From Pitch to Planet: Decatur's Sustainable Soccer Stories

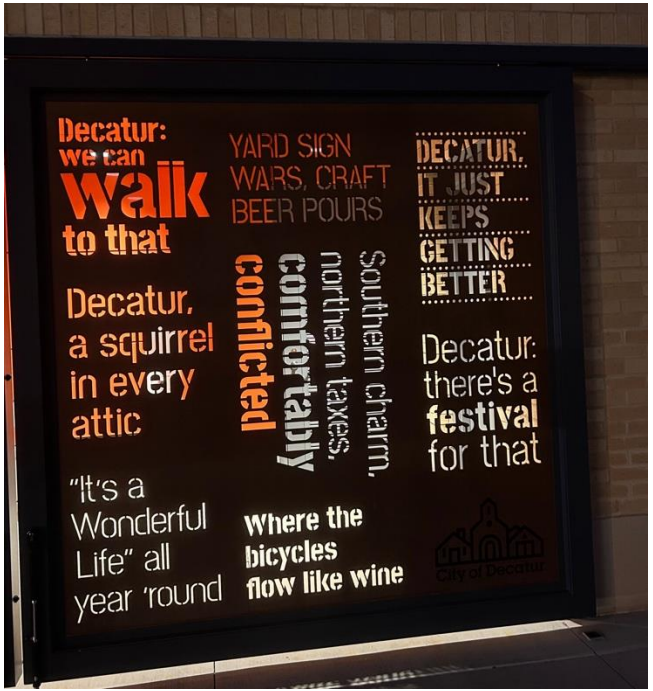
Presented by:

Gael Doyle – City of Decatur Parks & Recreation

Allison Ericson – City of Decatur Public Works

City of Decatur

“A City of Homes, Schools, and Places of Worship”

