bloom.

Community Engagement Plan

Town of Davidson
March 2022

prepared by: erica madden
bloomandchange.com

Table of Contents

Overview

The Town of Davidson contracted *bloom.* to help gather input and feedback from its community members on specific topics related to Davidson's Downtown Small Area Plan (DSAP). bloom. recommended a multi-phased approach, beginning with the creation of an engagement plan that outlines the problem statements and strategies for outreach and public participation. The goal is to engage the community in authentic and meaningful ways and create inclusive opportunities for many voices to be heard, not just the loudest. The following plan includes dynamic strategies that are intended to generate ideas and solutions to Town challenges.

Many supporting resources were used during the creation of this plan, including:

- Comprehensive Plan + Implementation Guidebook (2022)
- Mobility Plan + Comments Received + Feedback Summary
- Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks (shared in Mobility Plan)
- Public Engagement Report (Exploring Our Planning Principles)
- Public Engagement Report (Testing Policy Direction)

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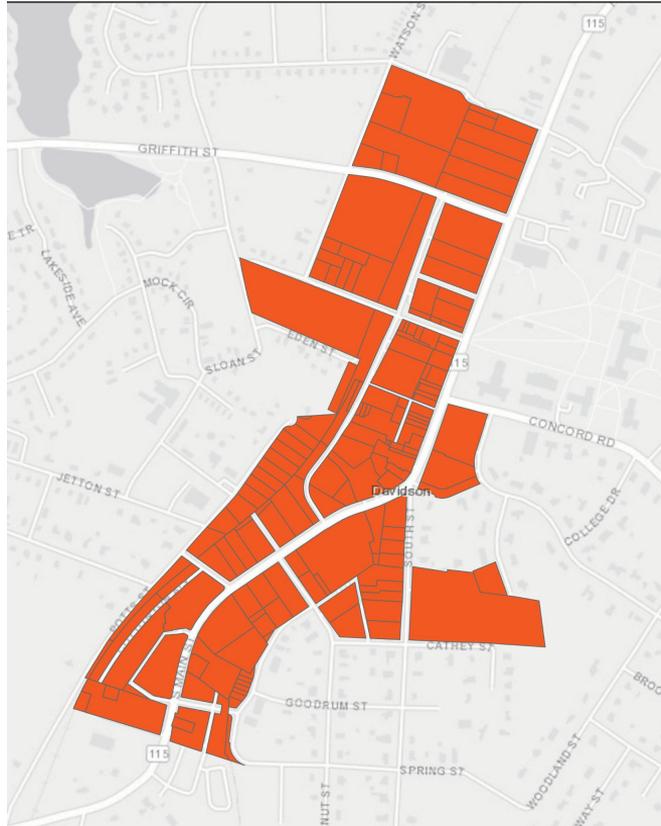
Downtown Davidson will continue to thrive as the community's center of history, commerce, gathering, and as the gateway to the college. Through targeted actions, this plan will further this cherished area's quality of character, mobility options, and public gathering spaces with an emphasis on sustainability,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

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.

defining the problems

We began this phase by getting very clear on what problems we want the community to help us solve related to:

- Character and Community
- Mobility
- Public Spaces
- Sustainability

People only use a few of the gathering spaces downtown.

problem statement #1

People only use a few of the gathering spaces downtown

point of views

❖ "I have three kids ages 5-12 years. I love sitting behind Summit Coffee on a nice day — I can grab a drink, visit with a friend, and all three of my kiddos can be (generally) entertained and safe without pulling on my arm every five minutes."

❖ "Having meetings outside is one of the best reasons to live in NC! I just need a semi-quiet/semi-private space to have a conversation without tons of interruption. Oh, and wifi is a nice bonus."

❖ "I really enjoy working on a project or studying outside, but sometimes it is too distracting and loud to work behind Summit for too long. I wish there were some other outdoor places where I could work and get some fresh air."

❖ "I have a little clothing store on Main St, but so many locals miss it because they park in the back and have no reason to really stroll Knox Court after grabbing their coffee. I wish I had ways to entice them to pop in and see what we have going on."

❖ "Is there anywhere to have some fun, hang out with friends in Davidson after 9 pm?!"

character + community, public spaces

People only use a few of the gathering spaces downtown

opportunity questions

❖ How might we determine the other downtown spaces people might want to spend time?

❖ How might we redesign the space behind Main St. businesses?

❖ How might we encourage people to gather up + down Knox Ct?

❖ How might we make the Town Green *the* place for middle schoolers to to hang out?

❖ How might we transform our gathering spaces seasonally?

❖ How might we make the Town Green a family-focused gathering space?

