DECATUR, ALABAMA
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT
The Community

DECATUR, ALABAMA (Population: 55,683) Located in Morgan and Limestone counties in Alabama, Decatur is nestled in the Tennessee River Valley. "The River City" boasts a rich and colorful history and serves as the county seat of Morgan County. Decatur is among one of the largest cities in Alabama and its location on the Tennessee River makes it a major transportation hub in the southeast.

Originally a river crossing for settlers west of the Appalachian Mountains, the city became known as Decatur on June 16, 1820. A few years later, in 1826, the Alabama Legislature incorporated the City of Decatur. Settlers were drawn to the community at this time by its fertile river valley soil and relatively easy Tennessee River access to other cities. The year 1836 would prove to be a turning point in Decatur's history, since at that time it was chosen to become the eastern terminus of the first railroad line west of the Appalachian Mountains. This new outlet provided a boost to the city's economy and a rapid growth in population ensued. With two major outlets for industry – the Tennessee River and the Tuscumbia, Courtland and Decatur Railroad, Decatur became an important industrial hub in Alabama.

The Civil War brought with it a host of changes to the city. Because of its railroad, Decatur was of strategic importance during the war and therefore changed hands several times as the opposing armies struggled to control the all-important railroad. By the war's end, the city had suffered complete devastation, with all but three buildings burned to the ground.

The citizens of Decatur quickly began the task of rebuilding, and by the late 1880's – after two yellow fever plagues further decimated the city – Decatur was again expanding. In 1886, the Decatur Land and Development Company decided to promote a new city to the southeast of Decatur called New Decatur. By 1887, the new city, now known as Albany, was incorporated. In 1927, Albany merged with Decatur to become a single city. This merger is still evidenced by the two downtown areas within the city.

During the early 1900's Decatur was a major city in Alabama, with population between 7,000 and 8,000. At that time, many new homes were constructed, and civic improvements were made as the city focused on providing a superior quality of life for its citizens. In 1919 a livery stable was renovated to become the Princess Theater and in 1929 Decatur's first traffic lights were installed. Downtown Decatur was the place to be on weekend evenings, with movies, ice cream parlors and live theater and musical performances all providing a social outlet.

The city rapidly grew into a large economic center within the Tennessee Valley and was a hub for travelers and cargo between Nashville, TN and Mobile, AL, as well as Chattanooga, TN and New Orleans, LA. Throughout the 20th century, the city experienced steady growth, but was eclipsed as the regional economic center by fast-growing Huntsville during the space race. The city now finds its economy heavily based on manufacturing, mining, cargo transit, chemical and high-tech companies.

With a total area of approximately 60 square miles, Decatur's business climate is as progressive as it is diverse. It is home to industrial giants such as United Launch Alliance, GE Appliances, Nucor Steel, Daikin America, Indorama Ventures (a parent company to AlphaPet), J.M. Smucker Company, Toray, Bunge Limited, Hyosung, Ascend, 3M and Alabama Farmer's Co-Op as well as award-winning small retailers like Big Bob Gibson's Barbecue and Morgan Price Candy Company and is experiencing significant industrial expansions, retail development, and residential growth. For additional details, the City's annual CAFR can be found at [https://www.decaturalabamausa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2018-City-of-Decatur-CAFR.pdf](https://www.decaturalabamausa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2018-City-of-Decatur-CAFR.pdf).

In addition to three historic districts and Decatur's unique shopping and dining experiences, the city is home to a thriving arts and educational community. From the state-of-the-art Alabama Center for the Arts to the heralded Princess Theatre Center for the Performing Arts, there are several areas of creative inspiration and artistic outlets. The Carnegie Visual Arts Center hosts a variety of exhibits, classes and events featuring all mediums of visual art. The Cook Museum of Natural Science, locally owned and operated, recently opened a brand new, 62,000 sq. ft. state of the art natural science museum that houses live animals, an aquarium, interactive and immersive learning experiences, and variety of educational exhibits designed to cater to all ages. The Cook Museum of Natural Science has recently been recognized by USA Today as one of the top new museums in America. Decatur has also been named:

- Among the best small places for business and careers
- Among the best high schools
- Among the best cities to live in Alabama
Outdoor/Indoor Activities
With over 1,275 acres of park land, Decatur offers a variety of indoor and outdoor recreational venues that will appeal to any recreational enthusiast. With fishing, water skiing, canoeing, boating and kayaking, there's always plenty to do on the water. On land, enjoy hiking, running, biking, tennis, golfing, swimming, baseball, soccer and other sports through their award-winning recreational programs.

Point Mallard Park, home to one of the first wave pools in America, features 750 acres for recreational use with year-round activities, including the J. Gilmer Blackburn Aquatic Center, Decatur Community Archery Park, Native American Indian Interpretive Walking Trails, a golf course, an indoor ice rink, hiking/biking trails by the river, sports fields and a campground. The North Alabama Birding Trail is also a great outlet for wilderness exploration and scenic relaxation. In addition, the Jack Allen Sports Complex offers a 77-acre park that hosts 30 acres of laser-graded and irrigated soccer and football fields.

