



Delaware County 2035 | Central Places

# Downtown Upper Darby

Vision Summary



May 2018

## Introduction

The *Downtown Upper Darby Vision Plan* is a long-range vision plan developed through community outreach to help guide future improvements. It is intended to build on recent efforts and current momentum in the community – not replace it. The plan helps to coordinate the efforts and vision of multiple stakeholders to keep working towards common goals.

Downtown Upper Darby is a 20th Century success  
REIMAGINED into a 21st Century LEGACY  
as the VIBRANT and DIVERSE hub for the regional economy.

### Vision Statement

Downtown Upper Darby was developed in the early 20th century as an innovative transit-oriented community and flourished throughout much of the 1900s. Today, it stands as a prime example of the type of dense, walkable development pattern many others are trying to replicate while retrofitting shopping malls. The vision for downtown Upper Darby is rooted in an emphasis to strengthen its position in the next century by reimagining itself and creating an experience that is unique and fosters innovation.

## Vision Themes

The Vision Themes serve as the guiding principles – not specific actions or projects – for working towards the community vision. As needs and market demands change over time, so too will the projects; the Vision Themes provide broad principles to help decision-makers remain flexible while still building towards the community vision.



### Tell the Story

The positive perception of downtown Upper Darby is a vital element to its success. The story told about downtown Upper Darby should portray it as a vibrant and distinct experience in the region.



### Embrace the Heritage

The diverse cultural background of the Upper Darby community contributes to the distinct mixture of shops and restaurants that make downtown special.



### Build on Strengths

The entertainment options downtown draw people from across the region. Attracting uses that support the variety of entertainment options, such as restaurants, will create a vibrant downtown.



### Foster Local Business

Local businesses are invested in the future of downtown and are a crucial component a diverse and vibrant economy. They should be closely involved in the implementation of the community vision.



### Curate an Experience

A mix of local stores and restaurants, special events, and pop-up markets will activate the sidewalk and public spaces so that downtown Upper Darby becomes the community focal point – the place to see and be seen.



### Streamline Access

The comfort and safety of pedestrians should be prioritized throughout downtown to support use of the unparalleled transit access and create inviting spaces for people to enjoy.



### Protect Signature Features

The art deco design style that is prevalent in the built environment of downtown Upper Darby distinguishes it from similar commercial districts in the region and creates a unique sense of place.



### Capitalize on Assets

The existing scale of development sustains a variety of uses and the housing stock can support a range of age groups and economic backgrounds. New development should continue these patterns.

## Vision Realized

The plan calls for efforts focused on creating unique experiences along the streetscape for pedestrians, including special events and a mix of stores and restaurants. These types of projects, centered around people and experience, will bring renewed activity and a dynamic feel to downtown Upper Darby.

### Alleyway

Gateways to downtown set the tone for what type of experience people should expect. Special treatments, such as a mural, signage, or lighting, can create a unique sense of arrival for visitors. Many of these potential improvements are relatively low cost, but can have a long-lasting impact on the perception of the area. It is worth noting that these improvements, as with any meaningful change, would need to involve a partnership with private property owners.



Potential

## Plaza

Wide sidewalks provide the opportunity to host smaller events, such as a farmers' market, in highly visible and highly trafficked locations to create activity downtown. The existing space can be used to minimize effects on parking and traffic. These events can contribute to a vibrant and active streetscape environment downtown.



## Activity Node

Some spaces can be enhanced to increase the comfort of people and create greater visual distinction – this will create natural gathering spaces and “landmarks” for people. These “activity nodes” are an important element in drawing people through different areas of downtown Upper Darby.



## Dining

The temporary use of on-street parking for outdoor dining can provide additional space for local businesses without reducing the sidewalk space for pedestrians. This use of additional space and visual interest on the ground floor of buildings will make it comfortable for people to spend time walking around downtown.



Existing



Potential



The *Downtown Upper Darby Vision Plan* represents a unique summary of what the community believes will make Downtown Upper Darby thrive in the 21st Century. Achieving this vision will require flexibility and a long-term, coordinated effort that involves many public, private, and non-profit partners.



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