



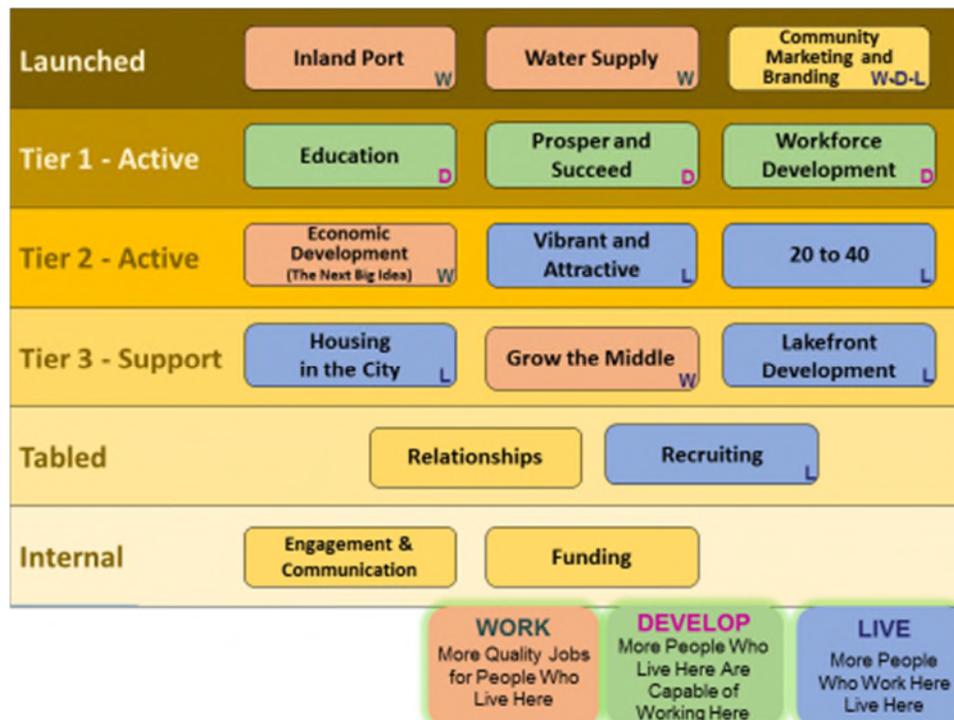
September 1, 2016

Grow Decatur Stakeholder Committee, Community Constituents and Friends-

It has been a very long time since we communicated with you regarding Grow Decatur’s activities. The good news is that we have been very active on several fronts. We do plan to hold meetings with our Stakeholder Committee and Community Constituents in about two or three months. But we thought we should provide this interim communication as a means to provide you a snapshot of some of what we are currently working on. If your feedback suggests this form of written update is helpful, we will plan to provide these progress reports on a quarterly basis.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

Last year after several community forums and workshops Grow Decatur updated its list of Strategic Imperatives. These are represented in the diagram below; a more detailed description of each of the *Launched, Tier 1 – Active, Tier 2 – Active and Tier 3 – Support* imperatives is provided as an attachment.



As suggested by this diagram, the three *Launched* imperatives are deemed to be up-and-running with a multi-year activity resource plan with defined accountability. Grow Decatur remains supportive of these imperatives but has little involvement with any of them.

The rest of this update will address the *Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3* imperatives.

TIER 1 – PROSPER and SUCCEED, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT and EDUCATION

These three imperatives rose to the top of the prioritization process this past year. *Education* was a pre-existing imperative on which we believe good progress was and is being achieved. *Workforce Development* was also a pre-existing imperative on which Grow Decatur's efforts made little progress. However, it should be emphasized that there is a good foundation of *Workforce Development* activities taking place involving Workforce Investment Solutions, Richland Community College and others. Grow Decatur's objective has been to find ways to significantly expand the number of people in our community who can benefit from these and other successful programs. *Prosper and Succeed* is a newly identified imperative from last year's review process. This imperative seeks to attack the deep and broad poverty in our community, along with the resulting low expectations that many people have for their future.

