planning, specifically identifying those areas to be protected and those

suitable for redevelopment. The City coordinates closely with DeKalb County, MARTA, and City Schools of Decatur to ensure infrastructure is in place to support its growth goals. Decatur will continue to work with its business associations and the County to offer professional development and training opportunities to support the needs of employees.

Natural and Cultural Resources Objectives

The City of Decatur has considerable natural and historic resources and is committed to protection of its open spaces and significant historic resources through its Greenspace and Historic Preservation Commissions. The City is also committed to protecting air quality and its environmentally sensitive areas. Non-vehicular methods of transportation will be encouraged wherever possible.

Community Facilities and Services Objectives

Decatur is committed to providing quality and fiscally practical services to maintain a high quality of life standard for its citizens. Decatur will continue to work with adjacent and regional governmental bodies to formulate creative solutions to service delivery to increase efficiency and reduce taxpayer costs. Wherever possible, the City will seek to provide and improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities and encourage transit services as an alternative to automobiles.

Housing Objectives

The City of Decatur is dedicated to providing a diverse range of housing types. Of primary interest is the creation of workforce housing to allow people that work in the city to also live in the city. The City is committed to providing lifecycle housing for individuals of all ages and families of all sizes.

Land Use Objectives

As the City nears 100% build-out, land use policies focus on the encouragement of redevelopment and infill. Through the City's redevelopment efforts, the City supports mixed-use development in its central business core and commercial nodes along College Avenue. The City will focus on creating design guidelines to support appropriate single-family residential infill in its existing neighborhoods. The City has a strong presence in the Atlanta Region and is well known for its successful downtown retail and entertainment district. The City is committed to preserving this urban village sense of place.

POPULATION

Inventory

Total Population

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

Table 2.1 – Decatur Total Population 1980-2005

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

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

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

Table 2.3 – City of Decatur Forecasted Population Trends

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

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

Households

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

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

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

Source: Georgia DCA

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

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

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

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission
City of Decatur

Age Distribution

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Georgia DCA
City of Decatur

Racial Composition

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

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

Table 2.8 – Total Population by Race, City of Decatur

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

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

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

Educational Attainment

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census

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

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

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

Source: U.S. Census
Georgia DCA

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

Table 2.12 – Decatur Student Performance Characteristics

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

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

****not available at the time of publication

Income

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

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

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

Source: Georgia DCA

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

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

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

Source: Georgia DCA

Assessment of Current and Future Conditions

Unlike its surrounding neighbors, the City has not had to struggle with the pains of managing explosive growth. Its 20% decline in population throughout the 70's and 80's allowed the City the unique opportunity to step back and redefine its future with some careful and thoughtful planning. Its recent renaissance as an urban community with a highly successful mixed-use downtown is not a random happening. It is a direct result of proactive planning set forth decades ago. The increase in population seen during the 1990's is the start of these plans coming into fruition. The City will continue to grow at a faster rate, but growth is

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

With any successful city, as property values and the quality of services increase, so does the risk of losing the diversity of population. Decatur is no exception. The City has been very successful in attracting older, more professional and wealthier residents in recent years. Heard throughout the public meetings was the desire by the community to increase diversity within the City's neighborhoods. Looking at the distribution of incomes, it is apparent that strategies must be put in place to ensure housing options for those who earn less than \$30,000. Located throughout the elements of this plan are strategies to encourage a diversity of ethnic and economic backgrounds including those to provide a variety of housing options, promote a mix of businesses, and encourage more diversity at community events.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The City of Decatur has been very successful at economic development over the past decade. The importance of municipally supported economic development is to maintain an employment base and minimize poverty so that local revenues can adequately fund services and schools. The City Commission and the Downtown Development Authority, working with long-standing goals, a widely supported town center plan, and a growing market demand, has created a vibrant downtown shopping and entertainment district where ten years ago there was a plethora of vacancies. Successful commercial revitalization has also occurred in Oakhurst Village and the College Avenue Corridor.

The purpose of the economic development element is to provide a snapshot of Decatur's economy today through the use of standard statistical inventory tools, to offer an assessment of the current economy in Decatur, and to provide a vision and goals that will successfully propel the City of Decatur's economy into the next decade.

