

# FINAL MAIN STREET VISION PLAN FOR DARBY BOROUGH, PA



**APRIL 2007**

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*This project was funded by a grant from the  
Delaware County Planning Department*

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**MAIN STREET VISION PLAN  
for  
DARBY BOROUGH, PA**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Main Street Vision Plan is to provide Darby Borough, the Delaware County Planning Department, the Darby Borough Council, the Darby Community Development Corporation (CDC), and Darby residents a vision and a framework in which to continue efforts to revitalize Main Street in Darby Borough. To accomplish this, the plan reviews existing conditions along the corridor, identifies assets that are the Borough's strengths, presents ways to take advantage of these resources to spur revitalization of Main Street, prioritizes implementation programs and policies for revitalization, outlines roles and responsibilities for these programs, and identifies potential funding sources that can be used to pay for improvements along Main Street. The plan looks at Main Street as a whole by addressing issues related to theme, streetscape, natural resources and recreation, economic development, and transportation. A vision statement was developed for Darby's Main Street that reflects the desires of residents and stakeholders for Main Street's future:

*"Darby Borough residents and business owners envision a diverse and vibrant corridor that connects and unifies the Central Business District to surrounding neighborhoods. Through improvements and upgrades to physical features, economic conditions, cultural resources, and using its natural setting between two creeks, we envision a place that builds upon its strategic location as a cultural crossroads with great transportation access and a unique history."*

The resulting recommendations, summarized below, are based on this vision and emphasize the importance of creating a desirable place to work and live and a community of which people can be proud.

### THEME

- Emphasize Main Street's theme and vision through unified signage, design guidelines, etc. such as pedestrian-scaled development and facades that reflect the era of the building.
- Consider nominating the corridor as a Historic District under the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.
- Emphasize historic and natural resources as educational tools for children as well as tourist destinations.
- Create a sense of place by retaining existing residents and attracting new residents through a cohesive approach to Main Street improvements.
- Develop a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee to implement the vision and theme desired by residents and business owners in the long-term.
- Retain the "village" feeling and aesthetics of Main Street with new development.

### STREETSCAPE

- Consider adopting a design, historic, or conservation overlay district along Main Street and include it in revised zoning ordinance.
- Continue to seek façade improvement grants but better prioritize buildings so that buildings adjacent to already restored buildings receive preference for funding to improve consistency.
- Provide identification signs to guide transit users to trolley stops and the R2 Station.

- Provide wayfinding signage to important resources that guide residents and visitors to these resources from Main Street.
- Maintain existing lighting and consider installing compatibly designed and uniform lighting at strategic locations such as transit stops using sustainable design techniques.
- Provide a consistent surface design for sidewalks.
- Reconfigure parking at selected sites, expand sidewalks, and provide streetscape amenities.
- Improve existing litter cleanup, recruit volunteers to clean up Main Street or hold neighborhood/block clean-up events (similar to DCVA's watershed clean-up days).
- Continue maintenance once upgrades or improvements have been implemented.

## **RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

- Develop pocket parks along Main Street (skateboarding parks, playgrounds, etc.).
- Develop community gardens on vacant lots using residents and volunteer groups.
- Publicize the new recreation center at 1020 Ridge Ave.
- Plant trees in open space areas along Darby Creek (also reduces stormwater runoff and flooding).
- Develop centers of activity and parks with facilities for youth and young adults.
- Work with Darby Creek Valley Association and Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership to develop more recreational facilities and open space.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Flood Control and Stormwater Runoff**

- Plant trees and restore riparian vegetation along Darby Creek.
- Require property owners to adhere to requirements set forth in the Borough's Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- Remove debris and invasive plant species from Darby Creek beds and streambanks.
- Partner with the Darby Creek Valley Association and the Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership to implement programs.
- Encourage the use of simple and innovative stormwater best management practices such as rain gardens, green roofs, and rain barrels by public and private property owners.
- Acquire parcels in the floodplain along Darby Creek to include in greenway connection plans.

### **Residential Development**

- Create buffers between industrial and residential land uses.
- Encourage homeownership among renters by using programs such as Delaware County's Homeownership First Program or Habitat for Humanity.
- Enforce building codes, particularly for landowners.
- Find funding programs such as PA Housing Financing Agency's Home Ownership Choice Program to assist in rehabilitating housing stock.
- Promote the Borough's affordability to attract first-time home buyers.
- Encourage the Borough to communicate and participate more frequently with the Delaware County Housing Authority to better distribute subsidized and public housing throughout the County.

- Develop programs to inform tenants and property owners of their respective rights and responsibilities.
- Develop and enhance relationships with the Community Planning team for Southwest Philadelphia at the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

### **Commercial Development**

- Perform a detailed market analysis and assessment of Main Street's market areas.
- Reinvigorate the Main Street merchant's association.
- Utilize the Darby Transportation Center as a focus point for business development efforts due to its nature as a transfer point and central location in the Borough.
- Encourage the establishment of service oriented retail and dining establishments that could serve all potential demographics in the Borough.
- Create more flexibility in the zoning ordinance to allow mixed land use and adaptive reuse of historic buildings and oddly shaped lots.
- Attract shops that can be patronized by the Borough's immigrant population and provide a unique character to Main Street.
- Consider farmer's markets or other temporary uses on vacant lots to keep them actively programmed and provide additional revenue to the Borough.
- Work with the Borough and County Redevelopment Authorities to prioritize and designate redevelopment areas along Main Street where clusters of vacant, underused, and for sale properties are located.
- Form a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee to ensure market development efforts can be sustained over time.

### **Institutional Uses**

- Encourage institutions in the Borough to provide easements or other public spaces to complete Borough and County trail and open space systems.
- Use banners or other gateway amenities to enhance Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital as a gateway to the Borough.
- Work with institutions to promote the CBD as a place for employees and visitors to frequent for errands and entertainment.
- Promote the redevelopment of vacant parcels that are zoned for institutional use with the assistance of the Darby Borough Redevelopment Authority.
- Promote homeownership in Darby to hospital employees.

### **Community Facilities and Public Services**

- Integrate immigrants into other community groups by providing public services aimed at improving language skills, education, and providing recreation and extra-curricular activities for youth.
- Work with community groups to help implement other recommendations for Main Street and to develop a sense of community pride.
- Invest in marketing strategies to attract new residents and slow the decline in population.
- Continue to maintain and work with existing faith-based and community organizations, property owners, and other stakeholders along Main Street, including the Darby Friends Society, Darby Historic Commission, and other community groups offering programs at the Darby Library and the Darby Borough Recreation Center.

- Use the future municipal facility with recreation center to establish youth and children's programs and to engage the community in improving public services.
- Use volunteers and civic associations to beautify Main Street in terms of trash clean-up, landscaping, gardens, etc.
- Support the development of a visitor/historic archives center at 1000 Main Street.
- Work with the William Penn School District to expand opportunities for education and community activities.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

- Enhance connections between the R2 Darby Station and Main Street by improving walkability and signage.
- Create a Transit-Oriented Development district around the Darby Transportation Center.
- Utilize the Darby Transportation Center as a focus for other design improvements and work with the Historic Commission to incorporate cultural and artistic elements into the Center.
- Synchronize traffic lights, and make other small changes along Main Street that, when combined, will have a significant impact.
- Use high traffic flow to attract people passing through to stop at Darby businesses.

These recommendations build upon existing assets and resources and are presented in an action agenda at the end of the plan, which provides a guide as to who would be responsible for implementation and what funding sources may be available to complete the projects.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The zoning/vision plan task force assisted with the visioning process and recommendations that are presented throughout this plan:

Mark Possenti, Borough Manager  
Leonard Tenaglia, Borough Council  
Tom Gaffney, Code Enforcement Officer  
Joe Nerelli, Code Enforcement Officer  
Timothy Dopson, Businessperson  
Janice Davis, President, Borough Council  
Lindy Wardell, Darby Borough Historical Commission  
Eileen Mulvena, Borough Engineer  
Sam Haber, Delaware County Planning Department  
John Pickett, Delaware County Planning Department

The Delaware County Planning Department, the Darby Historic Commission, and the Darby Borough Community Development Corporation also provided significant guidance and input throughout the preparation of this plan.