At the beginning of this year, work and work plans were being addressed in each of these three areas. In the April – May timeframe a couple of significant developments occurred. First, discussions with various leaders from the African – American community highlighted the need for Grow Decatur to become significantly more active in its engagement with the African – American community; second, as we addressed each of the three Tier 1 imperatives, it became increasingly clear that there was significant overlap and interdependencies- suggesting an opportunity to work on these three human capital development imperatives on a coordinated and integrated basis.

This has led to perhaps the most comprehensive initiative undertaken by Grow Decatur since its inception. Parallel and independent assessments are being made of these three imperatives by representatives of the following groups: the African – American community, the six largest private employers in Decatur, educators, those involved in workforce development programs and those involved in social service programs. The process is depicted in the diagram on the following page.

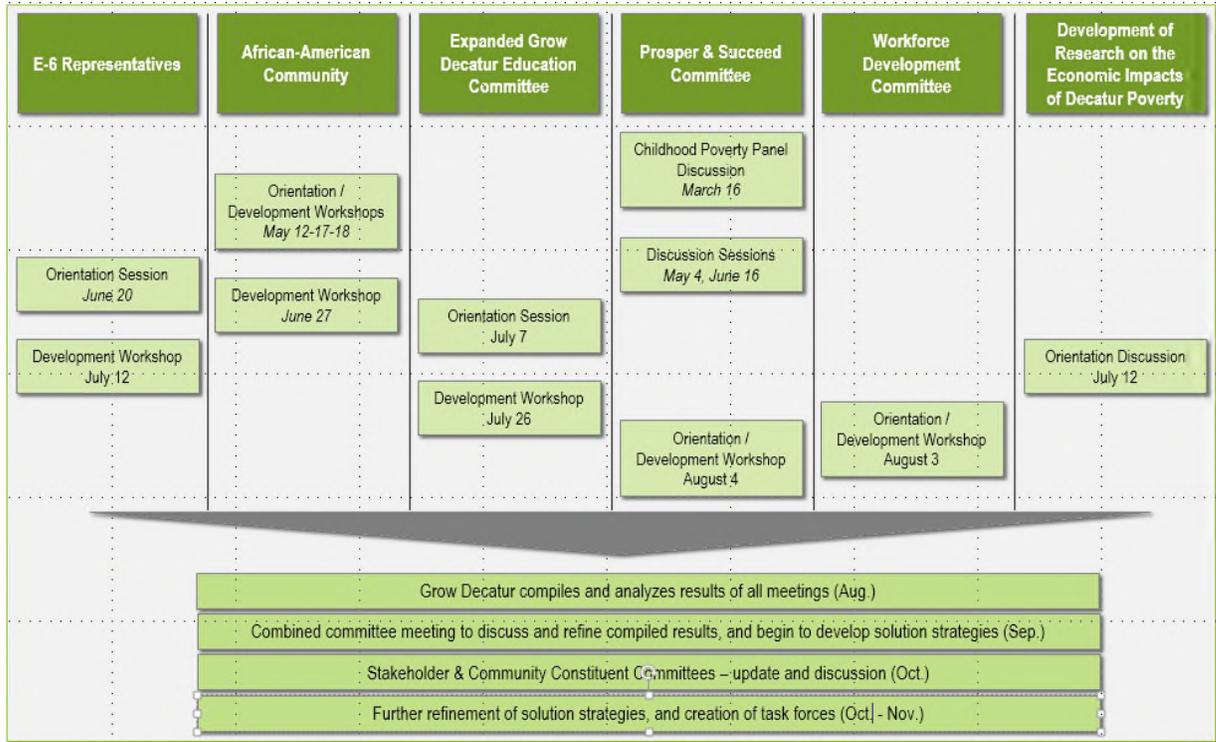
Each of these groups is independently assessing the overall situation and identifying and prioritizing what they see as the biggest problems and challenges. Next steps include identifying what the community's priority objectives should be in each of these three imperative areas. With this foundational information developed by each group, the process will then bring all the groups together in a common forum to reconcile differences in perspectives, prioritized problems and objectives and then begin the process of collaboratively developing approaches to address the problems and achieve the objectives.