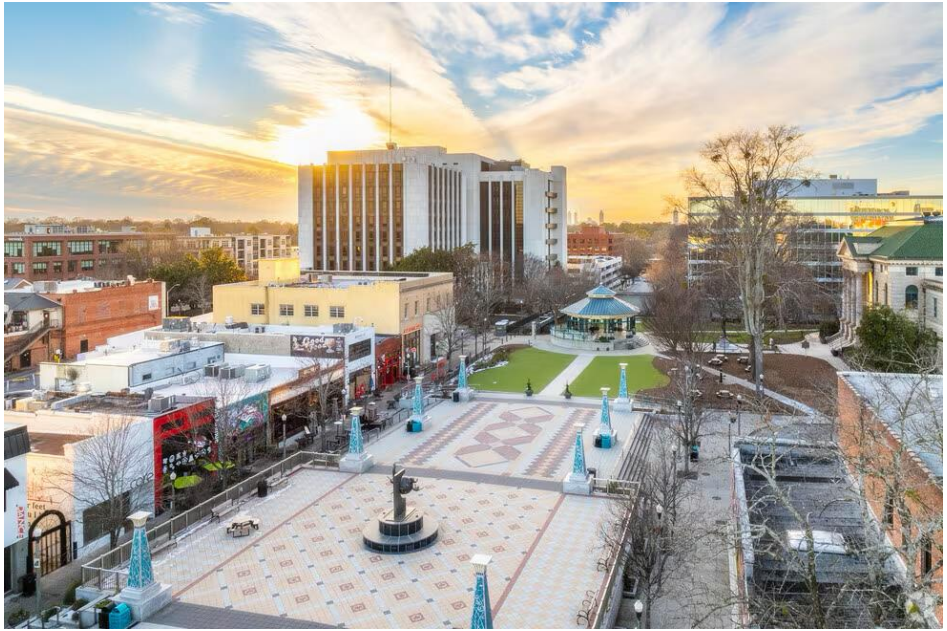


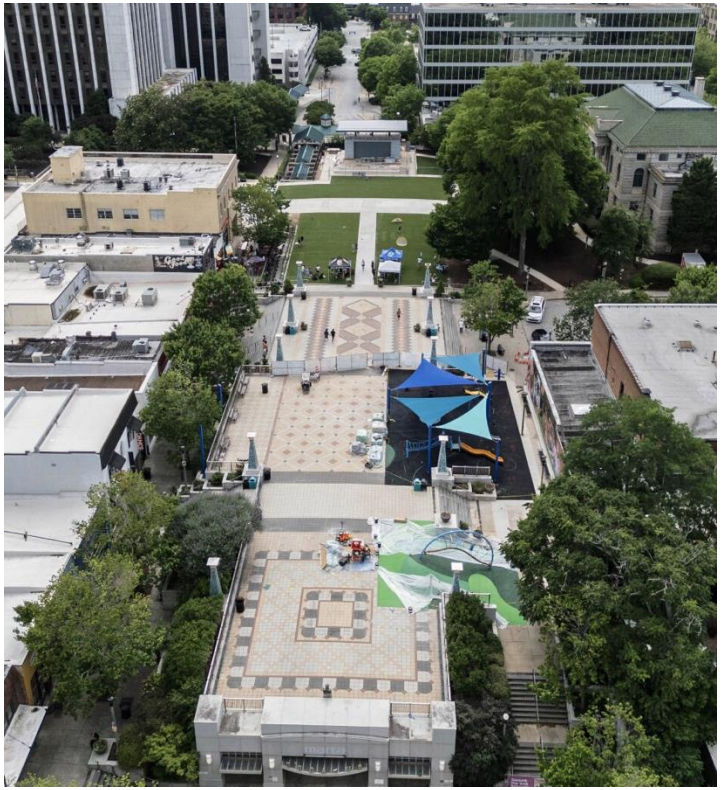
- 4.7 square miles
- Located 6 miles east of Atlanta
- Around 25,000 residents
- Median Age: Around 38 years
- Median household income is around $100,000
- Mix of single-family homes and apartments
- 16 major festivals plus smaller events and festivals
- Newly renovated downtown square
- MARTA station located under the square

City of Decatur

Downtown Decatur Square

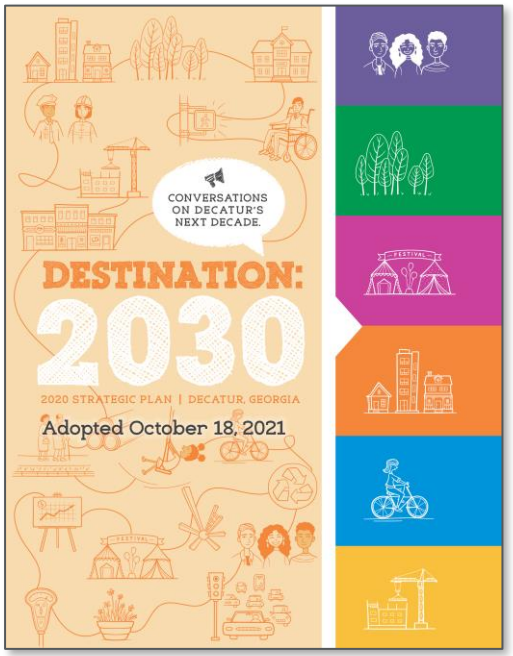
Decatur Town Center Plan 2.0 and Square Shake Up Transformation





Alignment with Strategic Plan

2020 Strategic Plan: Destination 2030



CA.15: **Recover discarded resources appropriately.** Opportunities to reuse, compost, and recycle items should be promoted and expanded to reduce waste, based on the results of the Waste Characterization Study.

CA.16: **Create a compost collection program.** Collect compostable material from local residences through a fee-supported program.

CA.18: **Reduce single-use materials.** Educational campaigns, policies, and ordinances can help businesses and consumers choose sustainable alternatives to disposable plastic and similar materials, including at City facilities and City sponsored events.