## 1.0 Plan Purpose/Overview

The purpose of this Main Street Vision Plan is to provide Darby Borough, the Delaware County Planning Department, the Darby Borough Council, the Darby Community Development Corporation (CDC), and Darby residents a vision and a framework in which to continue efforts to revitalize Main Street in Darby Borough. To accomplish this, the plan will: review existing conditions along the corridor, identify assets that are the Borough's strengths, present ways to take advantage of these resources to spur revitalization of Main Street, prioritize implementation programs and policies for revitalization, outline roles and responsibilities for these programs, and identify funding sources that can be used to pay for improvements along Main Street. The resulting recommendations of this plan emphasize the importance of creating a desirable place to work and live and a community of which people can be proud.

This plan will lay the groundwork and outline an overall program to tie together the diverse needs and strengths of the Borough to not only revitalize Main Street but to spur broader sustainable improvements in the Borough. As such, it will address existing initiatives in the Borough, but will not develop detailed capital improvement plans or physical designs for improvements. It will provide a vision for the future Main Street and recommend efforts to improve all of the components necessary to forge a sustainable revitalization of Main Street. It will not focus on one specific area of improvement but will look at Main Street as a whole by addressing issues related to theme, streetscape, natural resources and recreation, economic development, and transportation. By using grassroots and local efforts to implement the recommendations that address each of these aspects, Darby can create change in the way people view their own community, which will assist in increasing homeownership, the Borough's tax base, and eventually lead to larger scale projects.

The Borough of Darby received grant funding to complete this Main Street Vision Plan, in cooperation with the Delaware County Planning Department. Over the past ten years, Darby Borough has undertaken numerous efforts to enhance and improve the Main Street corridor from Cobbs Creek to Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital, including the area zoned as Central Business District. The Borough is rich in historic resources and has numerous other valuable attributes such as extensive public transportation; proximity to major interstates, the Philadelphia International Airport, University City, and Center City Philadelphia; and numerous well established small businesses. However, the Main Street Corridor has not developed and been improved consistently and cohesively along its length.

In 1991, the Comprehensive Plan for Darby Borough was completed, which was one of the first efforts to address Main Street specifically by presenting goals and objectives for the Main Street Central Business District. The Plan's goal for this portion of the corridor is to: "Strengthen and upgrade the Central Business District (Main Street) in order to improve its function, convenience, and appearance." To reach this goal, the Comprehensive Plan outlined the following objectives:

1. Improve the function of Main Street businesses by providing improvements such as lighting, directional signs, benches, and sidewalk improvements.

2. Upgrade the appearance of the Main Street shopping area by improving storefronts and sidewalks, regulating signs, and providing plantings, benches, and trash receptacles.
3. Improve the economic viability of the central business district by encouraging pedestrian-oriented, low impact retail and service establishments and discouraging industrial/wholesale and other auto-oriented, high impact businesses not generally appropriate for or permitted in central business district locations. Revision of the local zoning ordinance would be required to accomplish this objective.
4. Consider selecting and maintaining a single visual theme or idea for the central business district through common color schemes, signage, logos and storefront design.

Since the Comprehensive Plan has been adopted, the Borough has implemented some façade improvements, streetscape, and business attraction programs to help spur reinvestment along Main Street. However, these programs have taken place without an overall plan to guide and coordinate these efforts. In 2006, Darby Borough established a Tar

of Main Street. Approximately 16 people attended the public meeting. To publicize this meeting, approximately 300 flyers were distributed by borough staff to public locations throughout the borough and business owners, and the meeting was advertised on the Darby Borough website. Several individual residents and business owners were notified of the meeting through email who had been actively involved in the project. Public surveys and comment forms were also distributed at this meeting. Public comment forms and surveys were due by March 30 for incorporation into the vision plan. The public was also welcome to attend the monthly task force meetings, as well as a borough council meeting where the vision plan was presented. See Appendix A for comments received and a copy of the flyer that was distributed.

### 3.0 Existing Conditions Report

One of the first tasks of this project was the completion of an Existing Conditions Report (see Appendix B for full report) to provide an update on demographic trends in the Borough and to document physical conditions along the corridor. This report provided data and information regarding the past and present situation in the Main Street corridor, including:

- Physical conditions
- Demographic, income, and housing conditions
- Employment/Economic Conditions
- Infrastructure
- Zoning and land use
- Community facilities
- Public safety
- Cultural resources
- Natural resources
- Business inventory
- Review of previous studies

The key findings in this report are summarized below:

#### Demographics

- Population projections show decreases for Darby and surrounding municipalities
- The Study Area has a unique demographic composition (48% black, 47% white) which includes a recent influx of West African immigrants

#### Income

- Residents have median household income levels below the Delaware County and State levels
- According to the 2000 US Census, 20 percent of individuals living in Darby were living below the poverty level (as defined by US Census Bureau)

#### Housing

- Building lots are narrow and odd-shaped along the majority of Main Street
- Aging structures are common that are reaching the end of their lifespan
- Numerous parcels and buildings are vacant and underutilized
- Generous supply of affordable housing

#### Employment/Economic Conditions

- Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital, one of the largest employers in the County, anchors the western end of Main Street and is partially within the Borough of Yeadon
- Lack of overflow business from workers & visitors to multi-service center

#### Infrastructure

- Main St area has excellent access to trolley and bus service
- Access is available to Commuter Regional Rail on R2 line
- Ample parking is provided, including municipal lots
- Main Street is connected to major roadways in Delaware County (Chester Pike, MacDade Boulevard)
- Lack of unifying theme and holistic approach to physical improvements (piecemeal projects get lost in overall appearance)
- Large scale transportation facilities (bus depot)
- Need improvements to transit facilities, including the Darby Transportation Center
- Sewer and water infrastructure are aging (funding has recently been awarded for sewer improvements)
- The Borough adopted a stormwater management ordinance in 2005
- Roads and bridges need maintenance

#### Zoning and Land Use

- Lack of a unifying, consistent theme along Main Street due to disjointed funding and planning efforts
- Renovations have been completed adjacent to dilapidated structures (disjointed)
- Little unifying façade treatments
- Existing land uses vary widely in small corridor and are challenging to manage
- Zoning ordinance is in the process of being updated and should be completed in 2008

#### Community Facilities

- Well established existing community facilities include post office, Darby Free Library, Darby Resource and Recreation Center, and the multi-service health and welfare center
- Existing recreational facilities along or near Main Street include Darby Park, Bartram Park, and Powell Park
- Municipal building will be relocated in 2007 and will include a multi-purpose recreation/community center
- It is still undetermined as to who would use the existing municipal building on Summit Street.
- Darby and Cobbs Creeks are valuable recreational assets

- Open space along Darby Creek is included in ongoing greenway plans
- Annual events and festivals promote a sense of community (OcTrolleyFest)

#### Public Safety

- Although crime and public safety may be a community concern, statistics between 2004 and 2005 show decreases in crime
- The police and fire departments are generally seen as under staffed.

#### Cultural Resources

- Prominent historic properties along Main St that need to be demarcated:
  - Darby Library
  - 1000 Main St
  - Blue Bell Inn
  - Darby Friends Burial Ground
  - Darby Friends Schoolmasters House
- Older buildings create a sense of place
- Minimal existing signage indicating historic resources or events
- Darby's location has ensured it has been a crossroads throughout its history and consequently numerous historic events occurred in Darby that should be noted.

#### Natural Resources

- Existing public open space near Main Street includes land at end of 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Bartram Park along Darby Creek, Darby Park
- Darby Creek and Cobbs Creek serve as natural amenities; however, periodic flooding of Main Street properties and properties to the south of Main Street may occur

#### Business Inventory

- Existing long-term and well-established businesses and residents
- Lower end retail and service establishments are abundant
- Several new commercial developments planned (new restaurant, grocery store, etc.)
- Numerous parcels are for sale or vacant – opportunity for large sections to be developed simultaneously
- Existing businesses may no longer meet the needs of a changing community

The existing strengths of Main Street will allow the Borough of Darby to better position the Street and work towards improving those issues of ongoing concern. Darby has a proven ability to obtain grant funding for improvements that would address issues similar to the above-listed strengths and ongoing concerns. In the past, efforts have been approached on a project by project basis and each has been left to succeed or fail on its own which has added to the disjointed appearance of Main Street. Main Street does have many assets and the Borough should continue to leverage and strengthen these, especially as its own funds are somewhat constrained. As the Borough builds on its strengths, it should work to ensure that they are tied together with a unifying theme that enhances the evolution of Darby's identity.