❖ How might we create a "relax + unwind" gathering space?

❖ How might we use the space outside the post office to serve people working and studying?

❖ How might we redesign Knox Court if Depot St was closed to motor vehicle traffic?

what are our constraints?

● maintain current amount of parking spaces
● development plans in progress may need adjusted and impact the space

who should we engage?

● business owners
● community members

engagement opportunities

● connection maps (physical + virtual)
● design your space contest
● open mic night

Parking spots are being used for things other than parking.

problem statement #2

Parking spots are being used for things other than parking

point of views

❖ "I'm a delivery driver with regular deliveries for The Soda Shop and my deliveries almost always include multiple boxes that require a dolly. I get so tired of circling the block looking for room to make the delivery because the length of my day depends on how efficiently I can get everything off my truck."

❖ "As a business owner, I wish there was a more predictable, timely and convenient way to accept deliveries that doesn't hinder my customer experience but also enables me to restock needed supplies."

❖ "I prefer using Uber/Lyft for quick trips into Davidson so I don't have to deal with traffic on the way or parking when I arrive, but it's hard to safely get out of a car on Main Street if my driver is even able to find a place to pause for me to jump out. We end up driving around, I end up late, and my driver ends up with a lower tip and my irritated review."

❖ "It is getting more and more frustrating to drive and park downtown — there are so many delivery trucks and they are nearly always double-parked … and it seems like they are always there at the busiest times of day!"

mobility

Parking spots are being used for things other than parking

opportunity questions

- ❖ How might we use real-time data to ease parking challenges?
- ❖ How might we create a local logistics hub?
- ❖ How might we reduce delivery/rideshare driver circling?
- ❖ How might we make rideshare travel the ideal way to commute into downtown?
- ❖ How might we design flexible curb space?
- ❖ How might we implement an off-hour delivery program?

what are our constraints?

- no parking spaces added to central block of downtown

who should we engage?

- business owners (downtown footprint)
- rideshare drivers and/or riders
- delivery drivers
- people with logistics backgrounds

engagement opportunities

- lotus blossom
- brief face-to-face interviews with delivery drivers, peer communities

11

Parking is a constant source of angst for the community.

Parking is a constant source of angst for the community

point of views

❖ "I work at Pickled Peach and honestly, I'm always running late! In part because I circle trying to find the closest parking spot. But then, even if I get close, I often have to relocate my car again due to the 2-hour parking limit. It is frustrating and time consuming to get to my job."

❖ "I have two kids under the age of five, and I need to find parking quickly that isn't too far away from the library or the play area because my kids require attention and they come with a lot of stuff!"

❖ "I work from home in Mooresville, but I often have coffee/lunch meetings in Davidson. I can't count the number of times I've been late for a meeting because I've been driving around searching for an open spot or a parking lot."

❖ "I came to Davidson for the first time last week, and I had NO idea where to park because there were very few directions or parking information posted after I got off the interstate."

mobility

Parking is a constant source of angst for the community

opportunity questions

❖ How might we make it easy to find available parking spaces?

❖ How might we make walking from "farther" parking places a highlight of a visitor's time downtown?

❖ How might we make walking to school/work the highlight of the day?

❖ How might we use real-time data to ease parking challenges?

❖ How might we implement an employee parking program?

❖ How might we implement reasonable paid parking options?

❖ How might we make parking rules easy to find and understand?

❖ How might we make the search for parking more enjoyable?

❖ How might we communicate mobility and parking information to visitors?

what are our constraints?

● no parking spaces added to central block of downtown

who should we engage?

● community members
● employees who drive to work

engagement opportunities

● future workshop
● round robin
● dot boards
● brief face-to-face interviews with people who park downtown

Some individuals in West Davidson feel disconnected and unwelcome downtown.

———————

Individuals on the west side feel isolated & unwelcome downtown

point of views

❖ "I live behind Roosevelt Wilson Park and the last time I attended an event in Davidson at night, I was scared walking home because there is limited lighting and a lot of the sidewalks are old and cracked."

❖ "I live just beyond the Ada Jenkins Center, and we feel like it is a totally different world over here — there are no brick sidewalks or signs directing us to Main Street. It's like everything drops off when you walk over the railroad tracks and past that big white warehouse that is falling apart. I want to go get flowers at the market or listen to live music in the evenings, but I don't really feel invited."

❖ "My family needs more reasonably-priced, family-friendly food options downtown. We could easily walk there on a Friday evening for dinner, but my kids don't do fancy, and we don't have the budget for most of the restaurants on Main St."

mobility, community + character

16

Individuals on the west side feel isolated & unwelcome downtown

opportunity questions

❖ How might we make it desirable/preferable to walk to downtown Davidson from the West Side of town?