Decatur FC

Women’s Semi-Professional Soccer Team competing in the Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL)

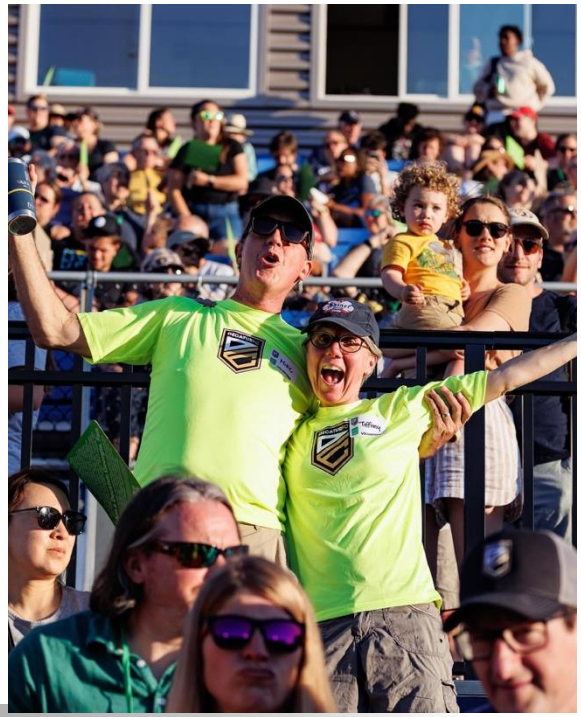
- Home matches played at the Decatur High School Stadium
- City Partnership and creation of the “Green Team”





Decatur FC Green Team

2024 Inaugural Season



The program included:

- Compostable plates and utensils from Better Earth, a Clarkston-based company.
- Composting and recycling stations throughout Decatur High School Stadium.
- Green Team volunteers helping fans correctly sort materials.
- CompostNow processing the collected compost into nutrient-rich soil amendment.

517 pounds of waste diverted

~8,000 attendees over the 6-week season

Decatur FC Green Team





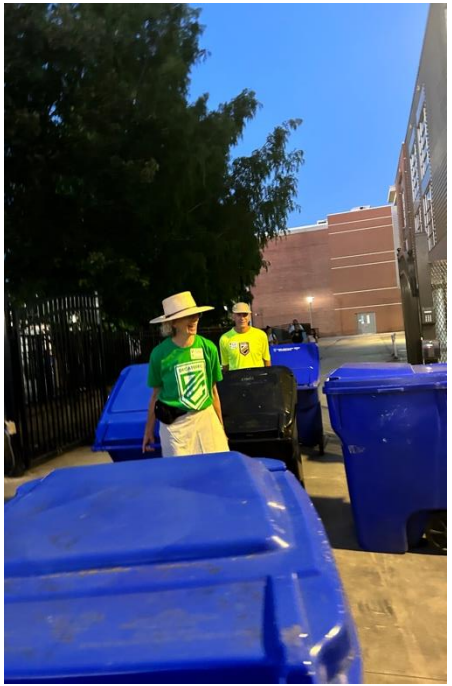


Decatur FC Green Team

Seasons 2025 & 2026

- City took the lead on volunteers for Seasons 1-2
- By season 3, the City started tapering off support
- Had recurring volunteers over the first 3 seasons
- **755 pounds diverted**





Decatur FC Doubles Down on Victory and Sustainability

Decatur FC's second season was one for the record books. The team delivered an undefeated regular season, captured the Peachtree Division Championship, and ended the year ranked #3 in the nation.

But the success didn't stop on the field. Game attendance increased by more than 60 percent, turning each match into a high-energy, family-friendly event. With free admission for all youth attendees, Decatur FC continued to prioritize accessibility and inclusion for the entire community.

The team also expanded its commitment to environmental stewardship through a growing Zero Waste initiative. In partnership with the City of Decatur, Decatur FC diverted 755 pounds of waste from landfills which was an improvement of 61 percent over the previous season. Compostable plates and utensils manufactured by Better Earth, a local company based in Clarkston, were used at all home games.

Composting and recycling stations at Decatur High School Stadium were staffed by dedicated Green Team volunteers, many of whom returned from the inaugural season. Their continued involvement reflects how strongly the program resonates with the community.

