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Other City Code Amendments

To align other parts of the Code of Ordinances with the 2010 Strategic Plan and the proposed UDO, it will be necessary to prepare strategic amendments to:

Chapter 14: Animals

Chapter 18: Buildings

Chapter 46: Fire Prevention

Chapter 82: Solid Waste

Chapter 86: Streets, Sidewalks and Other Public Places

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Public Meeting 01.08.2014

Potential Changes:
New/Amended Districts

THE BIG IDEA: Strategically create new zoning districts that reflect the character of existing residential and neighborhood commercial areas, or that serve an unmet need identified in the 2010 Strategic Plan.

NEW DISTRICT: R-50 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

WHAT IS IT? A single-family district that would allow 50 feet wide lots and would include urban design requirements so new development is in harmony with the character of neighborhoods.

WHY? Much of the traditional residential fabric of Decatur is zoned R-60, although many of the lots of record are 50 feet wide. This new district would reflect the character of these older lots.

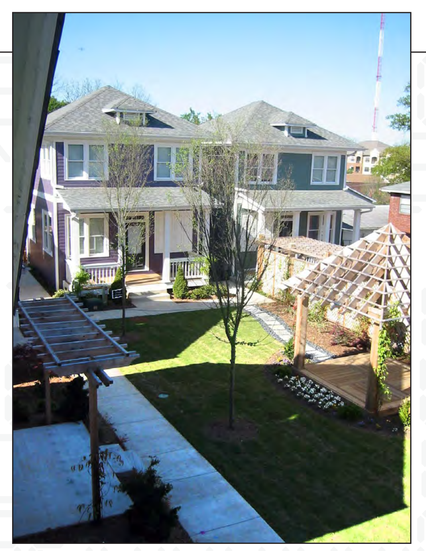
WHERE? This district could be proactively mapped by the City or applied for by individual neighborhoods.

NEW DISTRICT: MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

WHAT IS IT? A district that would allow urban, medium-density residential uses such as small lot-single-family homes, duplexes, cottage courts, and 4- and 6-unit multifamily buildings that resemble large houses. These building types would provide a good transition between existing traditional neighborhoods and commercial and mixed-use districts.

WHY? The existing multifamily district (RMH) promotes auto-oriented development that is incompatible with Decatur character. The new district would provide housing options for residents who want to downsize, but do not want to live in a large multifamily building in Downtown.

WHERE? This district could only be available for future rezoning.



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Potential Changes:
New/Amended Districts

NEW DISTRICT: NEIGHBORHOOD MIXED-USE

WHAT IS IT? A district that would allow small neighborhood commercial uses that are compatible with nearby neighborhoods. Above-shop flats or offices and live-work uses would also be allowed.

WHY? Existing commercial zoning allows stores that are too large for a neighborhood setting and do not support mixed-uses or live-work uses.

WHERE? This district could only be available for future rezoning.

AMENDED DISTRICT: LOCAL COMMERCIAL C-1

WHAT IS IT? Amendments to the C-1 district to allow live-work and mixed-uses, and to incorporate urban design standards.

WHY? The current C-1 district prohibits mixed-use development and includes barriers to live-work uses. As such, it is a significant barrier to expanding housing options in existing commercial areas, including the Oakhurst commercial district.

WHERE? This change would affect all existing C-1 properties.

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Potential Changes:
New Historic Preservation Tools

THE BIG IDEA: Provide additional tools to protect historic resources in Decatur, in both residential and commercial areas.

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

WHAT IS IT? Regulations that preserve the integrity of Decatur's more modest historic neighborhoods facing development pressure, but are less stringent than are found in the City's Historic Districts. These districts should address demolition delay by establishing a prescribed period for the review of residential demolition permits, including the notification of neighboring properties and a public hearing. They could also regulate new construction on an as-needed basis.

WHY? Several Decatur neighborhoods could benefit from greater control over demolitions and new development, but not to the level provided in the City's Historic Districts. Conservation Districts can slow demolitions and allow individual neighborhoods to determine what their most important character-defining elements are, and require new development to incorporate them.

WHERE? Conservation District creation could be initiated by the City or by nomination. Nominated districts would require verifiable written support from the owners of more than 50% of the privately owned parcels in the proposed district.

