

DOWNTOWN SMALL AREA PLAN

Vision + Guiding Principles

03.01.2022

VISION

THE VISION

*Davidson remains committed to controlling our own destiny
as a distinct, sustainable, and sovereign small town.
Our sense of community is rooted in citizens who respect each other;
in racial and socioeconomic diversity;
and in pedestrian and bicycle orientation;
all in the presence of a small liberal arts college.
Our history and character guide our future.*

The above vision is taken directly from the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The 2020 Strategic Plan sited the need for additional input on the creation of a Downtown Small Area Plan. In addition to these two underlying documents, there have been a number of other plans and efforts that effect the downtown area including:

- Mobility Plan
- Historic Preservation Plan
- Pedestrian Task Force
- Sustainability Framework

All of these plans have been incorporated into the Downtown Small Area Plan process to determine those items where public input is still needed vs. those items that have already been agreed upon.

DOWNTOWN SMALL AREA PLAN VISION

Downtown Davidson will continue to thrive as the community's center of history, commerce, gathering, and as the gateway to the college. Through targeted actions this plan will further this cherished area's quality of character, mobility options, and public gathering spaces with an emphasis on sustainability, inclusivity, and equity.

GENERAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The General Planning Principles, updated through the 2020 Davidson Comprehensive Plan, express our community's shared aspirations. Two principles – Downtown and Placemaking – especially emphasize downtown's uniqueness and importance. These principles, along with select articles of other principles, will guide this plan's framework.

Character & Community: We must preserve Davidson’s character and sense of community. *The essence of Davidson is that residents know their neighbors and interact with them in a variety of well-designed settings. This sense of community is enhanced by:*

- » A walkable and historic downtown and adjacent neighborhoods
- » Engaging public spaces and celebrating historic resources throughout town
- » Local businesses that invest in our community

Downtown: We must preserve and enhance Davidson’s unique, historic downtown and neighborhoods. *The presence of our cherished historic downtown has always contributed to our residents’ quality of life and is viewed as critical to maintaining our small-town character. This valuable asset will remain viable if we:*

- » Increase accessibility to downtown from surrounding neighborhoods and within downtown by making it easier to walk, bike, and park
- » Build upon its status as Davidson’s social and civic center and create additional compelling public spaces to foster interaction among residents
- » Strengthen existing businesses by increasing customer accessibility
- » Preserve historic buildings and encourage stewardship of these unique resources
- » Encourage development of new businesses within vacant spaces to meet the needs and desires of a diverse community
- » Encourage a mix of uses in each building to create a vibrant and active downtown
- » Broaden the downtown area through design and redevelopment to better integrate North Main and South Main Streets and the edge areas along Jackson and Depot Streets in a manner that also protects historic character along the corridors

Mobility: We must provide a safe and efficient transportation network for all users by supporting active transportation, transit, and new mobility options. *The built environment can enhance the use of alternatives to the car and increase our physical health. We will make it preferable to do some of life’s activities without driving by creating:*

- » Commercial centers that support walking, bicycling, riding public transit, and using other alternative modes as viable and safe options to these destinations
- » Streets that are safe and accessible for all people — pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers

Natural Assets: We must wisely manage the finite land and natural resources in the town’s planning area. *The natural environment enhances our quality of life, both physically and socially. We will preserve this irreplaceable asset for future generations through:*

- » Development that uses green design, energy conservation, and flexible spaces
- » Village-scale development that builds up and not out in strategic locations

Diversity & Inclusivity: We must create an environment that maintains and enhances community diversity and inclusivity. *Davidson will be a community where all persons feel welcome and are able to fully and safely participate in community life. We will encourage*

diversity of all economic levels, all races and ethnic groups, all ages, and all physical and mental abilities through:

- » Commercial and employment development that supports a diversity of socioeconomic backgrounds

Growth Management: We must manage growth and support appropriate economic development so the town can provide public facilities and services appropriate with development.

Livability depends on the timely provision of transportation, schools, public safety, utilities, commercial goods and services, spiritual life, and job opportunities. It is our intent that all parts of a vibrant, successful community grow together through:

- » Economic growth that supports our sense of community and placemaking

Placemaking: We must maintain the town's unique sense of place through quality architecture and design. *Livable environments include well-designed buildings, a dynamic public realm, and seamless connections between the two. This means that:*

- » The built form is an integral component of place-making
- » Private buildings and public infrastructure must work together to shape public space and to build community character, including through sustainable design practices
- » Davidson's cultural heritage and historic resources will be actively preserved and maintained
- » The design of our public spaces, parks, and plazas will encourage social interaction, cultural experiences, and recreational opportunities
- » Public art will animate our civic spaces

Fiscal Health: We must consider the town's fiscal health when making decisions.

Community planning and capital investment decisions can have real and direct impacts on the town's fiscal health. The town's long-term quality of life is dependent upon having a balanced fiscal approach. This means that:

- » A balanced fiscal approach will take into account that not all community priorities will have net positive fiscal impacts
- » Decision-making will encourage a fiscally-sustainable balance between the residential and commercial components of the town's tax base

Community Partnerships: We must support our institutional and nonprofit community partners that contribute to our quality of life.

Davidson's quality of life is exceptional in part because of the many nonprofit organizations, places of worship, educational and institutional partners that are committed to improving the lives of residents. The town will support these organizations through:

- » Planning policies and regulations that are developed in collaboration with community partners
- » Consideration of the impacts of community decisions on community partner organizations
- » Partnerships with organizations to support the advancement of community goals