Collected waste is processed by Compost Now and transformed into nutrient-rich soil used in public planting projects throughout the city.

By combining elite-level soccer with inclusive community engagement, and sustainability efforts, Decatur FC continues to demonstrate that success off the field is just as meaningful as victory on it.





Decatur FC Green Team

What Worked & What We Learned

Successes:

- Controlled environment with minimal contamination (no outside food or drink)
- Coordinated with vendors on approved food-service materials
- In-game announcements reinforced the zero-waste initiative
- Strong partnership between Decatur FC and the City

Challenges:

- Educating fans about proper waste sorting
- Making collection signage clear and visible
- Recruiting and retaining volunteers
- Ensuring vendors used approved materials

Decatur FC Green Team

Leasons Learned









Legacy Park Community & Earth Day Festival

Applying the Model at a Community Festival



- Adapted the Decatur FC approach for an open festival
- Coordinated with vendors to provide compostable serviceware
- Established recycling and compost collection stations staffed with youth volunteers
- Used a less congested park setting to test the approach
- Explored how the model could be adapted for other City events

Decatur WatchFest ‘26

Celebrating the FIFA World Cup 26™ with a 34-day watch party

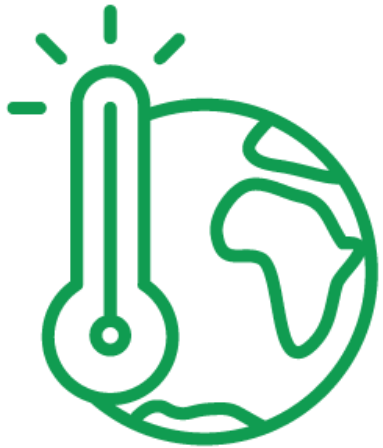




Decatur WatchFest ‘26

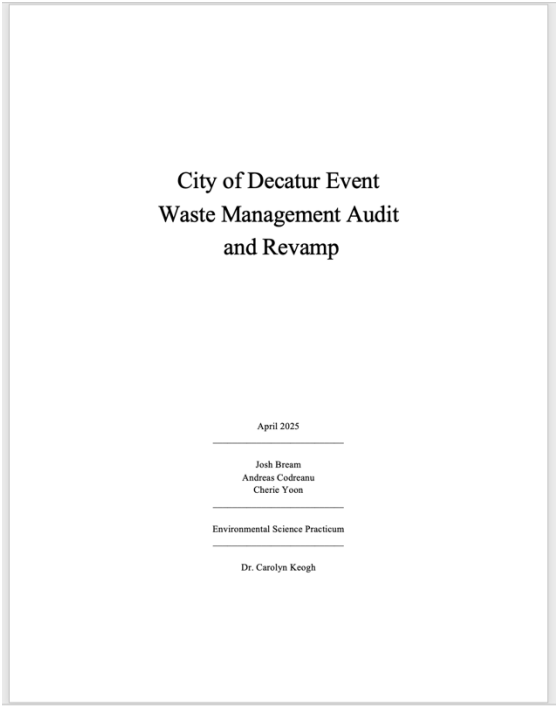
One major question:

“How can we make this event less trashy?”