The Tennessee River is also easy to explore through the Decatur Riverwalk Marina and Ingalls Harbor. This backdrop allows for a variety of festivals throughout the year to celebrate music, balloons, Dragon Boat Festival, food and fun including the Christmas Tour of Homes, Tour of Gardens, Music by the River, Movies in the Park, Alabama Jubilee Hot Air Balloon Classic and the Spirit of American celebration. Each month the Market on Bank is available for residents and visitors as well as 3rd Friday’s which are both community block parties.
The Decatur Public School System includes twelve (12) elementary schools, three (3) middle schools, and two (2) newly built, state-of-the-art high schools. Decatur also has five private/parochial schools and three institutions of higher education. It is ranked 3rd in Alabama for Most Diverse School District.

Some notes about the Decatur Education System:

- Decatur is the only school system in the state north of Birmingham that offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program and is the only system in Alabama that has the IB program in the middle schools.
- Several elementary schools, all middle schools, and both high schools have award-winning robotics teams.
- The Environmental Learning Center is a unique partnership between public schools and industry.
- Both high schools are consistently above the state and national averages on ACT (American College Testing) college placement exams.
- Decatur City Schools have the second largest chorus in the state.
- Austin High School’s band has received the most consecutive superior ratings of any band in Alabama.
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- Decatur City Schools have 23 National Board-certified teachers, which puts it in the top 10 school systems in the state with the most certified teachers.
- A Decatur City student has been a state winner of SkillsUSA auto tech competition.
- Decatur City Schools are a national MOVE (Mobility Opportunities via Education) model site. MOVE helps children and adults with severe disabilities acquire increased independence in sitting, standing, and walking so they may experience, learn and gain mobility, better health, and enhanced personal dignity.
- Decatur City Schools was the first system in the state to have a partnership with the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.
- Every third-grade student in the city receives 10 Suzuki violin lessons.
School System/Educational Opportunities (Cont’d)

Decatur is also home to Calhoun Community College and the Alabama Center for the Arts. John C. Calhoun Community College, the largest of the two-year institutions in the Alabama College System, offers 49 associate degree programs and 52 career/certificate programs. Calhoun serves just over 9,000 students at its 110-acre Decatur campus; its Huntsville/Cummings Research Park site; at Redstone Arsenal, a local military installation; and at the Limestone Correctional Facility. Nestled right next to Calhoun is the Alabama Robotic Technology Park, a state of the art facility providing workforce training in automation and robotics systems and technologies.

Athens State University, in neighboring city of Athens, Alabama, is the oldest consecutively operated higher education institution in the state and is the only upper-level university in Alabama. Athens State works in direct conjunction with Calhoun Community College to serve students as they transition to complete the last two years of their bachelor’s degree programs. The University offers over 50 majors and 40 minors and provides online degree programs with two master’s degree tracks.

The Alabama Center for the Arts is centered around a cooperative agreement between Calhoun Community College, Athens State University and the City of Decatur, whereby each institution continues to offer their respective art programs and degrees, but also work cooperatively to address the educational needs of students interested in the visual arts, and to expand opportunities and experiences in the arts for students and members of the regional community.

DECATUR CITY GOVERNMENT/DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Since 1968, the City of Decatur has been governed by a Mayor-Council form of government. The Mayor is the Chief Executive Officer of the city and is elected by general election to a four-year term. The City Council is the legislative body and consists of five (5) members, who are elected for four-year terms. Prior to 1988, members of the city council were elected on an “at large” basis. In 1988, the city council established five (5) electoral districts at which time a “single member district” basis vote was done to fill all five places on the city council and since then, elections continue to be held on this basis quadrennially.

The City of Decatur provides a full range of services including: Finance, Public Works, Community Development, Fire and Police Protection, Parks & Recreation, Sanitation services and general administrative services. Utility services are provided through a separate Municipal Utilities Board, which is a major proprietary fund included in the city’s financial statements.

Decatur is a fiscally conservative driven community placing value on keeping the financial stability of the community at the forefront of their capital planning and growth. They are a value-driven organization dedicated to responsive, respectful and courteous customer service. The budget for 2020-2021 including all non-proprietary funds is about $97 million with a general fund budget of around $67.7 million. The city budgets for 525 FTE employees; currently filled at 514.

The Development Department is comprised of Community Development, Planning and Zoning, Building Code Enforcement and Engineering. This merger of various departments has taken place over the last few years creating a department that is robust and has the ability to continue to help the city expand and grow both residentially, commercially and industrially. The 2020 operating budget for all operations under Community Develop is $6,326,237 and the total allocated employees is 30.

Aiding the Development Director is the recently adopted “One Decatur Plan” (https://onedecatur.org/2020/). A comprehensive planning tool that evaluates various aspects of the city and establishes a series of policies to help guide future decisions. Since its adoption in 2018, the city has been working to implement the many action items in the plan. Significant highlights of items currently in action are: the initiation of a complete revision of the city zoning ordinance, multiple sidewalk and bike trail projects, a new rebranding of the city has been initiated as well as establishing a program in the high schools called “Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities”. In addition, the city is actively participating in Launch 2035, which is a regional long-range planning initiative that includes the Singing River Trail, a multiple country bicycle/pedestrian trail.
Challenges and Opportunities for the Development Director

With any organization, an organizational analysis needs to be completed to determine if personnel are allocated to the right divisions within the Development Department and if there could be an incorporation of functions within the various divisions as are currently recognized in the organizational chart. Additionally, the department needs to conduct a self-analysis to determine future needs of the department and how it should grow to meet the developing needs of the city.