Inventory

Economic Base

In general, the City of Decatur is characterized by relatively low unemployment and relatively high household income. In 2000, the median household income for Decatur was \$47,935. This amount is higher than both state (\$42,433) and national (\$41,994) median household income for 2000. Nearly 20% of households earned \$100,000 or more (18.9%). As of 2000, 7% of families lived at or below the poverty level in Decatur. For Georgia overall, 9.9% of families lived at or below the poverty level in 2000.

Since its creation, Decatur has been the county seat for DeKalb County, Georgia. As such, it is not surprising that DeKalb County Government activities lead the list of major employers in Decatur. Major employers include:

- DeKalb County Government
- Emory University (satellite offices)
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (satellite offices)
- Agnes Scott College (education)
- The City Schools of Decatur (education)
- Allied Systems (automotive distributor and transporter)

Most of these employers contribute to Decatur's share of management, professional, and related occupations. The strength of the employers listed above has contributed to a commercial vacancy rate that was less than 10% in early 2005. The reduction in vacancy is approximately 10% since 1995.

The inventory of the economic base continues with information on the employment, personal income, and average wages.

Employment by Economic Sector

A key element of community evaluation for economic development is industry mix. Determining what types of employment exist helps to determine the strength of the overall tax base. For this reason, industry sectors are evaluated over time in order to identify trends.

From 1970 to 2000, Decatur increased its employment by over 3,900 jobs. Significant factors in employment history during this period include an increase in government employment of nearly 10% and an increase of over 1,400 services sector jobs between 1990 and 2000. These increases reflect a strong employment presence of DeKalb County government offices in downtown Decatur and satellite offices from both Emory University and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

During this same period, the finance, insurance, real estate employment (FIRE) sector rose by 64% from 1980 to 1990 and then dropped 62% from 1990 to 2000. Employment losses in Decatur for FIRE are significant because increases in this high wage employment sector took place at both the state and national levels during the same period. Between 1990 and 2000, Georgia experienced a 24.7% increase. Between 1995 and 2004, the average annual employment for this sector increased by nearly 18%.

There was also a large percentage reduction in wholesale trade employment from 1990 to 2000 (49%), but the decline in employment is consistent with county (2%) and state (5.6%) percentage declines as well. The Georgia Department of Labor reported that contributing factors for the decline in this sector include technological advances, office automation, and foreign competition.

A pattern of fluctuation for employment in transportation, communications, and utilities as well as the construction sector is also apparent during the 1970 to 2000 period. However, these combined employment sectors accounted for about 18% of jobs in 1970 and only about 7% of jobs in 2000, demonstrating a reduction in goods producing employment to service producing employment.

Retail trade employment remained stable over the period despite an overall increase in employment. The number of jobs in retail from 1980 to 1990 mirrors population loss in the City overall. Despite population increases between 1990 and 2000, retail employment did not rebound with the population increase, but remained stable. It is important to note that the increases in retail employment from successful downtown revitalization are not reflected in 2000 census

information.

The following table provides Decatur employment history since 1970.

Table 3.1 – City of Decatur Employment by Sector 1970-2000

Employment Sector	1970	1980	1990	2000
Agriculture	28	15	22	0
Construction	556	362	554	292
Manufacturing	462	303	394	366
Transportation, Communications, and Utilities	938	349	282	539
Wholesale Trade	242	305	306	118
Retail Trade	1,110	936	946	973
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	865	884	1,418	538
Services	2,163	3,532	4,267	5,674
Sub-Total - Private	6,364	6,686	8,119	8,500
Government	1,784	2,700	3,278	3,579
Total	8,148	9,386	11,467	12,079

Source: City of Decatur
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

The review of industries can also be evaluated in comparison with the entire state. For 2000, comparisons between the City of Decatur and the State of Georgia regarding employment by sector demonstrate five (5) significant differences. Most importantly, Decatur held 8% more professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management service jobs than the overall state percentage in 2000. In addition, Decatur held 11% more educational, health, and social services jobs than the overall state percentage in 2000.

Decatur had few jobs in others areas. In 2000, the city contained 5% less construction jobs than the overall state percentage. Decatur also contained 10% less manufacturing jobs and 5% less retail trade jobs than the overall state percentage.

These and all employment sector comparisons between Decatur and the State of Georgia are provided below.