#### 4.0 Borough Assets and Theme

The theme of Main Street should focus on Darby's historic and natural resources, the unique community character and composition of the existing residents, and its roots as a crossroads. We recommend an overall theme that is reflective of history, industry, and nature and the continuing evolution of the cross cutting relationships between these issues. In the early days of the Commonwealth and the country, Darby developed around a crossroads of several strategically important routes. Darby was once referred to as "The Gateway to The South" because it was a stop for travelers between Baltimore and Philadelphia. This locational advantage and the presence of a creek to power mills and industries enhanced the Borough's importance as industry flourished during and after the Industrial Revolution. Main Street was one of the crossroads along which the Borough developed and has served as its commercial hub for many years. This position also facilitated the development of numerous transit services such as buses, trolleys, and commuter rail service that tie the Borough to educational and professional opportunities throughout the region. As such, a diverse population has settled in Darby that is reflective of its shifting role.

As industry and the Borough's population has declined, in response to broader socio-economic trends, the Borough's status within the region, and that of Main Street, has lessened. Nonetheless, remnants of the Borough's long and rich past remain in the form of physical structures, transportation access, and alterations to Darby Creek and the natural environment due to past human activities. While some of these structures are in disrepair and environmental degradation has occurred, adaptive reuse of the structures and improvements to the environment will allow the Borough to educate residents and visitors about its history, natural environment, transportation, and population.

This discussion shows that the Borough theme should be built on its assets: history, natural resources, transportation, and a strong sense of community. Darby is continually evolving as a crossroads where history, the environment, and industry interact with each other, providing the driving force for progress and future development in Darby. As a crossroads, change is accepted as a constant but is also seen as a way to drive and continually improve the Borough.

*"...the Borough theme should be built on its assets: history, natural resources, transportation, and a strong sense of community. Darby is continually evolving as a crossroads where history, the environment, and industry interact with each other..."*

Regardless of the theme or identity that is pursued along Main Street, it should be promoted through gateways and signage that embody the culture and tradition of Main Street, and the larger Borough as well as involve community pride. Darby's demographics may be changing, but underlying the statistics are a rich tradition of families that span many generations and new immigrants attempting to create similar family legacies. Darby should work with the entire community to ensure that Main Street's theme considers the needs of all residents and continues to allow the community to serve as a crossroads for the region.

**4.1 Historic Resources**

Darby’s history as a village dates back to the 1600s when it was a significant location for Swedish settlers and a place where many of the first mills in Pennsylvania were established. To build on the list of historic resources presented in the Existing Conditions Report (Appendix B), the following table lists a handful of the important pub

Meetinghouse at 1017 Main Street is the only structure in Darby currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Borough's historic resources will not be preserved unless they are well documented and the public is made aware of them. The Darby Creek Watershed Plan recommends that each municipality complete a Historic Preservation Plan, a Historic Resources Inventory, and a Historic Resources Survey. It has been at least a decade since any complete inventories have been performed in Darby. The 1991 Comprehensive Plan lists historic resources; however, several key properties and sites are missing. To help guide the vision and growth of Main Street, important historic resources should be identified, documented, and maintained, and should be made accessible to the public when appropriate. Main Street's buildings, particularly between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets, appear to be significant and may be considered eligible as contributing resources to a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. The Borough and the Historic Commission should consider pursuing a nomination as an official Historic District, which would bring a certain level of protection to the contributing buildings and features within the designated district.

In 2004, a historic trolley loop was proposed to DVRPC on which no action has been taken to date. Residents and the Darby Historic Commission have recommended continuing discussions with SEPTA to reinstitute and reconnect a switch for a loop between Darby and Yeadon that the Route 62 Dinky trolley used to follow. This would allow a trolley to leave Darby without having to cross the freight rail lines along Main Street.

The Borough's history is most visible in the streetscape amenities along Main Street. Streetscape includes sidewalks, lighting, transportation infrastructure, and existing building facades. These elements should be improved and enhanced to build on the Borough's theme and to accentuate its resources.

#### 4.2 Natural Resources

In addition to historic resources, the natural features in Darby such as Darby and Cobbs Creeks are valuable assets to the community. In addition, the *Multi-Municipal Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan* that was completed in 2006 for the six boroughs within the William Penn School District inventoried public open space and concluded that Darby Borough has approximately 22 acres of parks, school grounds, and open space. The creeks and public open space, along with privately owned open spaces along Main Street should be used to enhance quality of life in Darby. Signage should be placed along Darby Creek to inform passersby of the natural features, its historic use for industry, its degradation, existing rehabilitation efforts, and future options for improvement. This would help the community re-establish historic links to this resource.

#### 4.3 Population

The Borough's population has and continues to evolve. As such, successful marketing of Main Street to residents and visitors should build on the Borough's diversity to attract the greatest number of people downtown to support businesses and facilitate economic development. The Borough's population is a resource that can be tapped to create sustainable efforts to continually improve the Borough's attractiveness as a place in which to live and work. As the Borough's

attractiveness improves and is publicized it will create further opportunities to enhance and grow the Borough's residential and commercial tax base. In turn this will help provide funds to help implement some of the recommendations in this plan. Current efforts to market Darby as an attractive place to live and work include the production of an informational pamphlet for new residents by the Borough's Community Development Corporation (CDC).

#### 4.4 Transportation

The Borough possesses numerous transportation amenities in part due to its historic role as a crossroads. It is serviced by SEPTA trolley and Regional Rail service. In addition, it is located in close proximity to major modern day thoroughfares. As such, these assets and the Borough's history as a crossroads should be promoted and incorporated into the theme for Main Street.

#### 4.5 General Theme Considerations

Darby's history is evident in the numerous buildings with varying architectural styles that have been constructed over the years along Main Street. As the Borough encourages the revitalization of Main Street, these buildings will serve as a valuable foundation for rehabilitation and the addition of new structures. Therefore, to continue to build on history and location as a theme for the Street, the Borough should consider establishing an historic district or other overlay district to encourage uniform signage and design in future buildings. This will ensure that future development complements current buildings. In addition, the overlay would place additional review requirements for the rehabilitation of historic structures, ensuring that they continue to contribute to the corridor.

A theme for Main Street will take time to develop and implement. As such, the Borough will need to consider how to staff and promote an organization responsible for theme development. The Main Street program can form the basis of any efforts for ongoing theme promotion. Although the Borough has indicated its preference to not pursue designation as an official Main Street Community under the PA Department of Community and Economic Development's program, the Borough has pursued physical improvements in the recent past that are in keeping with the general guidelines for programs from the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). Several other program components may be implemented by forming a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee. This committee would utilize the theme and vision to improve the overall appearance of the CBD by following DCED's Main Street and Elm Street program guidelines. The members of the existing Darby CDC and the Darby Redevelopment Authority could be the foundation of a future Main Street Committee. This committee can be used to track and oversee programs that Darby implements to reach its goals for Main Street, and may also serve to coordinate and provide oversight to local volunteer groups that are called upon or agree to assist the Borough in improving Main Street.

#### Recommendations

- Emphasize Main Street's theme and vision through unified signage, design guidelines, etc. such as pedestrian-scaled development and facades that reflect the era of the building.
- Consider nominating the corridor a Historic District under the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.

- Emphasize historic and natural resources as educational tools for children as well as tourist destinations.
- Create a sense of place by retaining existing residents and attracting new residents through a cohesive approach to Main Street improvements (possibly following the Four-Point Approach of the Main Street NTHP Program).
- Develop a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee to implement the vision and theme desired by residents and business owners in the long-term.
- Retain the “village” feeling and aesthetics of Main Street with new development.