❖ How might we make downtown Davidson events "can't miss" events on *all* residents' calendars?

❖ How might we extend downtown beyond the railroad tracks?

❖ How might we create or improve connectivity between West Davidson and Main St?

❖ How might we make entry into the downtown area more welcoming from an aesthetic and safety perspective?

❖ How might we use existing spaces like the Train Depot station, Sloan House, or others to offer more affordable options to eat, shop, and play downtown?

what are our constraints?
- n/a

who should we engage?
- community members who live in West Davidson
- business owners

engagement opportunities
- walk + talks
- design your space contest
- map your route
- dot boards

17

Mobility, Mobility, Mobility!

problem statement #5

Mobility, Mobility, Mobility

point of views

❖ "There was a day when I could easily cross the street and navigate all of downtown quickly on foot, but those days are long gone. There is too much traffic, and I don't feel safe on foot or on my bike, and it's just so time consuming to move around!"

❖ "Honestly, I'm a bundle of nerves when biking in and around Davidson these days because drivers aren't paying attention and sharing the road just isn't really a thing they are inclined to do."

mobility

Mobility, Mobility, Mobility

opportunity questions

❖ How might we create the safest bicycle facilities?

❖ How might we use an AV shuttle to move people/calm traffic?

❖ How might we create a 10-star bus stop experience?

❖ How might we create a safe, user-friendly bike share program?

❖ How might we make downtown Davidson a Pedestrian Priority Community?

✳ How can we communicate the "green" benefits of mobility and make this a sustainability initiative as well?

what are our constraints?
- n/a

who should we engage?
- residents inclined to use non-motor mobility options
- residents within one mile of downtown
- bus patrons

engagement opportunities
- walk + talks
- brief interviews at bus stops, Farmer's Market, runners/bikers at Summit
- round robin, lotus blossom, and/or remote brainwriting

People rarely walk from North Main St to South Main St. (the downtown footprint)

People rarely walk from North Main St to South Main St

point of views

❖ "I work at the Hub, and I usually just have lunch at the Brickhouse or drive to Carrburritos. I'm usually in a hurry, I'm never sure how long it will take me to walk, and I'm not sure what other options there are to have a quick lunch."

❖ "I'd like to walk to get all my errands done in Davidson, but drivers aren't all that friendly at a lot of the crosswalks - especially those not at traffic lights. I want to safely and efficiently go from EarthFare, to the post office, to CVS, to Whit's (for my reward!)."

mobility

People rarely walk from North Main St to South Main St

opportunity questions

- ❖ How might we make the downtown footprint more walkable?
- ❖ How might we use art to make the various sections of downtown feel connected?
- ❖ How might we encourage people to wander through the entire downtown area?
- ❖ How might we create street connectivity for non-motorized travelers?
- ❖ How might we encourage non-motorized movement downtown?
- ❖ How might we utilize signage to create connectivity downtown?

✳ Mobility Plan has a lot of action items already; how do we communicate what is already in progress?

what are our constraints?
- n/a

who should we engage?
- individuals working at The Hub + other office buildings
- community members who frequent downtown

engagement opportunities
- walk + talks
- brief interviews
- round robin, lotus blossom, and/or remote brainwriting

Davidson receives a lot of requests for downtown space but it has limited land for additional development.

problem statement #7

Davidson has limited land for additional development

point of views

❖ "I love being able to shop, eat, and play without traveling far from home and in a place that is safe for my family. Davidson needs more small and local commercial development along Main Street and South Main."

❖ "As much as I want our Town to grow and offer all the amenities people need, I fear we might lose our unique small town feel and end up with more traffic issues than we already have. I want the best of both worlds!"

character + community, public spaces

Davidson has limited land for additional development

opportunity questions

❖ How might we determine the appetite for new building development downtown?

❖ How might we determine locations where development is desirable?

❖ How might we create a thriving downtown?

❖ How might we develop downtown to enable new business?

❖ How might we breathe new life into existing spaces: Sadler Square, old car wash site, South Main Square, Sloan House, Train Depot station?

what are our constraints?
- n/a

who should we engage?
- diverse representation of community members (people who frequent downtown and those who currently don't)
- growth-oriented business owners

engagement opportunities
- interactive maps
- brief interviews
- round robin, lotus blossom, remote brainwriting, and/or open mic
- design your space contest

26

The downtown area generates a lot of landfill waste, especially during events & on weekends.