Table 3.2 –Decatur Employment by Sector as Compared with the State of Georgia

Employment Sector	Decatur in 2000	Georgia in 2000
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining	0.01%	1.4%
Construction	2.4%	7.9%
Manufacturing	4.8%	14.8%
Wholesale Trade	2.6%	3.9%
Retail Trade	6.9%	12%
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	3%	6%
Information	5.9%	3.5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	5.6%	6.5%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	17.8%	9.4%
Educational, Health, and Social Services	28.7%	17.6%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, and Food Services	8.5%	7.1%
Other Services	6.1%	4.7%
Public Administration	7.5%	5%

Source: US. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Average Wages

Average weekly wages provide an overview of the quality of jobs in a community. The Georgia Department of Labor provides wage data at the county level. County level data from 2003 showed that DeKalb County average weekly wages of \$801 were higher than the state average of \$704, comparable to the Cobb County average of \$805 and the Gwinnett County average of \$786, but were lower than the Fulton County average of \$960.

Table 3.3 – Average Weekly Wages for
Selected Industry Sectors in 2003
DeKalb County

Industry	2003 Average Weekly Wages
Agriculture	\$313
Construction	\$827
Manufacturing	\$924
Transportation and Warehousing	\$695
Wholesale Trade	\$1,124
Retail Trade	\$491
Finance and Insurance	\$1,129
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$689
Services (general)	\$770
Sub-Total - Private	\$786
Government	\$883

Source: Georgia Department of Labor

Since Decatur has a greater share of management, professional, and related occupations, average weekly wages would most likely be higher for Decatur than for DeKalb County as a whole. However, the average weekly wage level for Fulton County indicates that some high wage jobs which Decatur residents might occupy are located in the employment centers of Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Buckhead Atlanta in Fulton County.

Personal Income by Type

For 2000, the predominate income type for Decatur residents was aggregate wage or salary income (78%). This income type refers to total money earnings received for work performed as an employee during the past 12-month period. It includes wages, salary, Armed Forces pay, commissions, tips, piece rate

payments, and cash bonuses earned before deductions were made for taxes, bonds, pensions, and union dues. While the share of income in the category of aggregate wage or salary income for households increased by 7.3% since 1990, the share of income coming from wages or salaries was the same as the state in 2000. The share of income from interest, dividends, or net rental income decreased from 11.2% to 6.8% during the same period. The reduction means that Decatur residents obtained less of their income from interest on savings or bonds, dividends from stock holdings or memberships in associations, net income from rental property to others and receipts from boarders or lodgers, net royalties, or periodic payments from estates or trust funds than they did in 1990. To a lesser degree, the share of income from social security also decreased. These findings and all comparisons between 1990 and 2000 are provided below in tables showing income type by percentage and income type by dollars.

Table 3.4 – City of Decatur Personal Income by Type

Category	1990	2000
Aggregate wage or salary income for households	70.5%	77.8%
Aggregate other types of income for households	1.1%	1.2%
Aggregate self employment income for households	6.4%	6.0%
Aggregate interest, dividends, or net rental income	11.2%	6.8%
Aggregate social security income for households	6.1%	3.5%
Aggregate public assistance income for households	0.8%	0.5%
Aggregate retirement income for households	3.9%	4.1%
Total Income	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Georgia DCA

Personal income is also provided by dollars. The increase in total income for Decatur is consistent with the increase in total income for the State at 94% and 95% respectively.

Table 3.5 – City of Decatur Personal Income by Type in Dollars

Category	1990	2000
Aggregate wage or salary income for households	190,887,549	408,033,200
Aggregate other types of income for households	3,095,089	6,263,000
Aggregate self employment income for households	17,239,454	31,332,800
Aggregate interest, dividends, or net rental income	30,360,824	35,821,700
Aggregate social security income for households	16,510,095	18,412,800
Aggregate public assistance income for households	2,216,466	2,596,200
Aggregate retirement income for households	10,532,321	21,707,600
Total Income	270,841,798	524,167,300

Source: Georgia DCA

Since Decatur has a greater share of management, professional, and related occupations, average weekly wages would most likely be higher for Decatur than for DeKalb County in general. However, the average for Fulton County indicates that some high wage jobs that Decatur residents might occupy are located in the Downtown Atlanta, Midtown Atlanta, and Buckhead Atlanta employment centers.

