

# DECATUR 202: HOUSING

## BREAKOUT DISCUSSION GUIDE

Each group is tasked with discussing and finding common ground on the following questions. But first:

**Nominate a note taker.**

Take the notes of your discussion, then save them as a Word document or comparable and submit via email to [decaturdestination@gmail.com](mailto:decaturdestination@gmail.com) following the meeting.

After the breakouts conclude and we've returned to general session, your note taker will also be prompted to share highlights from your group using the Zoom chat function. The specific polling questions your note taker will be asked are noted within this guide.

Take a moment to say hello to your fellow participants. **Now let's begin.**

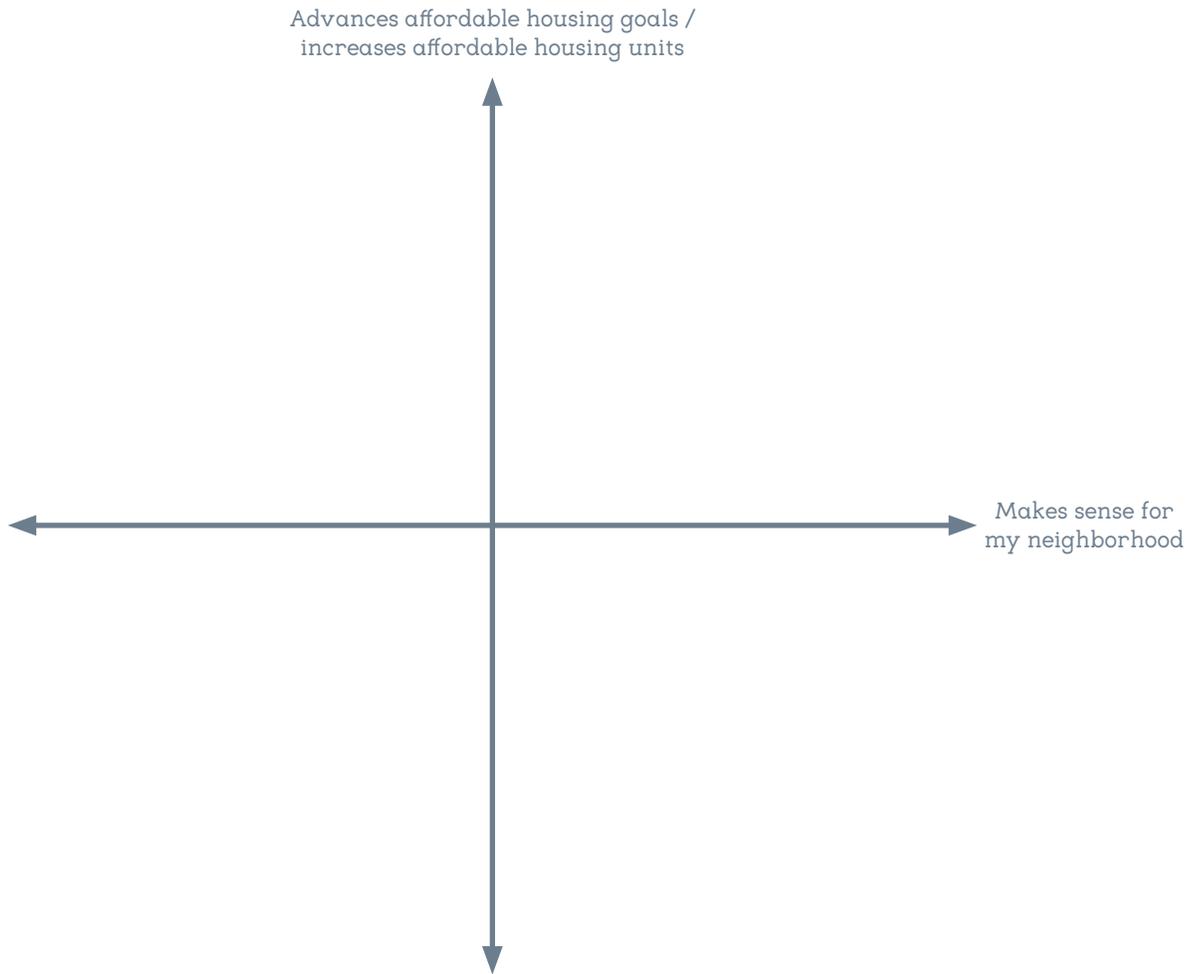
### 1. IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD (15 minutes)

Larger affordable housing projects near MARTA, or on one of the few large parcels still available in Decatur, are important options, but there is also a need for affordable housing within each neighborhood.

- » On the following page is a blank matrix with six neighborhood-based affordable housing strategies taken from the Affordable Housing Task Force Report. The vertical axis measures the degree to which a strategy advances affordable housing goals and/or results in additional affordable units; the horizontal axis charts the degree to which each strategy makes sense for your neighborhood.
- » Discuss with your group, then mark the grid in the agreed upon spot with the number for each affordable housing strategy. (Snap a picture of your completed matrix and submit it with your notes.)