DEMOLITION BY NEGLECT PROVISIONS

WHAT IS IT? Regulations that prevent demolition by neglect in Historic Districts by establishing maintenance, monitoring, specific procedures, and enforcement mechanisms.

WHY? Demolition by neglect is a loophole in current regulations that allows Historic District property owners to use lack of maintenance over time to accomplish what they weren't able to do through the City's process – namely demolish a historic structure. In it, owners stop spending money on repairs and the building slowly deteriorates until it's finally condemned or simply falls down.

DOWNTOWN HISTORIC PROTECTION

WHAT IS IT? The creation of a Historic District or Conservation District in downtown to prevent the demolition and inappropriate reuse of historic structures.

WHY? Decatur's most iconic commercial blocks — including those surrounding the Square — are currently unprotected. If a property owner wished to demolish any of the buildings in downtown, there would be nothing the City could do today to prevent this.

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Potential Changes:
Post-Development Stormwater Regulations

THE BIG IDEA: Update the City's post development stormwater regulations to align with zoning and tree conservation regulations and incorporate "green" best management practices.

REVISED REGULATIONS

WHAT IS IT? Update post development stormwater management regulations so that they are clear, more flexible, and consider the interconnectedness of stormwater management, tree conservation, and zoning. Align zoning and other regulations with changes. As part of this discussion should include:

- How to align regulations with the new tree conservation ordinance
- How to clarify the triggers for single-family compliance
- How to best regulate runoff
- How to regulate the regarding of properties and potential runoff impacts
- How to encourage pervious paving and semi-pervious ground cover
- Compliance options, with a focus on outcomes, rather than specific technologies
- Evaluating the "joint common development" requirements
- Incentives for innovative management solutions

WHY? Recently, post-development stormwater management regulations have come into the public eye as Decatur has seen more infill development in its neighborhoods. To comply with existing requirements, some builders have removed a significant number of trees, resulting in a community outcry. Updated regulations are needed to remove the false choice between tree conservation and stormwater, incorporate new practices, and improve usability.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

WHAT IS IT? A highly graphic and user-friendly document that accompanies the UDO and includes and explanation of regulations and various compliance options.

WHY? Best practices of stormwater management are an evolving field, and every year new ways are developed to handle stormwater in a more environmentally-friendly manner. Stormwater management guidelines could provide a user-friendly way to highlight these, and would allow the City to update them with emerging best management practices without having to amend the UDO.

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Potential Changes: Sustainability Enhancements

THE BIG IDEA: Incorporate greater environmental sustainability into various aspects of the UDO.

GREEN BUILDING REGULATIONS

WHAT IS IT? Update the building code to establish additional "green" or high performance building initiatives, such as use of the International Green Construction Code, the National Green Building Standard, or other certification programs. Include potential incentives as part of this discussion.

WHY? The Decatur High Performance Building Initiative identified several options for improving the environmental performance of buildings, yet did not provide a final direction for how to incorporate these into the UDO. The development of these regulations allow that needed-discussion to occur.

OUTDOOR LIGHTING REGULATIONS

WHAT IS IT? Regulations to limit light trespass onto adjacent properties and reduce nighttime light pollution.

WHY? Decatur currently lacks regulations to reduce night pollution, despite increasing scientific research on the negative health and environmental impacts of excessive lighting at nighttime.

ANIMAL REGULATIONS

WHAT IS IT? Update animal regulations to address pygmy goats, reflect the small lot sizes in many Decatur neighborhoods (while protecting adjacent properties from potential noise and odor impacts), and expand the ways to deal with waste and odor to include more environmentally-friendly practices.

WHY? Current regulations are unclear and contradictory on how to regulate animals. They also fail to incorporate many "green" practices for handling animal waste and odor.

COMMERCIAL AND MULTIFAMILY UNBUNDLED PARKING

WHAT IS IT? A requirement that parking is bought or rented separately when the apartment, condo, or commercial space is bought or leased.

WHY? Today the cost of parking is passed on to most multifamily and commercial occupants indirectly through the rent or purchase price rather than directly through a separate charge. This means that tenants or owners are not able to purchase only as much parking as they need, and are not given the opportunity to save money by using fewer spaces. The alternative is to unbundle parking — rent or sell parking spaces separately, rather than automatically including them with building space. This is not only more equitable, but can also reduce the total amount of parking required.

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