Labor Force Characteristics

Labor force characteristics explain the economic condition of the community's residents. The comprehensive plan explores this topic by reviewing employment by occupation, unemployment, and commuting patterns. Each topic contributes to a picture of the Decatur labor force.

Employment by Occupation

The review of labor force characteristics begins with a review of the occupations or types of jobs that are held by residents. The Census Bureau states that employment occupation is the set of activities or tasks that employees are paid to perform. Employees that perform essentially the same tasks are in the same occupation, whether or not they are in the same industry.

When compared with state and national figures, 2000 census information for

Decatur indicates that the City's residents hold a larger share of management, professional, and related occupations (59.5%) than state (32.7%) and national percentages (33.6%). The other major difference is in the production, transportation, and material moving occupations. At 3.5%, Decatur had much less employment in this sector than state and national levels. For service occupations and sales and office occupations, Decatur had a very similar share as compared to state and national figures.

Table 3.6 – Employment by Occupation in 2000
Decatur, State of Georgia, and the United States

Employment by Occupation	Decatur	Georgia	U.S.
Management, Professional, and Related Occupations	59.5%	32.7%	33.6%
Service Occupations	11.7%	13.4%	14.9%
Sales and Office Occupations	21.7%	26.8%	26.7%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	0%	0.6%	0.7%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance Occupations	3.6%	10.8%	9.4%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	3.5%	15.7%	14.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census 2000

Employment Status

The following section provides employment status information beginning with a comparison with state and national percentages.

Table 3.7 – Employment Status by Percentage in 1980-2000
Decatur, State of Georgia, and the United States

Government	Unemployment Rate in 1980	Unemployment Rate in 1990	Unemployment Rate in 2000
Decatur	5.1%*	5.8%	4.1%
Georgia	6.4%	5.4%	3.6%
U.S.	7.1%	5.5%	3.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

City of Decatur

* (overall DeKalb County unemployment rate)

Table 3.8 illustrates that Decatur unemployment declined from 5.8% in 1990 to 4.1% in 2000. In 2005, the Georgia Department of Labor estimated that the Decatur unemployment rate reduced further to 3%. The estimated rate of unemployment in Decatur is slightly less than the current State estimated rate of unemployment of 5%.

The following table provides past unemployment rates compared to surrounding counties, the state, and the U.S.

Table 3.8 – Unemployment Rates in Neighboring Areas 1985-2000

Neighboring Areas	1990	2000	2005*
Decatur	5.8%	4.1%	3%
Clayton	n/a	3.9%	5.8%
DeKalb County	5.0%	3.9%	5.5%
Fulton County	5.9%	6.0%	5.6%
Gwinnett County	4.3%	2.4%	4.2%
Henry County	n/a	1.9%	4.5%
Rockdale County	n/a	2.8%	5.3%
Georgia	5.4%	3.7%	5%
U.S.	5.5%	3.7%	5.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Georgia DCA

*Georgia Department of Labor, 2005 estimate only

Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns describe where and how residents get to their place of employment. The implications for commuting include residents' time, congestion, and overall economic conditions of the community. In Decatur, the implications for commuting also concern the balance between jobs and housing for residents and the utilization of transit resources.

As of 2000, roughly 80% of the Decatur workforce commuted outside the City for employment. Residents spent an average of 26.2 minutes commuting to work. The amount of time was slightly less than the state average of 27.7 minutes.

As provided in the table below, only about 21% of Decatur's workforce held work in Decatur. In comparison, census information in 2000 indicated that 44% of the DeKalb County workforce held work within DeKalb County. Recently, Decatur residents have expressed interest in more employment opportunities within the City. If appropriate jobs for Decatur's workforce are not added to the City, then existing commuting patterns will continue. These patterns are generally derived from census information showing that roughly 36% of the DeKalb County workforce that did not work in the County commuted to jobs in Fulton County and roughly another 10% commuted to jobs in Gwinnett County.

