

Downtown Decatur Neighbors      MINUTES

March 9, 2016

Meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Superior Court Judge Broulee was in attendance and acknowledged.

I      January Minutes were deferred to the end of the meeting to allow time to read them. They were then approved after proper motions.

II      Committee Reports

TREASURER – Sara Sullivan is preparing a budget. DDN has \$100 in the bank after expenses paid.

SENIORS - Lilla reported that they are in the process of establishing a Decatur chapter of Common Courtesy ride share program and AARP will help seniors with tax preparation at Decatur Rec Center on M, W, and F from 10 AM – 2 PM.

PLANNING AND CODES and COMMUNICATIONS – No report given due to lengthy program.

Public Spaces will present at the end of the meeting.

III      Program – Kathie introduced our speaker, Dan Reuter, who has served as the Manager of Community Development for the Atlanta Regional Commission for 16 years. He manages ARC's responsibilities under GA law as a Regional Commission related to local government and regional planning. Dan's division also manages the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), Community Choices and local government Comprehensive Plans – which is our topic this evening. Dan has a BBA from UGA and Masters of Science from GSU. He has taught growth management at both Georgia Tech and GSU College of law. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

Dan's comments are in the power point *Comprehensive Planning* which will be posted on the DDN website. As background Dan noted that the 1989 Georgia Planning Act requires local planning but the depth of the plan and implementation are not required. Portland has a Growth Boundaries model but in GA we separate land uses thus requiring more car use. Decatur, while a growth management model has a 30 year old plan and is now "in the eye of the storm" as people desire to age in place, people moving to this area and young people wanting live in town. Comprehensive Plans are a high level planning tool that can be followed with special studies for small areas, districts or corridors; development regulations like zoning and then investment tools like SPLOST or incentives.

Please review the entire Power Point for an overview of Comprehensive Planning. It is on the website and attached to these Minutes.

Q and A:

1. *Explain the LCI grants* – Grant to help plan and look at all transportation modes, mix of uses and community involvement. The program also gives grants to implement the plan. Decatur Square is an example.
2. *Downtown is zoned C-2, which may not be appropriate any more, how is this issue addressed in the Comp Plan?* It's the zoning that deals with negative impacts and things that don't work for the community. There are new kinds of codes out there now so Decatur zoning is no longer considered sophisticated. Need a way to jump in to massage things and staff can do that.
3. *How to get data in sync as our 2010 Plan is based on 2000 data, before downtown had residents?* - You have to update your Plans and continually reevaluate them.
4. *Compare Comp Plans and LCI?* – Comp Plan sets policy, its at a high level. LCI is small area planning to focus on the details.
5. *Some probably thought that downtown could have unlimited growth and others may think No growth. How do you regulate growth?* – With zoning. Go block by block and see what is the maximum allowable. That will tell you where you are headed for un- or under- developed property.
6. *How can you limit if already zoned?* – Zoning is a vested right but you can still change your codes, many are looking at form codes or more modern codes.

Dan provided a handout of the Comp Plan dates for Decatur with a kick off in mid March and wrap up on June 8. Jim Diez was introduced as the DDN representative to the Steering Committee. The City will be sending out a survey in the near future.

IV PUBLIC SPACES INITIATIVE – George Dusenbury reported on the Parks initiative of DDN. Parks and public spaces counter balance dense urban development. It defines who you are as a community. The Decatur Square is a loved example of community green space but we are loving it to death and there is no accessible space to our growing number of downtown residents. A slide presentation illustrated lack of accessibility to park spaces, money issues, and over development leaving the parcel at Church St and Commerce the only undeveloped place in downtown. In April the committee and DDN will launch their PARKS for downtown initiative, NOW or NEVER with an email campaign and buy a t-shirt to wear to public meetings. Watch for information coming to your condo, on the website and thru email.

Submitted by Kathie Gannon, Secretary.