

# DDN Planning and Development Committee

## Breakout Discussion

March 11, 2015

### DDN Members Participating in this Discussion:

Mark Minick

\* Jim Dietz

\* Charles DeWald

\* Joan Karr

Mike Arceneaux

\* Jean O'Callahan

\* Kathie Allen

\* Linda Wasserman

Buddy Harrell (Chair)

\* *denotes interest expressed in being on committee.*

### Items of Interest/Concern Expressed by Participants:

1. Code compliance in general, but with reference especially to the 315 W Ponce project. It was expressed that there seemed to be a lot (ie, more than normal) of "variances" to code granted to the developers. Parking was mentioned as an issue, buffer space with other developments, things that appeared or came up after the plans were presented. Opinion expressed that DDA and Planning Commission seemed to pretty much rubber-stamp whatever the developers wanted to do.

2. Interest expressed in pursuing development of a city plan than includes a pedestrian mall, perhaps from Church to Commerce along Ponce. Example cited of Charlottesville, VA. This has been proposed before, with the idea always being shot-down, supposedly by the downtown businesses as being harmful to business.

3. Concern over traffic flow and congestion. The item in the City Plan covering synchronization of lights was deferred from 2015 to 2017. Parking in downtown area was cited as a problem.

4. A need for "better" railroad crossing gates discussed. It is believed that more modern technology, with perhaps less noise exists. It is not known whether the city has control over this issue or the railroad.

5. Annexation? Who is looking at this issue from the perspective of existing residents? What happens when 700 new residents are added to the Scott Blvd/N Decatur intersection area?

6. Issues with pedestrian crossings - maintenance, enforcement, and locations. Existing crossings appear to have very lax enforcement by the police. The suggestion was made that there be "buttons and signals" at least at some of the crossings as there is on College. The condition of the crossings with their cracking was discussed, as well as a need for a crossing

coming out the back of Town Square toward the Rec center.

7. An overall lack of satisfaction with Decatur WiFi - no one seems to have a positive impression with the availability or performance with the existing WiFi. Can it be improved?

8. Google Fiber - what can we do to get behind and support the initiative to rollout Google Fiber throughout the City?

Finally, there were kudos to the city mentioned, specifically with regard to efforts to encourage bicycling throughout the area, and with the overall safety environment and police presence. Participants were united in their support in these areas.

### **Next Steps**

This committee will be contacting all those who have expressed an interest in participating on the committee going forward, and coordinating a date/time/place for an April committee meeting.

Chair Buddy Harrell will consolidate our notes from the breakout session, a previous meeting Kathie Gannon and I held, along with the notes from the "Proposed Committee Structure" that George Dusenbury handed out at an earlier meeting containing suggested topics of interest, with a goal of consolidating and combining like topics from which we can pick our top three areas of concentration and associated action items.