Decatur WatchFest ‘26

Working with Emory Students



City of Decatur Event
Waste Management Audit
and Revamp

April 2025

Josh Bream
Andreas Codreanu
Cherie Yoon

Environmental Science Practicum

Dr. Carolyn Keogh

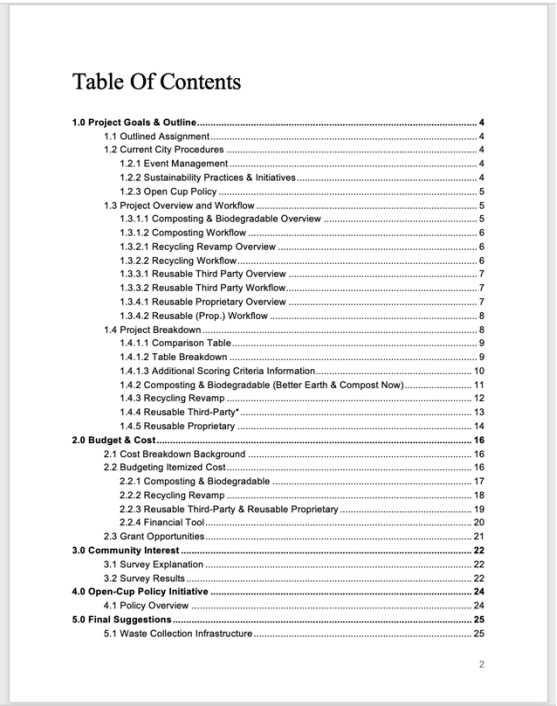
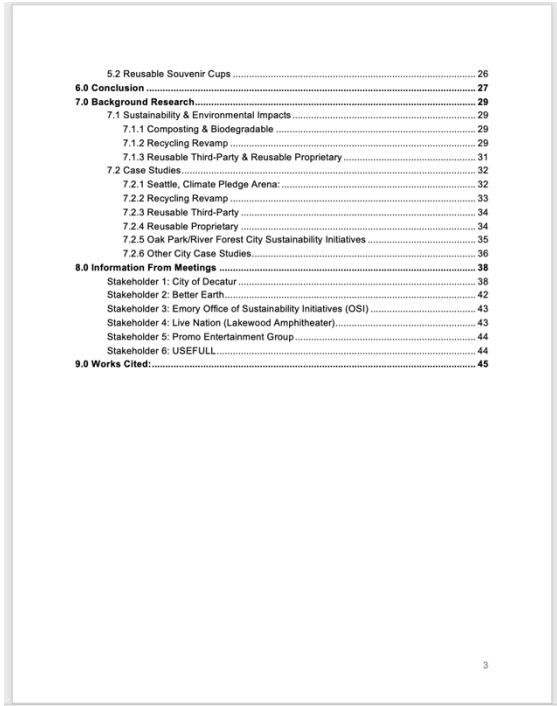


Table Of Contents

1.0 Project Goals & Outline **4**
1.1 Outlined Assignment 4
1.2 Current City Procedures 4
1.2.1 Event Management 4
1.2.2 Sustainability Practices & Initiatives 4
1.2.3 Open Cup Policy 5
1.3 Project Overview and Workflow 5
1.3.1.1 Composting & Biodegradable Overview 5
1.3.1.2 Composting Workflow 6
1.3.2.1 Recycling Revamp Overview 6
1.3.2.2 Recycling Workflow 6
1.3.3.1 Reusable Third Party Overview 7
1.3.3.2 Reusable Third Party Workflow 7
1.3.4.1 Reusable Proprietary Overview 7
1.3.4.2 Reusable (Prop.) Workflow 8
1.4 Project Breakdown 8
1.4.1.1 Comparison Table 9
1.4.1.2 Table Breakdown 9
1.4.1.3 Additional Scoring Criteria Information 10
1.4.2 Composting & Biodegradable (Better Earth & Compost Now) 11
1.4.3 Recycling Revamp 12
1.4.4 Reusable Third-Party* 13
1.4.5 Reusable Proprietary 14
2.0 Budget & Cost **16**
2.1 Cost Breakdown Background 16
2.2 Budgeting Itemized Cost 16
2.2.1 Composting & Biodegradable 17
2.2.2 Recycling Revamp 18
2.2.3 Reusable Third-Party & Reusable Proprietary 19
2.2.4 Financial Tool 20
2.3 Grant Opportunities 21
3.0 Community Interest **22**
3.1 Survey Explanation 22
3.2 Survey Results 22
4.0 Open-Cup Policy Initiative **24**
4.1 Policy Overview 24
5.0 Final Suggestions **25**
5.1 Waste Collection Infrastructure 25