## 5.0 Streetscape

A key component of most revitalization plans are streetscape improvements. To be successful, such streetscape efforts should address not only features along the streets and sidewalks, but surrounding buildings and spaces that contribute to the street’s overall character. In addition streetscape enhancements offer the opportunity to enhance transit ridership by clearly marking mass transit stops and access routes. All of these strategies can be pursued by Darby Borough to achieve its vision for an historic, attractive, walkable, pedestrian friendly Main Street.

### 5.1 Facades and Historic Structures

Darby Borough can draw on its existing structures and highlight their history to achieve its vision for Main Street. The Borough has utilized past façade grants to restore and rehabilitate selected buildings throughout the 300 to 900 blocks. Such efforts have resulted in a disjointed appearance to Main Street as some buildings that have undergone renovations sit next to older non-improved or vacant buildings. In addition, the grants have primarily been used on structures within the CDB, with little funding used to improve buildings outside of this area. As the Borough has had some success with past façade efforts, it should continue to pursue such grants, but in a more focused manner. If possible, applicants for the funds should be prioritized based on their proximity to adjacent features.

In addition, the Borough might wish to consider the use of a design overlay or historic overlay along Main Street. Such a district would capitalize on the abundance of historic and cultural resources along Main Street. Within the district, the Borough will use higher scrutiny when issuing permits for building and demolition activities. Rules would be established to limit the issuance of a building or demolition permit until a landowner met certain criteria. For a demolition permit the overlay zoning would require the landowner to prove that no other

*“...the Borough might wish to consider the use of a design overlay or historic overlay along Main Street.”*

use could be found for the building or that the building was not architecturally significant. For building permits, new construction would need to be compatible with existing structures in the neighborhood and meet specific bulk and density requirements. The plans would need to be reviewed by the zoning officer or the historic/design committee that would be established to review buildings in the design overlay district. Such a district should be considered by the Zoning Ordinance Task Force and would assist in bringing conformity to the design of any signs, facades, windows, paneling, etc. used along Main Street.

Similar to both the design overlay and the historic district overlay the Borough may wish to consider the option of creating a conservation district overlay. A conservation district overlay is intended to provide a vehicle to initiate and implement programs for the revitalization or conservation of older areas or districts possessing distinctive features, identity, or character worthy of retention and enhancement. A conservation district overlay takes effect through adoption of a neighborhood conservation plan and a set of guidelines that will facilitate maintenance and protection of the neighborhood character and the development of vacant or underused lots.

Incompatible mixes of uses will be reduced or prohibited by adding limitations to the list of permitted, limited and special uses of the base district. In addition, a conservation district is designed to ensure consistency with height, bulk, dimensional, and density regulations within the District so that oversized buildings are not constructed. This is done by ensuring that new buildings are not built with dimensions that are significantly larger or smaller than those on the block of, or within the designated radius of, a property. Many conservation districts also have massing, material, and design requirements for new construction, ensuring that it will not be out of place among other buildings in the district. New construction often can be of a different architectural style than surrounding buildings if other criteria are met. Restoration and renovation of older historic buildings are also encouraged within such a district.

Similar to an historic preservation district, a conservation district would require creation of a board or commission to review development applications and to ensure buildings meet specific height, bulk, massing, materials, design and other dimensional requirements of the district. Such a district will also promote walkability along Main Street by creating a more unified street façade with no empty facades or unsafe looking buildings. Improving walkability will also provide further incentives for residents and visitors to utilize transit, another asset in the Borough.

## 5.2 Sidewalks and Street Furniture

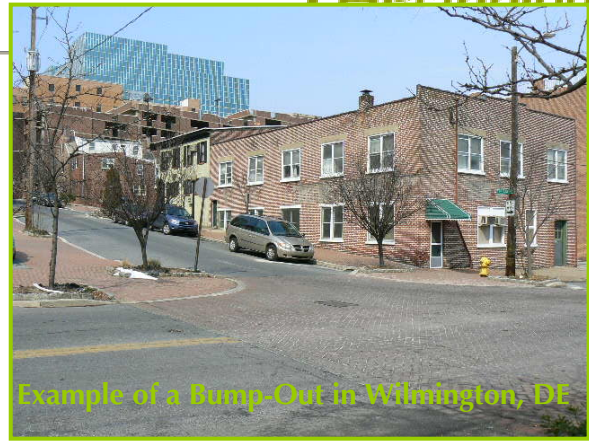
The sidewalks along Main Street are in various states of repair in part due to the extent of maintenance of surrounding buildings. Those buildings that are visually in better repair generally also have more maintained sidewalks. The Borough should take measures to ensure that sidewalks along Main Street are in good repair and of a consistent design that compliments its historic resources. The narrow sidewalks limit the opportunities to provide additional street amenities such as street trees; however, the Borough should maximize the use of planters already in place along the sidewalk by ensuring that trees or shrubs are maintained as several of them currently contain no vegetation.

The Borough should also pursue steps to expand the sidewalks in selected locations, which may require the removal of some on-street parking spaces to accommodate wider sidewalks. Specifically, such bump-outs could be constructed at the corners of key intersections to provide additional street furniture amenities, expand waiting areas at selected trolley stops, provide vegetative plantings, and assist traffic calming efforts. If trolleys stops were located at these expanded sidewalk areas, those boarding and disembarking transit would be able to safely transition from the vehicle to the sidewalk without having to avoid oncoming traffic, which would be slowed by the reduced clearance, and navigate around parked cars. At any given intersection where such improvements are pursued, two corners would be designed for transit improvements

while the other two would be designed with vegative plantings and street furniture to support overall streetscape improvement programs.

### 5.3 Parking

Street parking as well as municipal parking lots exist along the Main Street corridor for residents and patrons of the businesses. The municipal lots are free; however, signage along Main Street would assist in guiding visitors to parking lots that are set back behind the buildings and are difficult to locate for someone unfamiliar with the area. A general consensus among residents and business owners is that there is too much parking available along Main Street; however, existing parking may be at a level sufficient to support any future increases in commercial and residential development, which would in turn increase population and workforce densities. While excess parking means residents and visitors can easily find parking when needed, the excess can also present challenges to attracting businesses. Excess parking that is not occupied by vehicles can make the Main Street area appear more vacant and make it seem as if businesses are drawing fewer people. If excess parking does exist along certain blocks, some spaces can be reconfigured and wider sidewalks be provided as noted above.



### 5.4 Lighting

Efforts should be taken to standardize the design of street lamps along Main Street and provide a consistent appearance. The existing lighting along Main Street is a compilation of several different types of fixtures. Decorative green lamps were installed in the past 10 years along the majority of Main Street but they are lost among the existing trolley electrical lines, wiring, and taller lamps that were left in place. Due to normal weathering conditions and damage, several of these poles need to be replaced or maintained to improve their appearance. The fixtures themselves are therefore an asset in need of some cosmetic improvements, indicating that the overriding issue is of maintenance and upkeep of existing lighting infrastructure.



Existing Lighting and Signs along Main Street

Communities throughout the nation are considering more efficient options for lighting and signs including LED technology or solar-powered lighting that does not require extensive disturbance of existing infrastructure. The initial cost of energy-efficient streetscape features may be more than traditional lighting, but the savings in energy can be worth the upfront costs. In addition,

Pennsylvania has numerous grants available that assist in implementing sustainable design and green building techniques.

### Recommendations

- Consider adopting a design, historic, or conservation overlay district along Main Street and include it in revised zoning ordinance
- Continue to seek façade improvement grants but better prioritize buildings so that buildings adjacent to already restored buildings receive preference for funding to improve consistency.
- Provide identification signs to guide transit users to trolley stops and the R2 Station.
- Provide wayfinding signage that will guide residents and visitors to important resources and landmarks both on and off Main Street.
- Maintain existing lighting and consider installing compatibly designed and uniform lighting at strategic locations such as transit stops using sustainable design techniques (i.e. solar powered or battery-powered LED signs and lights that do not require wiring and trenching).
- Provide a consistent surface design for sidewalks.
- Reconfigure parking at selected sites, expand sidewalks, and provide streetscape amenities.
- Improve existing litter cleanup by placing more trashcans and increasing street maintenance for which Darby Borough Highway Department is responsible; recruit volunteers to clean up Main Street or hold neighborhood/block clean-up events (similar to DCVA's watershed clean-up days).
- Continue maintenance once upgrades or improvements have been implemented.