As can be the case, there is a divide among the Council and the Mayor and there could be a change in council members as a result of an upcoming election. This polarized situation can lead to either indecisions or unresponsiveness when they are needed to create policy and direction for the department.

Northern Alabama is poised to have an increase in their employment base as well as their housing stock based upon the current construction of a major employer and the off shoot of other businesses. Decatur will feel the effects of this as well as some of the challenges it will bring in the development arena.

The city is undertaking a complete review of their zoning ordinance and this process will continue until the new zoning ordinance is approved by Council. The process will have multiple areas of stakeholder input and the revisions will be guided by the Director.

Candidate Qualification Criteria

The Mayor and City Council are seeking candidates who are strong leaders in development, planning and/or economic development with a proven record of providing effective leadership in a complex organization, preferably in a city, municipal organization or another level of government of similar size as Decatur. Ideal candidates will be able to drive innovation and move agendas forward in a multi-stakeholder environment. The successful candidate will demonstrate excellent communication skills and significant career success in building collaborative, effective relationships across divisions. Additional experience in strategic planning, budgeting and project management and complex problem solving with the ability to work effectively in a wide variety of governmental disciplines is important. The advertised salary range is $86,000 - $131,000.

The following factors of education, experience, leadership and management skills have been identified as ideal attributes for the Development Director to possess to function effectively in the position.

Education and Experience

A bachelor’s degree in urban planning, architecture, public administration, or a related field from an accredited college or university and seven to ten years of progressively responsible senior level management experience. A master’s degree or an American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) designation is strongly preferred.

Possess a thorough knowledge of the principles and practices of urban planning, land use, building construction, zoning, subdivision regulations, historic preservation, economic development, and site development rules, regulations and ordinances preferably in a growing, comparably sized community.

Experience in developing and implementing workable solutions and making technical decisions on a variety of current planning and code enforcement issues and continuing to improve on the implementation of those solutions.

Possess proven interpersonal and human relations skills with the ability to present a professional and empathetic attitude toward all who interact with the Department of Development, understanding that this role is a highly visible one in the community.

Demonstrated abilities to implement new technologies or enhance current ones to facilitate a “one stop shop” approach to customer service including the ability to issue on-line permits and permit tracking by outside entities.

Extensive experience in delivering written and oral presentations to governing bodies and to officials at all levels of the organization as well as the ability to effectively communicate with residents about provisions within the building, zoning or property maintenance codes.

Have a positive record of delegating and fostering an attitude of teamwork and creativity in problem solving, while ultimately being accountable for the quality and effectiveness of overall departmental performance.

Excellent negotiating skills with the ability to work closely with developers and consultants while maintaining the city’s standards for quality development.

Project management and working knowledge of various types of imperatives and development structure.

Ability to manage key issues, initiatives, and projects; must have a complete understanding of the nature of issues and initiatives in an organizational setting and the ramifications that land use and long-range planning actions have on other departments within the organization.

Ability to strategically analyze and interpret complex public policy issues and prepare comprehensive staff reports while being astute to the political environment.
Management Style/Personal Traits

Possess unquestionable character, integrity and ethical standards in the performance of the Development Director duties.

Demonstrate excellent oral and written communication skills with the ability and willingness to communicate openly and transparently with a variety of elected officials from local (i.e. Mayor, City Council) to federal and state; department heads; appointed boards; employees; and the community.

Demonstrated ability to navigate a path through various interests and demands of multiple stakeholders while maintaining a clear perspective and commitment to the overall objective.

Exhibit a style characterized by candor, directness, tactfulness, and diplomacy, with the ability to build consensus and find common ground for discussions, agreements, and partnerships.

A strategic thinker with ability to establish short-term and long-term planning goals and objectives, as well as the ability to develop metrics for evaluating progress and monitoring strategic priorities and challenging staff to do the same.

Be “hands on” and excel in a team environment and maintain an open rapport with colleagues and staff members, empower and support staff while valuing the talents and accomplishments of everyone; project an “unflappable” demeanor with the ability to meet challenges and adversity through leadership.

Possess the ability to be a self-directed achiever with the ability to conceive, communicate and carry out effective strategies for implementing broad policy and goal directives as communicated by organizational policy makers.

Have experience in the professional development, mentoring, and leadership of a staff with varying levels of experience; understand the importance of developing new staff, providing experience and opportunities that will anchor them to the city organization and be “easily accessible” and approachable as a director.
COMPENSATION AND HOW TO APPLY

The advertised salary range for the position is $86,000 - $131,000 DOQ with excellent benefits. Interested candidates should apply online by April 3, 2020 with a cover letter, resume and contact information for at least five (5) professional references to www.govhrjobs.com and to the attention of:

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