5.2 Reusable Souvenir Cups 26
6.0 Conclusion **27**
7.0 Background Research **29**
7.1 Sustainability & Environmental Impacts 29
7.1.1 Composting & Biodegradable 29
7.1.2 Recycling Revamp 29
7.1.3 Reusable Third-Party & Reusable Proprietary 31
7.2 Case Studies 32
7.2.1 Seattle, Climate Pledge Arena: 32
7.2.2 Recycling Revamp 33
7.2.3 Reusable Third-Party 34
7.2.4 Reusable Proprietary 34
7.2.5 Oak Park/River Forest City Sustainability Initiatives 35
7.2.6 Other City Case Studies 36
8.0 Information From Meetings **38**
Stakeholder 1: City of Decatur 38
Stakeholder 2: Better Earth 42
Stakeholder 3: Emory Office of Sustainability Initiatives (OSI) 43
Stakeholder 4: Live Nation (Lakewood Amphitheater) 43
Stakeholder 5: Promo Entertainment Group 44
Stakeholder 6: USEFULL 44
9.0 Works Cited: **45**

City of Decatur®

Decatur WatchFest ‘26

Working with Emory Students

Spending Calculator	
Number of People	5000
Event Style	Slow
Number of Cups	10000
Type Of Cups	Compostable
Unit Cost	$0.11
Total Cost	970



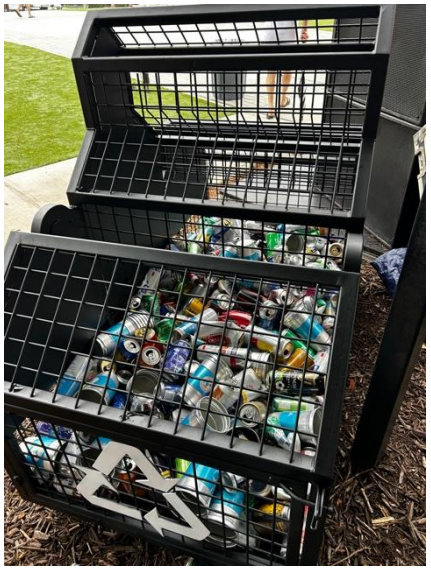
Decatur WatchFest ‘26

Recycling and Sustainability Initiatives

Connected with local metal artist to create cage







PLINKO!

DECATUR WATCHFEST26



Decatur WatchFest ‘26

Decatur Makers

We partnered with Decatur Makers to create a custom Plinko game that made recycling fun and interactive at WatchFest ’26.

Featuring laser-cut components and 3D-printed soccer-ball pucks, the game encouraged fans to recycle their aluminum cups and cans while learning about the City’s sustainability efforts.