Table 3.9 – City of Decatur Labor Force by Place of Work in 2000

Category	1990	2000
Total population	17,336	18,147
Worked in State of residence	8,487	9,740
Worked in place of residence	1,701	2,021
Worked outside of place of residence	6,786	7,719
Worked outside of state of residence	0	0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (SF1)

Furthermore, 2000 census information indicated that the primary mode of transportation for Decatur commuters was the single occupant vehicle (driving a car, truck or van alone). More than 72% commuted in this way despite the presence of three heavy rail stations. The next highest mode of commuting was public transportation, including taxicab (10.2%). Carpooling accounted for 5.6% of the workforce. Almost 5% worked at home.

Local Economic Development Opportunities and Resources

In order to take advantage of economic development opportunities, a local government must have a firm understanding of existing and potential development issues. A local community must also harness all available resources and organizational strengths of the community. The economic development section of this plan continues by describing the unique qualities for business in Decatur and how the City has organized its resources for continued economic development in the City.

Special or Unique Economic Activities

Decatur holds an enviable position in the metropolitan region. The City has renewed its mixed-use neighborhood centers, taken advantage of major public

transportation, and remains close to critical employers in nearby counties and in DeKalb County.

Specifically, strong neighborhood centers are prized in Decatur. The City has promoted the potential of its existing centers as a cornerstone of its economic development efforts. The City actively promotes and protects its three business districts and has begun to realize the benefits of revitalization. In 2005, the City characterized these three areas as follows:

Downtown Decatur Business District

Centered around the historic DeKalb County courthouse and the courthouse lawn, the downtown business district includes over 15 blocks of commercial, office, retail and restaurant options. Located north of the railroad tracks, the downtown business district is anchored on the western edge by the Decatur Post Office and on the eastern edge by the Ice House Loft project. The downtown district includes a collection of several office buildings, housing, commercial, medical, and legal services, a small hotel, and retail and restaurant district featuring over 45 restaurant selections and over 40 retailers, as well as a growing number of high-density residential developments. From the historic square to the West Ponce de Leon Corridor to the Old Depot District to the East Howard Avenue area, these various smaller districts are linked by a network of walkable streets.

Oakhurst Business District

The Oakhurst Business District, commonly known as Oakhurst Village, is centered around the intersection of East Lake Drive and Oakview Road and is easily accessible from the downtown business district via South McDonough Street. The Oakhurst Village once served as the commercial center of the City of Oakhurst before it was annexed into the City of Decatur in the 1920s. The Oakhurst Village serves as the heart of the Oakhurst residential neighborhood and includes a collection of restaurants and retailers adjacent to the historic Scottish Rite Hospital building. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Historic Scottish Rite Hospital has been renovated to include an art gallery, commercial office space, and a small housing complex operated by the Shepherd Center. The Oakhurst Village is surrounded by some of the City's historic neighborhoods.

College Avenue Corridor

The College Avenue Corridor includes a collection of distinct neighborhood commercial districts that extend along College Avenue; the area offers everything from small gourmet restaurants to neighborhood pizza, corner pubs and more traditional retail. The eastern edge of the corridor is currently being developed as a new mixed-use residential neighborhood with local retail and restaurant opportunities according to

the Avondale Livable Centers Initiative plan (LCI) and the City of Decatur Strategic Plan.

Though the economic benefits of these three business districts have not been quantified by City of Decatur, a private analysis conducted for the City of Decatur in 2003 revealed that there are more than 955 businesses and 9,820 employees within a one (1) mile radius of downtown Decatur.

Secondly, the City of Decatur is home to three MARTA rail stations. Over the past ten years, the City has taken steps to promote economic development and housing opportunities at the Decatur Station and at the Avondale station. The City continues to maximize transit-oriented development opportunities.

In 2005, the City of Decatur will benefit from a major renovation to the Decatur MARTA rail station in the center of the downtown area. The goal of the renovation is to remove many of the visual and physical barriers that the current station entrance imposes on the area. The project will benefit Decatur businesses because it will improve the quality of the public space near the MARTA entrance. Improvements for pedestrians will make shopping in this area much easier and pleasant. The redevelopment was funded by a federal grant that amounted to 80% of the project cost. The City of Decatur provided the remaining amount. Depending on the start date, the project is expected to be completed in 2006.

Lastly, proximity to major education and research-oriented institutions is a special quality for Decatur. As stated previously, the City of Decatur has benefited from satellite office uses from nearby educational and research employers in the Clifton Corridor. The opportunity to continue or expand office uses from these employers is unique for Decatur.