Another key element of this overall process is an analysis being conducted to determine the real economic impacts of poverty in Decatur. This analysis will be particularly helpful to help assess the net benefit of various initiatives and help justify resource commitments to support proposed activities.

We hope to make significant progress on these imperatives over the next several weeks; our plan is to provide a detailed report of findings and preliminary recommendations to the Stakeholders Committee and Community Constituents- targeting the latter half of October. And in those meetings, we hope to obtain feedback that will help us better define the appropriate next steps.

GROW DECATUR ACTIVITY PLAN

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT FOR **TIER 1 IMPERATIVES**: PROSPER & SUCCEED; WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; EDUCATION



TIER 2

There are three strategic imperatives that are being addressed as part of the Tier 2 group: Economic Development (the next big idea), Vibrant and Attractive and 20 – 40. As is the case with the Tier 1 imperatives, we have some interesting relationships with these Tier 2 imperatives. These are reviewed below:

❖ Economic Development (the next big idea)

As defined, this imperative seeks to develop an overall capability to effectively coordinate and utilize the community’s resources and capabilities to be positioned to strategically pursue larger economic development opportunities. In recent weeks, there has also been further review of the best way to advance the *Grow the Middle* imperative with a continued focus on the establishment of a Business Development and Resource Center (“BRDC”). Currently, consideration is being given to broadening the scope of the BRDC to support its taking on the role of coordinating the activities necessary to support the ‘next big idea’ as well as the more complete protocols and networked participation for the BRDC to allow it to provide the concierge-level support to help mid-tier businesses to establish themselves and / or grow to the next level in the Decatur area.

❖ Vibrant and Attractive

One of the areas where significant and meaningful research work has been performed is in the broad area of issues that falls under the umbrella of the *Vibrant and Attractive* imperative. In its

broadest terms, this imperative seeks to identify and develop the attributes of our community that establishes it as a community of choice- to live, to work, to visit, to do business and to retire. A comprehensive survey has been conducted and a major current effort is sharing the information with many other community organizations who have a shared interest in the improvement in the 'quality of place' characteristics of our community.

➤ **20 – 40**

While structured as a separate imperative because of its importance, the 20 – 40 imperative in many respects addresses a subset of the same issues largely being addressed by the *Vibrant and Attractive* imperative- but more focused on those issues and desires of the 20 – 40 year old demographic. The 20 – 40 imperative also has some overlap with issues being addressed by *Housing in the City*. Good progress has been made in establishing several young professional organizations through major employers and most recently through the Greater Decatur Chamber of Commerce. The objective will be to work with these groups to identify priority issues for this demographic and to expand the scope of engagement of the 20 – 40 year old demographic beyond just the young professionals.

TIER 3

As noted on the diagram on page 1, Grow Decatur remains supportive of the identified Tier 3 imperatives but in general is less actively involved. Over the course of recent months, however, the *Lakefront Development* imperative is one that is receiving a fair amount of attention. About four years ago, the Decatur Park District held an Unveiling Ceremony for the Lakeshore Landing development. This was a comprehensive master plan with the goals to provide a unique venue for open space and entertainment, to optimize and enhance community access to the lake, to provide linkages from Nelson Park to Scovill Park, and to create lakefront activities that will promote multi-generational and multi-seasonal use. Unfortunately, progress has been slow. In recent months Grow Decatur has been working with the Decatur Park District to establish a focused three-year progressive development strategy with increasingly significant outcomes. While not finalized, an example of what this three-year plan might encompass would be:

- Year 1: Batting cages, climbing wall, splash pad, go-karts, linear beach
- Year 2: Amphitheater
- Year 3: Restaurant, commercial and residential development- west of Beach House and potentially up on the hill

Grow Decatur hopes to work with the Decatur Park District over the next few months to finalize this focused development initiative.