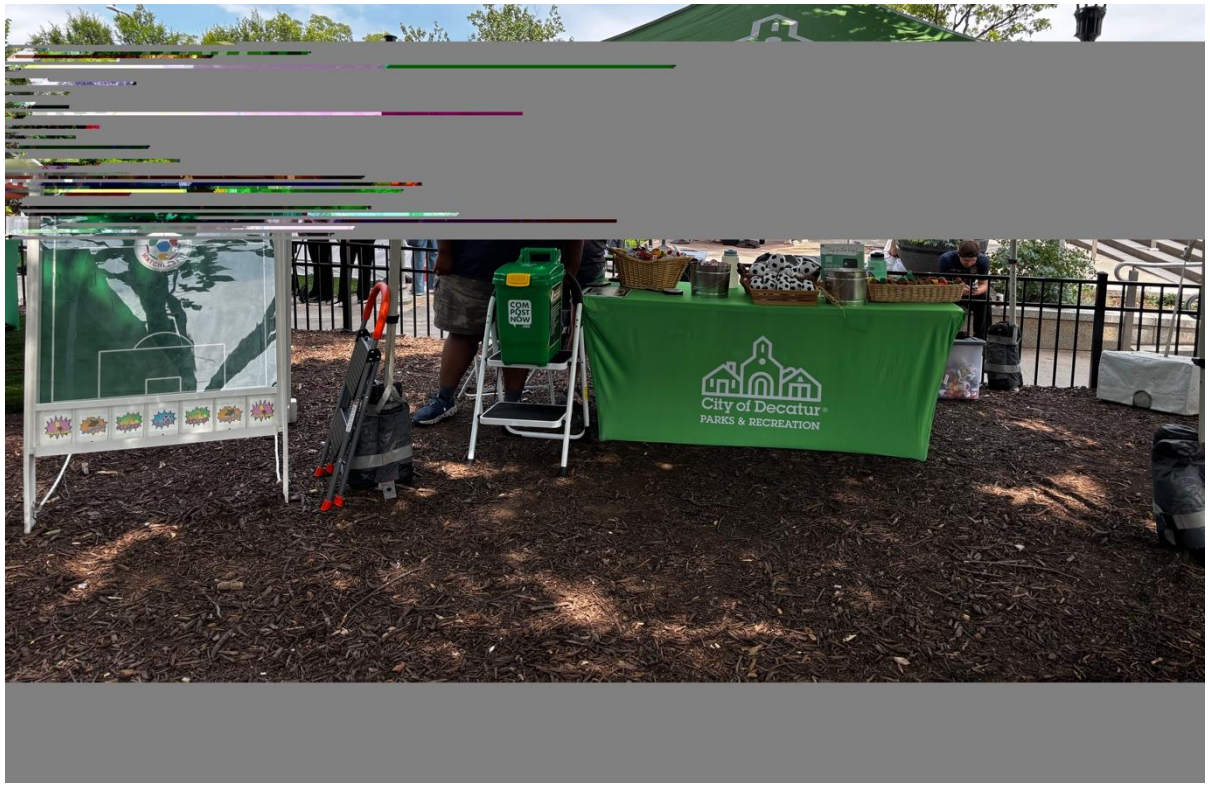
Decatur WatchFest ‘26

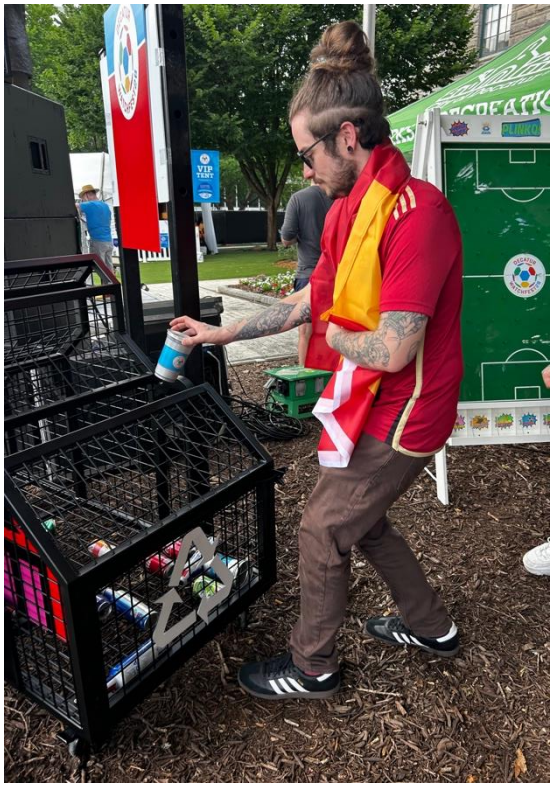






Decatur WatchFest ‘26





Decatur WatchFest ‘26





34 WATCHFEST DAYS

34 CONCERTS AND PERFORMANCES

72 MATCH SCREENINGS

270 HOURS OF PROGRAMMING

5,500 AVERAGE ATTENDANCE

10,800 ESTIMATED PEAK ATTENDANCE

170,000 TOTAL ATTENDEES

279 TRAINED VOLUNTEERS

509 VOLUNTEER SHIFTS

1,500+ VOLUNTEER HOURS

DECATUR WATCHFEST26

2 YEARS OF PLANNING

40 STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