Local Economic Development Resources

Decatur Downtown Development Authority and Decatur Development Authority

The primary business resource in Decatur is the Decatur Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The Mission Statement of the Downtown Development Authority is to assure the long-term economic stability of downtown Decatur by maintaining the small town character of the district and supporting values that assure Decatur is a great place to live, work, play, invest and do business.

The DDA also includes the Citywide Development Authority. Both authorities share a board and staff. Its programs are based in the City of Decatur Community & Economic Development Department.

The Decatur Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was founded in 1982 to implement the Decatur Town Center Plan and to provide day-to-day

management of the downtown development program. The Decatur Town Center Plan was an important visionary document that set the stage for the success of the downtown that the City enjoys today.

The DDA maintains a work program for development, recruiting, and business retention. Over the past few years the DDA has been actively engaged in specific project sites. Some of the most significant recent activities include design, zoning, and marketing assistance for proposed developments at 201 West Ponce de Leon, 101 Ponce Plaza and 335 West Ponce de Leon Avenue. For the Oakhurst area, the DDA continues to pursue redevelopment options for the Big H property. Targeted advertising and special events in the Oakhurst Business District have received both financial and staff support from the DDA.

The DDA works to assist businesses in a variety of ways. In order to offset disruption by the MARTA Plaza Redevelopment Project, the DDA implemented a marketing and public relations strategy for businesses that will be affected by the project. The DDA has also developed a plan for the East College Avenue district including an inventory of property ownership, consideration of redevelopment alternatives, and assessment of funding needs. The DDA has also attempted to identify grant funding for North McDonough, East Trinity, and East Howard streetscape improvements, as well as streetscape improvements in Oakhurst Village. In order to sustain small businesses, the DDA has developed a strategy to encourage diversified and local owner occupied retail uses.

For redevelopment opportunities, the DDA has pursued projects at 315 West Ponce de Leon, the 233 East Trinity block, the 500 block of Church Street and the Bank of America site. The DDA has also worked with DeKalb County to identify the best opportunities for the Calloway Building block so that demolition of the existing structure might result in a new mixed-use redevelopment of the five-acre site.

For the Avondale/Decatur Livable Centers Initiative Area, the DDA has supported activities to get the project started and directed tenant prospects to the East Decatur Station project area. In addition, the DDA has focused on annexation issues related to redevelopment opportunities east of the project area.

For business recruitment, the DDA generally markets Decatur as an active “Live, Work, Play” community in an urban setting with small town roots. The organization maintains regular communication with commercial property owners and leasing agents to stay current on available space and route business prospects effectively. The DDA has also concentrated efforts to recruit retail/restaurants and other desirable businesses based on marketing studies.

For business retention, the DDA regularly updates marketing materials for restaurants and retailers including materials for special events such as the July 4th Sidewalk Sale and the Terrific Thursday Holiday events. The organization

also supports existing retailers on parking issues, public safety, signage and similar program areas to assure a healthy business environment. Technical and financial support is provided to a variety of festivals and special events sponsored by other Decatur community groups to market Decatur.

Other current and future activities of the DDA are included in the Short Term Work Program of this plan.

An important aspect of the DDA and its achievements is its guiding principles. In addition to the mission statement and ongoing work program, the Downtown Development Authority utilizes the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Approach to revitalization. The Main Street Approach is based on four main principals: organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. Ongoing organizational activities help to build long-term stability. Promotion enables the business district to advertise its strengths collectively. Implementing visual improvements and promoting quality design enhances the physical environment of the business district. Economic restructuring enables the business district to increase competitiveness, identify opportunities, and attempt recruiting.

Since 1980, the success of the Main Street Approach nationwide has resulted in more than \$18.3 billion in total public and private reinvestment in physical improvements, a net gain of 60,577 businesses, and a net gain in jobs of over 244,000. Since Decatur utilized the Main Street Approach, downtown revitalization in Decatur is part of this overall success.

Decatur Business Association

The purpose of the Decatur Business Association (DBA) is to advocate for business interests in the City and to promote the City of Decatur as a "unique thriving, small-town experience in metro Atlanta." The DBA is a membership organization that includes businesses, professionals, financial institutions, arts groups, associated agencies and organizations and private individuals.