_____

problem statement #8

The downtown area generates a lot of landfill waste

point of views

❖ "I regularly eat my lunch outside at one of the new tables, but I'm never sure exactly which pieces of my trash can be recycled, so I just throw it all in the landfill bin because I don't want to make a mistake."

❖ "My wife and kids and I often have family picnics on the Town Green on Sunday afternoons. When we get ready to leave, it is almost always because nap time is approaching and the kids are about to lose it, so I need to get rid of our trash as quickly as possible and make a break for home."

sustainability

The downtown area generates a lot of landfill waste

opportunity questions

❖ How might we reduce landfill waste in the downtown area?

❖ How might we educate people on to dispose of waste in a more environmentally friendly way?

❖ How might we make it simple + easy to recycle or compost when enjoying all downtown has to offer?

what are our constraints?
- n/a

who should we engage?
- community members taking part in Town activities and/or spending time downtown

engagement opportunities
- new waste collection prototype
- communicate zero waste goals

✳ The Town needs to set the example here. New waste collection infrastructure should be used in all Town-owned buildings.

Downtown businesses create a lot of daily landfill waste.

problem statement #9

Downtown businesses create a lot of daily landfill waste

point of views

❖ "I'm a server at Toast, and during our breakfast/lunch rushes we need to work as quickly as possible to clear tables and clean dishes because the more people we serve, the better money I make.

❖ I work in the back of the house at Mestizo and by the end of the night, I just want to get the trash to the closest bin because it's late, dark, and I'm exhausted and ready to go home.

❖ I own a local hotel with so many moving parts - including a lack of staff - that I don't have time to even determine what I should do to reduce waste, let alone if I can afford the changes.

sustainability

Downtown businesses create a lot of daily landfill waste

opportunity questions

❖ How might we effectively communicate waste reduction opportunities to business owners?

❖ How might we help business owners implement waste reduction solutions?

❖ How might we make composting more convenient for businesses?

❖ How might we make recycling and/or composting the easiest way to get rid of waste?

❖ How might we incentivize employees to execute new waste reduction initiatives?

✳ The Town needs to set the example here. New waste collection infrastructure should be used in all Town-owned buildings.

what are our constraints?
- n/a

who should we engage?
- business owners
- local employees

engagement opportunities
- lotus blossom, round robin, 6-8-5, and/or remote brainwriting
- dot board

engagement activities!

There are so many creative ways to generate solutions with your community members! The following pages include descriptions and notes about the various engagement activities recommended in this report. Mix + match as you learn more about what generates the best input!

Engagement Opportunities

group brainstorming

Open Mic Night

Host Open Mic Night brainstorming sessions to allow people to generate and build off ideas and solutions for different opportunity questions. Set guidelines for how long of a "set" each contributor can do (1-5 mins) and use a moderator to keep ideas flowing. Allow people who don't want to take the mic to submit ideas for the moderator to share.

Lotus Blossom (in-person or Zoom breakout rooms)

Utilize a facilitator to engage small groups in this brainstorming activity:
- Fold a piece of paper twice horizontally and twice vertically to end up with 9 equal-size boxes
- Write an opportunity question in the center box
- Ask the group to submit one solution idea in each of the 8 remaining boxes
- Go deeper by taking each of those ideas and making them the "center of the blossom" and repeat to come up with more concrete/specific solutions

Engagement Opportunities (cont.)

group brainstorming

Future Workshop (in-person or Zoom breakout rooms)

Utilize a facilitator to engage small groups in this brainstorming activity:

- Ask participants to reflect on the present day situation and write down all their negative experiences. (for example: parking issues)
- Next, ask participants to fantasize about the desired future situation. What would the ideal situation be for them? Paint a full picture. For this stage there are no limitations, everything is possible.
- Share ideas and have participants note barriers to the ideas and brainstorm how to overcome them to get to feasible ideas.

6-8-5 (in-person or Zoom breakout rooms)

Utilize a facilitator to engage small groups in this brainstorming activity:

- Ask participants to generate 6-8 solutions in 5 minutes on one of the opportunity questions. (quantity over quality for this part!)
- Share ideas with group.
- Repeat activity and ask participants to refine and/or build off the ideas presented.

Engagement Opportunities (cont.)

group brainstorming

Round Robin

Utilize a facilitator to engage small groups in this brainstorming activity:

- Host in person in small groups, three people at a table.
- Give each person a paper with an opportunity question and three blocks:
  - Block 1: How would you solve the "how might we" statement?
  - Block 2: What are the possible risks + roadblocks to the above idea?
  - Block 3: How would you mitigate those risks?
- Everyone starts in Block 1 and outlines an idea to solve the challenge.
- After 8 minutes, each person hands their papers to the right and the next person reads the idea and notates the risks/roadblocks in Block 2 for the person's solution.
- After 8 minutes, each person hands their papers to the right a final time. The next person notes how to mitigate the risks/roadblocks listed in Block 3.
- Result of activity should be 3 more fully-formed solutions from each table.