## 6.0 Recreation and Open Space

The *Darby Creek Watershed Plan* states issues within this watershed that go beyond water resources. The plan mentions there is a lack of active and passive recreational facilities and new development is consuming open space instead of using abandoned and underutilized sites. Within the watershed, 2,700 acres of land are classified as "recreation" and 5,000 acres are wooded. The main focus in Darby should be providing a greenway for passive recreation opportunities such as hiking and fishing along Darby Creek by connecting open space parcels since this is a high priority for regional organizations such as the Darby Creek Valley Association (DCVA) and the Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership. These regional organizations should be used as assets since numerous educational and volunteer activities are already planned through them such as the annual Darby Creek Watershed Clean-Up.

According to the *Multi-Municipal Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan*, the borough has the beginnings of a greenway system of connected park and open space along Darby Creek from Bartram Park to the open space located at the foot of 11<sup>th</sup> Street. A greenway trail through Darby Borough is proposed along the creek that would begin in Bartram Park (behind Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital), cross over MacDade Blvd into the transportation center, cross over Chester Pike, travel through the municipal park, Norman Powell Park, and continue along the creek to end at Pine Street. Norman Powell Park is a two-

*"Tree and vegetative cover should be increased to the maximum extent possible, particularly along Darby Creek..."*

acre riparian park located between Darby Creek and New Walnut Street just south of Main Street. In addition, Delaware County's efforts to construct its portion of the East Coast Greenway may also provide additional opportunities to link these natural resources. Residents have also expressed a need for a pedestrian connection from Main Street to Darby Creek, possibly using one of the narrow lots in the 800 block near Springfield Road for creating a pathway. The open space areas along Darby Creek should become a place where residents can fish, walk, have picnics, or just sit and relax.

Darby Borough has 16-30 park trees per acre (optimum level is >60 trees per acre) and its impervious surface ranges from 31 to 57 percent. Tree cover ranges from

## 7.0 Economic Development

### 7.1 Flood Control and Stormwater Runoff

A number of local and regional issues contribute to flood events along Darby and Cobbs Creeks for which a combination of solutions at both levels will be needed to improve the current state of the watershed. Darby Borough, which covers 0.8 square miles, has aging stormwater infrastructure and is also highly built-out with 57, 55, and 31 percent impervious surface within the three census tracts along Main Street (4024, 4025, and 2046, respectively). Flood control along Darby Creek plays a role in improving economic development for Main Street residents and businesses, particularly between 10<sup>th</sup> and Mill Streets (800-900 blocks) where the buildings are located in the 100-year or 500-year floodplains.

Several local efforts are underway to reduce local hazards that contribute to flooding. PennDOT is currently working on the MacDade Boulevard bridge to remove its central pier and create a single-span structure over Darby Creek. This will eliminate an obstruction where debris has historically collected in the middle of the channel and blocked the stream's flow. While this construction is causing disturbances to local businesses, the long-term benefit of enlarging the floodway and removing a potential contributor to local flooding will be worth these short-term disruptions. Plans are also being made to remove large debris from other locations within the stream and a dam near 12<sup>th</sup> Street that will assist in alleviating flooding to local residents and businesses during large storm events.

In addition, upgrading infrastructure and the stormwater management system can help attract businesses to the Central Business District as new owners will know that their investments will be better protected against flooding. Related to business attraction, the floodplain map for Darby Creek has been recently revised; these changes should be incorporated into the ongoing zoning ordinance revisions so that property owners are provided the most recent and accurate information to better inform their investment decisions. The Borough should also acquire copies of the latest floodplain maps for Darby Creek and use them for flood and stormwater management purposes.

Other municipalities have experienced flooding issues in their downtown areas due to development within the floodplain and increases in upstream impervious surface. Although flood and stormwater control are more effectively performed at the regional scale, Darby could implement small-scale programs to encourage greening and increase pervious surface, which would reduce localized flooding during storm events. Each additional tree planted can reduce flooding and stormwater runoff by absorbing approximately 2,000 gallons of water per year. Best management practices recommended by the PA Department of Environmental Protection such as pervious pavement, vegetated roofs, and conserving/enhancing riparian areas can be implemented throughout the borough. In addition, requirements of the borough's stormwater ordinance should be actively enforced for new and existing development. Several of these practices may be suitable for use along Main Street to meet the requirements of the Borough's stormwater management ordinance. Green building techniques can also be incorporated into public facilities and buildings such as pervious pavers along the walkway that will tie into the Darby Transportation Center or a greenroof or energy efficient lighting and design at the new municipal building.

Delaware County recently used CDBG funds to acquire properties located at 868-878 Main Street that were damaged from flooding and fires. Properties such as these that are prone to flooding should be acquired by the County or the Borough to create greenway connections along Darby Creek as planned. Included in the redevelopment proposal for the Darby Transportation Center is a request to acquire and clear the properties between Darby Creek and Springfield Road that are in the floodway and include them in the Darby Creek greenway. More efforts such as these should be pursued to reduce flood risk of certain properties and enhance open space along Darby Creek.

### Recommendations

- Plant trees and restore riparian vegetation along Darby Creek.
- Require property owners to adhere to requirements set forth in the Borough's Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- Remove debris and invasive plant species from Darby Creek beds and streambanks.
- Partner with the Darby Creek Valley Association and the Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership to implement programs.
- Encourage the use of simple and innovative stormwater best management practices such as rain gardens, green roofs, and rain barrels by public and private property owners.
- Acquire parcels in the floodplain along Darby Creek to include in greenway connection plans.

## 7.2 Residential Development

A key factor in enhancing economic growth in Darby is strengthening homeownership and reusing vacant or underused residential buildings and sites. Ensuring that buildings are in constant use is one of the most important aspects of keeping a building well-maintained, particularly those that are historic.

According to Darby Borough staff, a high concentration of privately owned and subsidized housing or public housing exists in the Borough, with a notable cluster of these housing types present along Main Street's 400 block. Numerous landowners accept federal Section 8 Certificates from renters; however, in the case of the landowners along Main Street, many are not keeping up with property maintenance and basic housing needs such as electricity and water. Such conditions often lead to such housing being associated with stigmas such as high crime and poverty. To ameliorate these two intertwined issues landowners, renters, and borough staff need to work together to ensure that rental properties are complying with building codes, that these codes are being enforced, and that residents are encouraged to strive for homeownership and a better quality of life.



The Delaware County Housing Authority (which includes Delaware County Homeownership and Credit Counseling, Inc.) may be able to provide assistance with implementing a homeownership program in Darby and surrounding communities. The PA Low-Income Home Energy Assistance

Program (LIHEAP) should also be promoted to make residents aware that money is available in emergency situations for heating. Educational efforts should also be undertaken to improve the conditions of some rental housing in the Borough. To be successful, such programs would focus on both tenants and owners so that each group was aware of their respective rights and responsibilities, available resources for assistance, and appropriate processes that should be followed to resolve conflicts. Such programs may be developed by the Borough CDC in cooperation oi71 T848DelTm(ouCounty Home renAuthority.7.97998 Tm( TEMC EMC 1/P /MCID 0 >>BDC BT()T

- Find funding programs such as PA Housing Financing Agency's Home Ownership Choice Program to assist in rehabilitating housing stock.
- Promote the Borough's affordability to attract first-time home buyers.
- Encourage the Borough to communicate and participate more frequently with the Delaware County Housing Authority to better distribute subsidized and public housing throughout the County.
- Develop programs to inform tenants and property owners of their respective rights and responsibilities.
- Develop and enhance relationships with the Community Planning team for Southwest Philadelphia at the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

### 7.3 Commercial Development

Through the public participation process, it was determined there was a desire and a need to increase the diversity of commercial operations along Main Street. Some of the same strengths of the Borough were recognized as presenting challenges to successful business development and retention efforts; therefore, a creative and informed approach to business development must be pursued to accommodate the Borough's unique characteristics, namely its demographics and the size and configuration of existing structures along Main Street.