Young Professionals of Decatur

The Young Professionals of Decatur is a civic organization created to strengthen the careers, business and volunteer opportunities for young professionals in and around the City of Decatur. The organization works to promote networking among members, educate members on current business topics and political initiatives, and encourage civic involvement.

Oakhurst Business Association

The Oakhurst Business Association advocates for businesses including restaurants, art galleries, hair salons and barbershops, dry cleaners and a wide variety of other retailers in the Oakhurst Village, promoting them as "part of what makes the Oakhurst neighborhood a vibrant and charming place, and what

others far and wide have discovered ... a small town atmosphere with big city service.”

South Decatur Community Development Corporation (SDCDC)

The South Decatur Community Development Corporation (SDCDC) was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1994 to address some specific concerns of South Decatur residents. The organization received a major boost when the City of Decatur donated the commercial building at 350 Mead Road to the SDCDC in 1998. The organization sold the building, which is now occupied by several businesses. Sales proceeds are now invested with the income available to reinvest for the betterment of the South Decatur community. The SDCDC mission is to have a positive, measurable impact on the economic and cultural development of the South Decatur Community.

Economic Development Programs and Tools

The Decatur Development Authority (DDA) staff provides assistance to the Decatur Business Association (DBA) through a contract for services. The relationship between the DDA and the DBA was established in order to bridge the interests of the City and the business community.

With the exception of limited density bonuses for affordable housing, the City does not provide economic development incentives to developers, property owners, or zoning applicants. In past years, the Downtown Development Authority had been involved in some financing activities for economic development. However, the City of Decatur, through the DDA, attempts to make the development process work more smoothly for developers, property owners, and zoning applicants whose projects reflect adopted community goals.

Georgia Power Company

Through the Community & Economic Development Department, the City of Decatur receives occasional economic development assistance from Georgia Power. The company's Community and Economic Development organization provides assistance to communities in order to build their economic development attractiveness. Assistance includes leadership, strategy building, infrastructure, and marketing consultation services. In addition, Georgia Power also helps new and existing companies expand in Georgia through leadership, technology, targeted research and data management tools.

Atlanta Regional Commission

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) provides economic development assistance primarily in the form of its Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grant program along with project implementation funding for qualifying study areas. The purpose of the program is to encourage livability in the region's activity and employment centers by providing grants to communities that are working to enhance livability and mobility for their residents. Decatur's Avondale MARTA Station received an LCI grant in 2002 and created a master plan to guide the

area's future development.

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

The Georgia Department of community Affairs (DCA) offers many programs to encourage economic development in the State's municipalities. DCA provides community development block grants which can be used for a variety of uses. In addition, DCA also has programs that provide loans for cities in order to foster economic development as well as tax breaks for corporations and low-income housing.

Education and Training Opportunities

Since the City of Decatur does not provide job training, the residents and businesses in the City may utilize the DeKalb Workforce Center, Inc. (DWC). Located on Church Street in Decatur, the DWC administers employment and workforce development for DeKalb County.

The Decatur Focus is a monthly newsletter in the City of Decatur. The purpose of the newsletter is to promote the city and encourage the exchange of information among residents, business owners, and the school system. The Decatur Focus is a joint publication of the City of Decatur, the Decatur Downtown Development Authority, and the Decatur Business Association. The circulation of the Decatur Focus is approximately 10,000. The newsletter is mailed to all households in the City of Decatur, all of the city's business and professional license holders, and all members of the Decatur Business Association. Other copies of the newsletter are provided through the City's marketing packets as handouts available on the City's website and mailed upon request.

Assessment of Economic Development Issues, Trends and Opportunities

The assessment of economic development issues, trends, and opportunities begins with a review of the future of employment in Decatur.