Engagement Opportunities (cont.)

group brainstorming

Remote brainwriting

- Set up a Google Spreadsheet as a brainwriting tool.
- Ask stakeholders to enter solutions into a single column on the spreadsheet.
- Others can see the ideas in real-time and can use the ideas as inspiration for new ideas.
- This could be done together in real-time or as a way to give participants a chance to go into the spreadsheet at a time convenient for them.

Engagement Opportunities (cont.)

community conversations

Walk + Talks

Note: walk + talks can be used for several of the connectivity problem statements. This description offers a specific example of how to use them as a solution to problem statement 4.

- Host "walk + talks" with small groups of residents who live in West Davidson to gather specific suggestions on creating connectivity, walkability, and a welcoming environment.
- Complete the walk at a local Main Street establishment: Ben & Jerry's or Whit's for ice cream, The Crazy Pig for a BBQ lunch together. Create safe space for conversation. Have tables covered with paper and encourage people to draw ideas they had along the walk or draw their ideal "map" from home to downtown.
- Ensure there are "engagers" and "observers" on this walk + talk so some people are listening to feedback and other people are observing how people walk/travel.
- Look for opportunities to enhance feelings of belonging: ex. t-shirts or stickers with "I Am Davidson" or "Live the Davidson Life" for all participants on the walk + talk.

Engagement Opportunities (cont.)

Brief "impromptu" face-to-face interviews

Connect with specific stakeholders to understand behaviors. Give gift cards in appreciation for their input (to opposite end of town to encourage connectivity!) Examples include:

Delivery drivers:

- What would have made it easier for you to deliver these packages today?
- Have you seen anything implemented in other small towns to make delivery more efficient?

People parking downtown:

- What would have made it easier for you to park today?
- If we had a parking lot a 5 minute walk away, what would entice you to park there?
- How long do you typically need to park near downtown?
- How far are you willing to park from your destination? What impacts that?

Engagement Opportunities (cont.)

miscellaneous

Design your space contest

Put out a call to action for community members to design their ideal downtown hangout spot — draw by hand, create a collage, use a computer program, build with legos, etc — and submit for a chance to win prizes and/or have parts of your design implemented in town. Develop creative winner categories — ranging from most sustainable/green design to youngest designer!

Connection maps

Use physical and online interactive connections maps to allow people to "drop pins" where they want to see specific gathering spaces, new development, EV charging stations, bike racks, etc. (Example: Virtual Interactive Map) Different color stickers/pins could be used to get more specific information about what people want to see. Virtual tools allow for comments with pins; Gather comments on physical maps using "flags" with room to write notes.

Engagement Opportunities (cont.)

Dot boards

Dot boards are perfect for getting larger groups of people to vote on several potential solutions. Here is an example of how dot boards could be used to solve for employee parking.

- Craft 3-4 potential solutions for employee parking.
- Describe each solution on large poster boards to give to each downtown business.
- Give each employee 3 dot stickers for voting. More dots = best idea. Employees can put 3 dots all in one place or spread them out based their preferences.
- Include a "how could we make this option even better?" and allow employees to use post-its to make notes on how to improve solutions.

next steps ...

We are armed with a lot of ideas to generate solutions. Key to gathering useful information is making sure the right stakeholders are contributing. You will need to "over invite" your busy community members to ensure participation. You will have to go out of your way, not expect them to go out of theirs. Get them excited about coming up with big ideas for their town AND make sure to appreciate their contributions.

Moving Forward

Take Immediate Action on Problem Statement 8 (landfill waste downtown)

Put a team in charge of creating a new prototype for waste collection at downtown events. Upcoming Town events are important opportunities to test, monitor, and engage the community with a new model.

Select + Prioritize Engagement Activities

Determine which engagement activities you'd like to focus on for each problem statement. In some cases, one activity might inform another activity, so it is important to figure out which steps we need to take first. For example, there are several opportunities to use interactive physical and virtual maps to gather information that will inform future ideation questions for the community.

Set Timelines + Create Communications Plan

Now it is time to figure out who it doing what by when! What team members and outside support do you need for each activity? What will be involved in notifying and engaging the stakeholders and how long will it take? Create a *realistic* action plan and make sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities. Decide how and when you will regularly communicate progress. Let's go!

bloom.

bloomandchange.com

erica madden: erica@bloomandchange.com