Future businesses could serve either Borough residents, those passing through using transit, or non-residents who work in the Borough. Currently, approximately 44 businesses are located within the CBD, with the majority of them being service-oriented or convenience stores. The Borough is attracting new business investments as a new restaurant called Keya Graves that recently opened at 891-893 Main Street and a meat market is planned for the old Lime Sportswear building. However, many of the Borough's existing businesses have lost customers as the Borough's demographics have undergone significant change since Main Street was commercially vibrant in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The population has become more diverse both in terms of income and racial composition and this change continues today.

The Task Force and the public also recognized that transit users could potentially support businesses in the Borough and offset customer loss caused by the Borough's shifting demographics. The Darby Transportation Center is a main transfer point between bus routes and between bus routes and the trolley. These transit users could be served by shops that would allow them to run errands such as grocery shopping, dry cleaning, or shoe repair between their transfers. Such service-oriented retail



**Existing Commercial and Light Industrial Uses Along Main Street**

establishments could also be patronized by Borough residents. In addition, the transfer time could allow transit users to patronize businesses for a quick snack or coffee. Related to food service, the Task Force and the public also voiced concern over the need for sit-down restaurants along Main Street for Borough residents who may choose to travel to neighboring jurisdictions such as Lansdowne or Collingdale to dine at a restaurant. At the public meeting, coffee shops, bakeries, and ice cream shops were mentioned as potential dining establishments that might also serve the needs of transit users and visitors to the Borough. Farmers markets, or other temporary uses, were also mentioned as a way to provide the residents with fresh food, support the local and regional economies, actively use vacant lots along Main Street, and provide the Borough with additional revenues.

Some of the vacant lots along Main Street are irregular in shape, which is partly a result of the historic development pattern along the corridor that evolved from colonial era street patterns and traditional Indian trails. These historic routes were not laid out in a traditional grid pattern, which would have created rectangular lots, but instead were shaped by topography, resulting in Main Street's slightly extended "U" shape. Consequently, irregular lots were laid out to accommodate this street layout. Lots are also generally quite narrow along Main Street as many were laid out during the colonial era to accommodate uses and transportation modes common to the day. Modern day consumption patterns and uses may require more space than what is provided in these older buildings and lots; therefore, any businesses that are attracted to the Borough will have to be able to take advantage of and be compatible with these older two-story building types and lot layouts.

The unique physical layout along Main Street may also allow the Borough the opportunity to seek out variety in the mix of businesses, such as ethnic restaurants or food markets, entertainment (i.e. theaters), or cultural establishments. These businesses would bring a greater variety of clientele to Main Street and could support the needs of the Borough's large immigrant population. Darby can learn from other communities with high immigrant populations such as Fruitvale Village in East Oakland, California. Fruitvale is a historically Latino neighborhood that has always been well served by transportation and was the home of a thriving industrial and commercial district. The neighborhood lost major employers, and became an area of high crime, high unemployment, and high poverty. An economic development study was performed that determined a real estate makeover was needed as well as better connections between the transit station and International Boulevard, a major connector to downtown. The area was designated a transit village zone with an ordinance that allowed higher densities and mixed use development. This example, although it encompasses a larger higher density area, addresses three main transportation issues that many communities in Pennsylvania face: decentralized growth patterns; isolation of urban low-income and minority populations; and an aging population that changes transportation needs.

Zoning changes can therefore be enacted to encourage a greater mix of uses in the CBD and along Main Street as a whole, ensuring that the numerous religious institutions along Main Street are not affected by conflicting uses, and that existing structures are adaptively reused or combined to accommodate future businesses as noted in the streetscaping section (Section 5.0) of this plan. In addition, as noted throughout this section of the plan, businesses that locate along Main Street will need to serve the Borough's changing demographics, workers employed in Darby, a large immigrant population, and transit users. To support business attraction efforts, a more thorough understanding of these complex demographics and a determination of Main Street's existing and potential service areas is needed. Therefore, the Borough should seek support from the

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Delaware County Planning Department or other entities, such as the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to undertake and perform an in depth market analysis and assessment. Attempts in the past have been made to receive funding for a market analysis; however, Darby may have an increased probability of receiving funding from Delaware County once this plan has been approved as it shows a compelling and widely shared belief in the community of the need for a market analysis.

*“...the Borough should seek support...to undertake and perform an in depth market analysis...”*

Furthermore, to sustain these efforts, as mentioned earlier in this plan, it is recommended that Darby Borough form a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee to develop strategies for recruiting new businesses, retaining existing businesses, and improving the overall appearance of the CBD. It should be structured using elements of the NTHP’s Main Street and Elm Street programs so that if the Borough were to decide at a later date to have this organization function as a Main Street Program such a transition could be easily accommodated. The existing Darby CDC and the Darby Redevelopment Authority could both be used as the foundation of this Main Street Committee to start these efforts. CDC members were supportive of this recommendation. Main Street, at one time, also had a merchant’s association. Efforts to reinvigorate this group once a change in perspective has taken place along Main Street may assist businesses in working toward a common vision.

## Recommendations

- Perform a detailed market analysis and assessment of Main Street’s market areas.
- Reinvigorate the Main Street merchant’s association.
- Utilize the Darby Transportation Center as a focus point for business development efforts due to its nature as a transfer point and central location in the Borough.
- Encourage the establishment of service oriented retail and dining establishments that could serve all potential demographics in the Borough.
- Create more flexibility in the zoning ordinance to allow mixed land use and adaptive reuse of historic buildings and oddly shaped lots.
- Attract shops that can be patronized by the Borough’s immigrant population and provide a unique character to Main Street.
- Consider farmer’s markets or other temporary uses on vacant lots to keep them actively programmed and provide additional revenue to the Borough.
- Work with the Borough and County Redevelopment Authorities to prioritize and designate redevelopment areas along Main Street where clusters of vacant, underused, and for sale properties are located.
- Form a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee to ensure market development efforts can be sustained over time.

## 7.4 Institutional Uses

Located in the northwest section of Darby, where the boundary with Yeadon Borough lies, are the Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital (part of the property lies within Yeadon Borough) and the St. Francis Country House Nursing Center. These institutions are major employers in the Borough and in

Delaware County (the hospital employs approximately 2,200 people) and are all clustered together at the northwestern section of Main Street. These institutions serve as a gateway to Darby from the North and should be appropriately identified and signed.

In addition to existing institutions, the Zoning Task Force would like to modify the zoning ordinance of the vacant Villa St. Teresa site to allow a retirement home to potentially locate there. Currently, the parcel is zoned institutional, which allows nursing homes or continuing care facilities for the elderly. The residents of the home and associated staff, along with employees and visitors to existing institutions, could also frequent local businesses. In addition, new employees would increase the Borough's income tax base. The earned income tax is 1 percent for residents and non-residents. The Zoning Task Force should review institutional uses permitted along Main Street to ensure that these uses will maximize the Borough's tax base.

As noted earlier, these institutional parcels can form a link to some of the larger recreation and open space efforts underway in the Borough and the County. As such, these parcels can be seen as important contributors to the overall improvement of the Central Business District and efforts should be taken to better tie these Institutions to the CBD. Other hospitals in the region such as the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and Thomas Jefferson Hospital have worked with their surrounding communities to provide improvements that benefit the Institutions, their employees, and the neighborhoods. The Borough should work closely with hospital staff to enhance the lives of the hospital employees and promote the Borough as a place to live to employees. Existing resources such as Bartram Park, Darby Creek, and the unique assortment of services offered along Main Street can be used to improve the perception of Main Street to hospital employees. As Main Street improves and becomes more desirable homeownership programs could be pursued at the hospital to attract employees and greatly benefit Darby..

### **Recommendations**

- Encourage institutions in the Borough to provide easements or other public spaces to complete Borough and County trail and open space systems.
- Utilize banners or other gateway amenities to enhance Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital as a gateway to the Borough.
- Work with institutions to promote the CBD as a place for employees and visitors to frequent for errands and entertainment.
- Promote the redevelopment of vacant parcels that are zoned for institutional use with the assistance of the Darby Borough Redevelopment Authority.
- Promote homeownership in Darby to hospital employees.