Table 3.10 – Decatur Employment by Sector 2000 to 2030

Year	2000	2010	2020	2030
Construction	292	227	292	362
Manufacturing	366	402	490	575
Transportation, Communications, Utilities	539	778	1,021	1,234
Wholesale Trade	118	41	27	27
Retail	973	1,279	1,859	2,571
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	538	189	107	91
Services	5,674	6,406	6,913	7,313
Government	3,579	3,590	3,777	4,031
Totals:	12,079	12,912	14,486	16,204

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

Table 3.11 – Increase or Decrease in Employment by Sector 2000-2030

Year	2000-2010	2010-2020	2000-2030
Construction	-65	65	70
Manufacturing	36	88	85
Transportation, Communications, Utilities	239	243	213
Wholesale Trade	-77	-14	0
Retail	306	580	712
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	-349	-82	-16
Services	732	507	400
Government	11	187	254

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

The future of employment in Decatur over the next 25 years is marked by forecasts for large increases in services employment. The result will be an increase of 1,639 jobs from 5,674 jobs to 7,313 jobs by 2030. Growth in office needs for two major service employers, Emory University and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is expected during the 20 year planning period of the comprehensive plan.

For retail trade employment, the result will be an increase of 1,598 jobs from 973 jobs to 2,571 jobs by 2030. The 30-year forecast also calls for large decreases in the total number for wholesale trade jobs resulting in a loss of 91 jobs by 2030. For finance, insurance, and real estate employment, the City of Decatur is expected to lose 447 jobs by 2030. It is important to note that in 2030, forecasts indicate that 70% of all jobs (11,344) will be in the government or services sectors.

For the 13-county Atlanta Region, 2030 employment forecasts are roughly similar to forecasts for Decatur. The largest employment increases will be in the trade employment (basic wholesale trade, local wholesale trade, retail trade) and services employment (health, legal, educational, etc). As stated previously, these increases are also expected in Decatur with the exception of employment losses in wholesale trade. A second difference between the 2030 regional forecast and the 2030 Decatur forecast concerns employment in the area of finance, insurance and real estate employment (FIRE). Where the regional

forecast indicates modest increases, the forecast for Decatur indicates employment losses.

Points of Assessment

The City of Decatur recognizes that major employment growth will be in services and retail trade. The City should continue to accommodate these employers in order to maintain strength in these areas.

The City of Decatur recognizes the potential for employment losses in the area of wholesale trade and finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE). Unless recruiting addresses these forecasted losses, other communities will likely benefit from having more of these types of jobs than Decatur.

The City of Decatur has had considerable success in building a live-work-play environment across the city. In order to build on this goal, the City of Decatur recognizes that many residents would like to work in the City. To increase the availability of desirable employment for Decatur residents, the City of Decatur should tailor economic development activities and recruiting for specific employment areas.

Since the City of Decatur has had success in satellite offices in the downtown area, efforts should be maintained to capture future employment growth areas in the services sector. Some of this employment includes the type of work that is prevalent in the Clifton Road/Haygood Drive intersection of DeKalb County. Some of the most significant employers in the corridor include the American Cancer Society National Headquarters, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Egleston, Emory University Hospital, Emory Clinic, Veterans Administration Medical Center and Regional Office, and the Wesley Woods Center. Though Decatur already has a large share (60%) of management, professional, and related occupations, regional employment growth forecasts for 2030 show that health services, legal services, educational services, social services and membership organizations, and business and personal services employment areas are expected to be particularly strong. Continued recruiting and business development for employers in these areas could represent the type of employment that Decatur residents desire. Economic activities should focus on the current and anticipated needs of these employers as well as the locational advantages that Decatur might provide.

Economic Development Community Vision and Goals

Economic Development Community Vision

The economic development community vision is to promote business activity that reflects the diversity of the people, the "Live-Work-Play" environment of the City, and a strong desire for balance between large and small-scale business.

Economic Development Community Goals

Economic development community goals for Decatur reflect new desires for economic development and ongoing efforts that the community would like to continue.

- Continue marketing and public relations strategy designed to position Decatur as an active “Live, Work, Play” community in an urban setting with small town roots.
- To encourage the City and the Downtown Development Authority to continuously update an annual work program of activities.
- Promote existing small businesses throughout the City.
- Encourage mid-rise residential development on commercially-zoned properties in downtown Decatur.
- Cultivate a wide variety of retail in the downtown area by encouraging and recruiting both small locally owned businesses and larger nationally recognized businesses.
- Continue to market downtown Decatur as an ideal office location especially for satellite office needs from the Clifton Corridor.
- Sustain the Downtown Development Authority and its work program in the following areas: general development, the Oakhurst area activities, the Avondale LCI area activities, business retention, and business recruiting.