SUMMARY

It has been 4 ½ years since the public launch of Grow Decatur. Over that period, dozens of people have been involved and have helped sustain the process. Grow Decatur's mission continues to provide the guidance for all our efforts: **Recognizing urgency, Grow Decatur is a collaborative development and growth initiative seeking to transform Decatur, Illinois into a robust community.** Progress is being made, the level of community engagement continues to improve and the scope of our efforts has never been greater.

As this overall initiative moves forward we are looking for ways to strengthen and expand the organizational structure to support these various imperatives, including the further development of the

leadership team. In this regard, we are pleased to announce that Jeanelle Keck has joined the team. Jeanelle is a senior business analyst for State Farm Bank and has been leading the facilitation of the many sessions being held focused on the Tier 1 imperatives. Her process and strategic skills are particularly helpful to our efforts.

The balance of the leadership team consists of:

- Larry Altenbaumer, Midwest Inland Port
- Nicole Bateman, Community Marketing Manager
- Ashley Grayned, District 61
- Ellen Hearn, independent consultant specializing in Human Resource matters
- Bruce Nims, independent consultant- retired from Nims Associates, an information technology services firm
- Beth Nolan, Raymond James

Over the course of the next few months, we hope to add others to be more directly involved with many of the key imperatives being addressed.

COMMENTS

We encourage your feedback. Please feel free to contact Grow Decatur or any of the leadership team. Contact info is at the bottom of this page.

Your ideas, questions and suggestions are always welcome. The leadership team appreciates your support and your interest. Progress is being made; we are turning the corner; and –yes- there is much more work to do. But together, we can ***GROW DECATUR***

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20 to 40 *[previously existing imperative – Tier 2 active]* Develop and enhance the community's attributes that will attract and retain young individuals as dynamic and productive residents of Decatur and Macon County.

Community Marketing and Branding *[previously existing imperative - launched]* Effectively tell Decatur's story. Capitalize on the community's diverse set of assets to market Decatur as a desirable place to live, to work, and to raise a family.

Education *[previously existing imperative – Tier 1 active]* Insure that all students complete an educational track resulting in readiness for a career or advanced education without the need for remediation. Fill Decatur's job opportunities with fully qualified local candidates. Establish Decatur's public schools as destination schools of choice.

Grow the Middle *[previously existing imperative – Tier 3 support]* Develop Decatur as an attractive location for creation and growth of mid-tier businesses. Provide concierge-level support services to help grow businesses and increase employment.

Housing in the City *[previously existing imperative – Tier 3 support]* Develop affordable and attractive housing opportunities in Decatur for all demographics including low-income, young professionals, seniors, families, etc.

Inland Port *[previously existing imperative - launched]* Strategic development of Decatur as a distribution transportation center, capitalizing on Decatur's central geography, its existing rail services and interconnectivity, the potential of its quality airport infrastructure, and its interstate access.

Economic Development – the next big idea *[new imperative – Tier 2 active]* What will be the next focus area for building a stronger economic base in our community? What provides the best possible future impact, and how can we align the community's resources and energies to pursue it?

Lakefront Development *[previously existing imperative – Tier 3 support]* Support and promote lakefront development projects to provide Decatur with additional attractive options for housing, economic development, recreation and entertainment.

Prosper and Succeed *[new imperative – Tier 1 active]* Our community is challenged by significant poverty levels, including poverty that stretches over family generations. This poverty affects numerous other areas of our community growth, including education and workforce development. In addition, and perhaps as a result of the poverty around us, members of our community may set low expectations for the future of our community and even for their own personal future. Address these issues to determine ways to eliminate barriers that restrict our community's forward movement.