## **7.5 Community Facilities and Public Services**

Given that a significant portion of the current population are recent immigrants from West Africa, integrating West Africans and other immigrant groups into the community by offering assistance to get small businesses started, residents to buy homes, etc. is key to preventing further isolation of ethnic groups. Darby Borough should reach out to new residents and make them feel welcome and instill a sense of community pride. A community service center for the immigrant population may be a method of integrating West Africans into the community where English language classes, art and cultural educational programs can be offered to both children and adults. The Darby

Library and the Darby Borough Recreation Center can be used as facilities for providing classes since funding for a new community service center may be limited. The library is a valuable historic resource that should be promoted as one of Darby's premier assets. In addition, the churches and faith-based organizations along Main Street are a great asset to community members and should be used, along with any religious associations, as a venue for reaching out to the immigrant population and other demographics. The Borough of Darby can work with faith-based and community organizations to satisfy both parties' interests and goals for Main Street.



In addition to outreach to new residents, the Borough should utilize volunteer groups to involve existing residents in improving the community. As noted earlier in the plan, existing residents could lead trash cleanups and maintain plantings in efforts to improve Main Street. Not only will these efforts accomplish physical improvements, but they will help instill a sense of pride of place in Darby as residents begin to feel they have a hands-on stake in improving their community. The Borough should also work with the William Penn School District to provide opportunities for education and community activities so that residents obtain information and skills that will enable to feel empowered to help shape their community.

The future municipal building on Ridge Avenue will be within walking distance to Main Street for residents with children. The recreation component of this facility will be a great asset to the community, considering that community stakeholders suggested there is a need for more recreational facilities for children.

The Historic Commission in Darby would like to convert the building at 1000 Main Street into a historic archives and visitor center. A desire exists to convert the building into a green and energy-efficient building to use as an example for surrounding communities and maybe inspire homeowners to complete energy and green improvements on their own properties.

The William Penn Foundation as well as the Allen Hilles Fund provide grants to promote children's education and economic development in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Recent funding efforts by the Allen Hilles Fund include a \$3,000 grant in 2005 to the African Cultural Alliance of North America in Philadelphia for a West African Teen Retrieval Program.

## Recommendations

- Integrate immigrants into other community groups by providing public services aimed at improving language skills, education, and providing recreation and extra-curricular activities for youth.
- Work with community groups to help implement other recommendations for Main Street and to develop a sense of community pride.
- Invest in marketing strategies to attract new residents and slow the decline in population.
- Continue to maintain and work with existing faith-based and community organizations, property owners, and other stakeholders along Main Street, including the Darby Historic Commission and community groups offering programs at the Darby Library and the Darby Borough Recreation Center.

- Use the future municipal facility with recreation center to establish youth and children's programs and to engage the community in improving public services.
- Use volunteers and civic associations to beautify Main Street in terms of trash clean-up, landscaping, gardens, etc.
- Support the development of a visitor/historic archives center at 1000 Main Street.
- Work with the William Penn School District to expand opportunities for education and community activities.

## 8.0 Transportation

Darby is a first-generation suburb of Philadelphia and is influenced by the closely located West Philadelphia neighborhoods, which border the eastern end of Main Street. Numerous urban renewal efforts are taking place in Philadelphia that may assist in attracting residents farther west into Darby and other boroughs. Traffic that flows westward along Main Street is originating from Philadelphia and is bringing potential clientele for businesses. Residents of Darby also have quick and convenient access to Center City Philadelphia via roads, trolleys, or the regional rail line. Main Street offers the opportunity for the Borough to build on the fact that businesses along Main Street can be accessed by foot, trail, car, and rail. In many ways the Borough is an intermodal destination. As such, Darby should incorporate and embrace transit as much as possible into any and all streetscape proposals.

The Trolley is one of the most important and defining features of Main Street. Two routes provide access from the Transportation Center to Center City Philadelphia and efficiently move people through the Borough. It provides access to major historic and retail nodes along Main Street. These trolley routes may limit the amount of vehicular traffic that Main Street can accommodate. In 2005, the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) was 10,656 vehicles south of Route 13 (MacDade Blvd) and 16,369 vehicles north of Route 13 (Source: PennDOT iTMS). This is a high volume of traffic for a two-lane roadway with continuous trolley service. It has been suggested that traffic lights be better timed to accommodate this traffic flow along with the trolley.

Signage around major trolley stops in the Borough should also be improved in a cost-effective manner in close coordination with SEPTA. Improved signs would clearly identify the locations of stops and provide wayfinding to significant resources, such as historic sites. In addition the Borough could look at innovative ways to provide street furniture and amenities at selected stops. Cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and San Francisco all have provided street furniture such as bus shelters, benches, and kiosks at transit stops without expense by leasing advertising space on the facilities. Darby may wish to look into such a program. Regardless, providing better signage would not only highlight transit and significant resources along the corridor, but could be used to create a signature look or design for the Borough. Such small low cost programs should be pursued wherever possible. Although each effort may be small, together they can add up to create larger improvements in the Borough that are greater than each individual part.

Another key strategy would involve better signage and streetscape along 4<sup>th</sup> Street from Main Street to the Darby Station on SEPTA's R2 line. The station is currently underutilized and could become another gateway to the Borough. The station could be improved to provide easier access to Philadelphia-bound trains. In addition, much as in Media, signage could be placed at the Station

to provide a history of the Borough and guide visitors towards Main Street. An improved 4<sup>th</sup> Street with new sidewalks and other features would allow the Borough to draw people toward Main Street from the station and perhaps improve Ridership at the Station.

Finally, an expansion at the Darby Transportation Center along the 900 block of Main Street is planned that will have a significant impact on downtown. Construction includes a new bus terminal with a multi-bus staging area and access road connecting MacDade Boulevard and Main Street, a new pedestrian walkway from Main Street to MacDade Boulevard, and a new park area along Darby Creek with a paved walkway. The new design should blend in with existing structures and should also be designed using architectural materials that give the building an appearance of permanence while minimizing bulk. As such, the new structures can be viewed as a foundation for future transportation enhancements.

In addition, there may be funding associated with this improvement to involve local artists to create public art for the facility as part of SEPTA's Art-in-Transit program. If such funds are made available, the Borough should consider working with SEPTA to utilize the funding to develop signage or other art that ties into the Main Street theme such as creating a display area in the terminal for historic photos of the borough and the transportation facilities. The Darby Borough Historic Commission is also pursuing renaming the Transportation Center to the "John Drews Transportation Center." Another desire of the community is to retain the historic Pony-truss trolley bridge, constructed in 1904, that crosses Darby Creek near the Transportation Center. This bridge is slated for removal under the current redevelopment plans for the Transportation Center; however, if negotiations can be done to keep the bridge in place, Darby would be able to use this unique historic resource as a pedestrian connection across the creek, which may be the last bridge of its type left in the United States.



### Recommendations

- Enhance connections between the R2 Darby Station and Main Street by improving walkability and signage.
- Create a Transit-Oriented Development district around the Darby Transportation Center.
- Utilize the Darby Transportation Center as a focus for other design improvements and work with the Historic Commission to incorporate cultural and artistic elements into the Center.
- Synchronize traffic lights, and make other small changes along Main Street that, when combined, will have a significant impact.
- Use high traffic flow to attract people passing through to stop at Darby businesses.

## 9.0 Vision Statement

The Plan sections above show us that Darby is a crossroads. It has not or will not remain constant as people meet and exchange ideas. The visioning process for this plan included obtaining input from residents, the Task Force, and the CDC. The following visioning statement will serve as a

guide for this Plan. The statement builds upon the 1991 Comprehensive Plan Objectives, as well as goals from other recently published plans (discussed in Existing Conditions Report, Appendix B), to guide future improvements along Main Street:

*“Darby Borough residents and business owners envision a diverse and vibrant corridor that connects and unifies the Central Business District to surrounding neighborhoods. Through improvements and upgrades to physical features, economic conditions, cultural resources, and the natural setting of two creeks, we envision a place that builds upon its strategic location as a cultural crossroads with great transportation access and a unique history.”*

## 10.0 Action Agenda

To move the Vision Plan forward, this section summarizes the recommendations that Darby can do to build upon existing assets and resources, and provides a guide as to who would be responsible for implementation and what funding sources may be available. The Action Agenda prioritizes the recommendations made in earlier sections of the Plan into the following three categories:

**High priority:** Projects that should take place in 1-2 years to build capacity and the groundwork for future projects.