**TO BE ANSWERED VIA ZOOM CHAT WHEN WE RETURN TO GENERAL SESSION:**

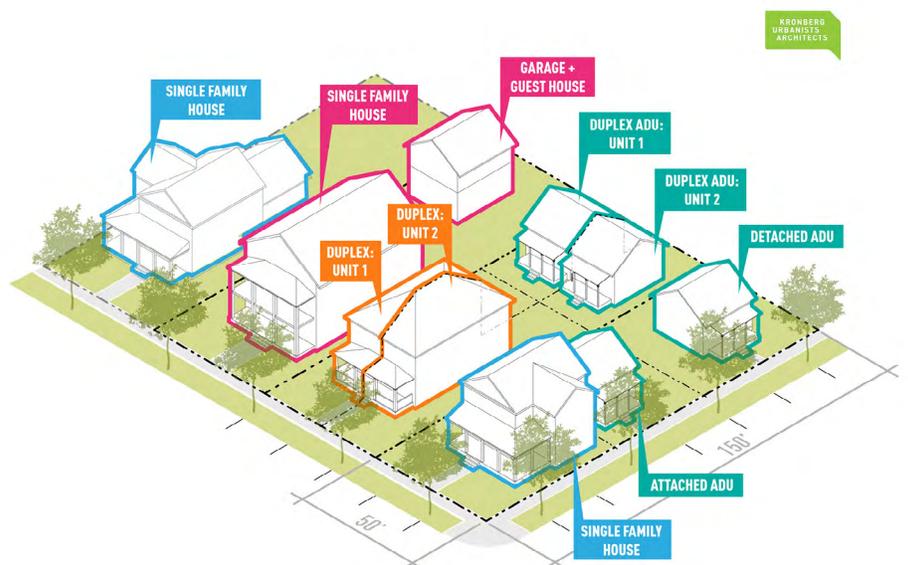
Which affordable housing strategies did you place in the upper right-most corner of your Question 1 matrix?



## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FROM THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE REPORT

(does not include funding strategies or city-wide efforts)

1. **Naturally occurring affordable housing** (tax abatements to keep existing units affordable)
2. **Duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and cottage courts** on single-family lots (zoning changes with size and height limits to respect neighborhood context)
3. **Accessory dwelling units** (finance program to encourage what is already allowed by zoning)
4. **Co-housing/communal living** (expand zoning districts where this is allowed as a limited or conditional use)
5. **Land acquisition** (identify, purchase, and partner to develop affordable housing at all scales)
6. **Decatur Land Trust** (long-term land ownership of affordable housing at all scales to ensure permanent affordability)



## 2. COSTS AND COMMITMENT (10 minutes)

Financial obstacles are the greatest hurdles to achieving affordability. Federal and state funding is limited and subject to strong competition. Local progress is dependent on political determination and the willingness to play a primary or supporting financial role. Discuss the following with your group:

- » Given the limited scope of funding options, will you continue to support affordable housing strategies in instances where the city must contribute financially, whether in the form of land acquisition, infrastructure, tax incentives, loans, direct financial support, or other options?
- » The expansion of affordable housing options is a long-term effort, far beyond the term of any one elected official. How can Decatur residents organize in ways that build and maintain momentum and continue to send strong messages of support to elected officials?

## 3. EQUITY (15 minutes)

An increase in housing costs in Decatur has significantly eroded our racial and economic diversity over the past few decades. Discuss the following with your group:

- » How has the racial and economic makeup of your neighborhood changed over the past ten years?
- » How could each of the personas shown in the presentation (or others like them) be able to afford to live in your neighborhood or elsewhere in Decatur? The personas are available for review on the following page.
- » How can Decatur promote an inclusive, anti-racist housing policy to help Decatur's neighborhoods become truly diverse?

**TO BE ANSWERED VIA ZOOM CHAT WHEN WE RETURN TO GENERAL SESSION:**

List one of your group's key ideas for promoting anti-racist housing policy in Decatur.

## HOUSING PERSONAS FROM PANELIST SLIDES

(examples of the types of people that might need affordable housing in Decatur)



### DESIREE

Teacher's aide salary: \$21,000

Can afford: \$375 monthly rent or \$60,500 home



### MICHAEL

Custodian salary: \$35,000

Can afford: \$875 monthly rent or \$130,000 home



### ADRIAN

Police officer salary: \$43,000

Can afford: \$1,075 monthly rent or \$170,000 home



### EMILY

Teacher salary: \$57,400

Can afford: \$1,435 monthly rent or \$240,000 home



### SARAH

Consultant salary: \$82,000

Can afford: \$2,050 monthly rent or \$400,000 home

(the average home in Decatur costs \$650,000)

#### 4. CLIMATE ACTION (10 minutes)

Neighborhoods with a more dense concentration of housing, jobs, and services make it easier to walk or bike, and allow some people to reduce or forego the cost of car ownership, which the AAA says averages \$9,282 per year. This would free up personal or family budget for housing expenses and can help Decaturites significantly reduce their carbon footprint. Discuss the following with your group:

- » How can Decatur encourage increased housing in locations that are close to jobs, services, and public transportation?

The costs of parking are often hidden, but can increase monthly rent or mortgage payments by 10-15% when the cost to construct a garage, parking lot, or parking deck is considered. And parking takes up land that could be used for additional housing, green space, or businesses. Widely available “free” parking also increases our carbon footprint by making it easier to drive everywhere. Discuss the following with your group:

- » How can Decatur’s parking policies and regulations be updated to avoid unintentionally encouraging too much parking?
- » Would you be willing to walk, bike, or take MARTA more places if it meant that more people could afford to live in Decatur, more affordable housing units could be built, and more green spaces would be available?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. DON'T FORGET TO SUBMIT YOUR NOTES  
AND MATRIX PICTURE TO [DECATURDESTINATION@GMAIL.COM](mailto:DECATURDESTINATION@GMAIL.COM)

WE'LL SEE YOU BACK IN THE GENERAL SESSION!