Vibrant and Attractive *[previously existing imperative – Tier 2 active]* Establish Decatur as a community of choice for existing and potential residents, and for visitors coming to the area for work or play. Address issues affecting the ability to recruit and retain professional employees.

Water Supply *[previously existing imperative - launched]* Support and promote City initiatives to ensure Decatur has an ample and reliable water supply.

Workforce Development *[previously existing imperative – Tier 1 active]* Provide training and development opportunities for Decatur residents – employed, underemployed, and unemployed – preparing them for highly skilled and high-paying careers and employment within the community. Development includes both technical and soft skills.

4 Core Values

People in Decatur have these “Greater Expectations” for their community. This is the kind of community we want to live in.

We expect that all residents, businesses and organizations in Decatur will have an opportunity to prosper and succeed.

- All residents of Decatur who are able to work will have meaningful job opportunities, allowing them to be self-sufficient and successful.
- Businesses, labor, educational and community support organizations will work collaboratively to identify special needs and help provide additional support to ensure that opportunities for employment can be realized by all.
- All businesses and organizations in Decatur will have access to well-qualified local workers with the necessary technical, behavioral and life skills.
- Decatur will be known as business-friendly with supporting systems, services, resources and an infrastructure that encourage new and existing businesses to succeed and grow.
- Prosperity and success are not givens; individuals and organizations assume the responsibility to pursue prosperity and success for themselves and support prosperity and success for the entire community.

We expect Decatur to be a highly desirable community in which to live and learn, work and play, raise a family, visit, and retire.

- Decatur will be a safe place to live and visit.
- Decatur will be clean and attractive.
- Our neighborhoods will be strong and robust, encouraging residents to connect with their neighbors to build a strong sense of connection and community.
- Decatur will be a healthy community, with highly recognized health services, including specialized capabilities, to meet its health care requirements.
- The people of Decatur will welcome newcomers and help them become involved in the community.
- Decatur will have a good variety of quality retail, entertainment, arts and dining options, attractive to both residents and visitors.
- We will have a broad range of recreational options, with high-quality recreational facilities and a strong neighborhood public park system.
- Residents of Decatur will be proud to show visitors around the community and call Decatur home.
- We will develop our unique community assets, including our downtown and the lakefront, to enhance the overall quality of life for those who live here, and establish Decatur as a destination of choice.
- Decatur will be an affordable community, with quality housing, transportation, opportunities and activities for residents with varied economic capabilities.

We expect Decatur to embrace, value and celebrate diversity.

- We expect diversity to be evident in all areas, including in our population, our businesses, and our neighborhoods.
- Residents will recognize the strength of our diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, cultures, spirituality, interests, arts, music and traditions.
- Our community’s commitment to diversity will be evident in the education and employment success achieved by all residents of Decatur.
- Decatur will be driven by a diversity of economic engines, resulting in good jobs across the blue-collar / white-collar spectrum.
- Our community will have services and activities that appeal to a variety of types of residents, including families, young professionals and retirees.
- The entire community, including business, labor, education, nonprofits, neighborhood leadership and governmental agencies, will work together to ensure the community achieves its diversity vision.

We expect that all residents will seek and support excellence in education and personal development.

- Educational systems and support services in Decatur will be robust and accessible, and will provide a pathway to future educational and career success.
- Decatur’s students will consistently realize success through access to a broad range of high-quality educational offerings that are viewed favorably by people living in and outside our community.
- Our educational resources will provide students with the training in academic, technical, behavioral and life skills necessary to meet the requirements of the next level of education or employment without remediation or supplemental training.
- Businesses, support organizations and education providers will work together to define requirements and structure programs to ensure students possess skill and behavioral requirements necessary for a strong workforce.
- Lifelong learning will be encouraged as a way to maximize the potential for a full life in every way, including economically, culturally, and personally.
- Families will recognize the importance of education, and will embrace and support the educational system; teachers, students and parents will work together toward educational success.