**Medium priority:** Projects that will help implement portions of the vision plan once the capacity and support projects are in place and should take place within the next five years.

**Low priority:** Projects that will require other projects to be completed to be successfully implemented. These will occur within a longer timeframe of about six to 20 years.

A natural progression of implementation would be best for the Borough to obtain their vision and goals for Main Street, beginning with the high priority recommendations, which are meant to be feasible with little or no funding required. Projects or recommendations with a higher priority should be completed first and would facilitate implementation of the medium and lower priority recommendations.

## ACTION AGENDA DARBY BOROUGH MAIN STREET VISION PLAN

### THEME

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Within 1-2 Years	Within Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Create design guidelines for Main Street corridor through design overlay or other tools.	●			Zoning Ordinance Committee	DCED/DVRPC	Sec 4.5
Consider nominating the entire Main Street corridor a Historic District under the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.	●			Zoning Ordinance Committee	NPS	Sec 4.5
Emphasize historic and natural resources as educational tools for children as well as tourist destinations.	●			William Penn School District, Darby Borough		Sec 4.5
Create a sense of place by retaining existing residents and attracting new residents through a cohesive approach to Main Street improvements.		●		Main Street Organization	DCED/DVRPC	Sec 4.5
Develop a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee to implement the vision and theme desired by residents and business owners in the long-term.	●			Borough Council/ Darby CDC		Sec 4.5
Apply zoning standard for new development to retain the "village" feeling and aesthetics of Main Street with new development.	●			Zoning Ordinance Task Force/ Borough Council		Sec 4.5

## STREETSCAPE

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Adopt a design, historic, or conservation overlay district along Main Street and include in revised zoning ordinance.	●			Zoning Ordinance Task Force/ Committee	Delaware County	Sec 5.1
Develop a prioritization system for buildings that apply for façade improvement funds.	●			Zoning Board / Borough Council	Delaware County	Sec 5.1
Continue to seek out and use façade improvement grants.			●	CDC / Borough Council/ Private Property Owners	Delaware County/ DCED	Sec 5.1
Provide wayfinding signage that will guide residents and visitors to important resources and landmarks both on and off Main Street.		●		CDC / Borough Council / Main Street Organization	SEPTA/DVRPC	Sec 5.0
Improve parking and sidewalk configurations, and streetscape amenities (i.e. bump-outs, plantings, benches, etc.).		●		CDC/ Main Street Organization / Borough Council	DVRPC, DCED, PennDOT	Sec 5.2
Maintain existing lighting and consider installing uniform lighting along the corridor and at strategic locations such as transit stops using sustainable design techniques.		●		CDC/Borough Council/SEPTA	DCED, PennDOT	Sec 5.4
Improve existing litter cleanup and increase frequency of street maintenance.	●			Neighborhood /volunteer groups, Darby Borough Hwy Dept.		Sec 5.0

## RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Develop pocket parks along Main Street (skateboarding parks, playgrounds, etc.).	●			Zoning Board	DCNR, DCED, PDA	Sec 6.0
Develop community gardens or farmers markets in vacant lots.		●		Volunteer groups, garden club, local citizens	DCNR, DCED, PDA	Sec 6.0
Develop and publicize new recreation center at 1020 Ridge Ave.	●			Borough Recreation Committee	<i>[Funding already set aside for recreation equipment].</i>	Sec 6.0
Plant trees and native vegetation in open space areas along Darby Creek (also reduces stormwater runoff and flooding).		●		Volunteer Groups/ Borough Council	TreeVitalize, Urban and Community Forestry Grant	Sec 6.0
Develop centers of activity and parks with facilities for youth and young adults.		●		Borough Recreation Committee	DCNR, DCED, William Penn Foundation	Sec 6.0
Work with Darby Creek Valley Association and Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership to develop more recreational facilities and open space.	●			Borough Council/ Volunteer Groups		Sec 6.0

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Plant trees and restore riparian vegetation along Darby Creek.	●			Zoning Board, Darby Creek Valley Association	TreeVitalize, DCNR, Urban and Community Forestry Grant	Sec 7.1
Require property owners to adhere to requirements set forth in the Borough's stormwater management ordinance.	●			Zoning Board, Borough Code Enforcement	US EPA Grants	Sec 7.1
Remove debris and invasive plant species from Darby Creek beds and streambanks.		●		Darby Creek Valley Association	Private Organizations	Sec 7.1
Partner with Darby Creek Valley Association and the Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership to implement programs.	●			Borough Council/ CDC	DCNR, Growing Greener	Sec 7.1
Encourage the use of simple and innovative stormwater BMPs (i.e. rain gardens, green roofs, rain barrels, educational brochures and pamphlets for homeowners).		●		Code Enforcement, Zoning Board, Borough, CDC	EPA Source Reduction Assistance Grants, Nonpoint Source Management Section 319 Grants, PA Growing Greener Funds	Sec 7.1

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Acquire parcels in floodplain along Darby Creek to include in greenway connection plans.		●		Delaware County Redevelopment Authority/Darby Redevelopment Authority/CDC		Sec 7.1
Create buffers between industrial and residential land uses.			●	Zoning Board/ Zoning Task Force	Delaware County, DVRPC, DCED	Sec 7.2
Encourage homeownership among renters by using programs such as Delaware County's Homeownership First Program or Habitat for Humanity.		●		Darby Borough (in coordination with Delaware County Housing Authority)	Delaware County, HUD	Sec 7.2
Enforce building codes, particularly for landowners.	●			Borough Code Enforcement		Sec 7.2
Rehabilitate existing housing stock.		●		Private Homeowners/ Borough Council/ Code Enforcement	PA Housing Financing Agency's Home Ownership Choice Program, HUD	Sec 7.2
Promote the Borough's affordability to attract first-time home buyers.			●	CDC	DVRPC	Sec 7.2

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Encourage the Borough to communicate and participate more frequently with the Delaware County Housing Authority to better distribute subsidized and public housing throughout the County.	●			Borough Staff/ Borough Council		Sec 7.2
Develop programs to inform tenants and property owners of their respective rights and responsibilities.	●			Borough CDC/ Delaware County Housing Authority	US Department of Housing and Urban Development	Sec 7.2
Develop and enhance the relationship between the Borough and the City of Philadelphia, mainly through the PCPC's Southwest Philadelphia Community Planning Team.	●			Borough Staff/ Borough Council		Sec 7.2
Reinvigorate the Main Street merchant's association.		●		CDC		Sec 7.3
Create a more flexible zoning ordinance to allow mixed land use and adaptive reuse.		●		Zoning Ordinance Task Force/ Committee	Delaware County, DCED	Sec 7.3
Conduct a detailed market assessment and analysis to determine the Borough's customer base to identify businesses that could serve demographics.	●			CDC/Borough Council	DCED, DVRPC, Delaware County	Sec 7.3

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Prioritize areas along Main Street where clusters of vacant, underused, and for sale properties are located to designate as redevelopment areas.		●		Borough/County Redevelopment Authorities	Delaware County	Sec 7.3
Form a Main Street Corridor Revitalization Committee.	●			Borough Council / Darby CDC		Sec 7.3
Encourage institutions to provide easements or other public spaces to complete Borough and County trail and open space systems.			●	Institutions/Borough Council	DCNR, Borough Council	Sec 7.4
Utilize banners or other gateway amenities to enhance Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital as a gateway to the Borough.			●	Borough (in coordination with Mercy-Fitzgerald Hospital)		Sec 7.4
Work with institutions to promote the CBD as a place for employees and visitors to frequent for errands and entertainment.		●		CDC, Institutions		Sec 7.4
Promote the redevelopment of vacant parcels that are zoned institutional with the assistance of the Darby Borough Redevelopment Authority.		●		CDC, Institutions		Sec 7.4

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Integrate immigrants into other community groups by providing public services aimed at improving language skills, education, and providing recreation and extra-curricular activities for youth.		●		Borough Council, CDC, William Penn School District	Allen Hilles Fund, William Penn Foundation	Sec 7.5
Invest in marketing strategies to attract new residents and slow the decline in population.			●	CDC, Main Street Organization, Borough Council	DCED, DVRPC	Sec 7.5
Continue to maintain and work with existing faith-based and community organizations, property owners, and other stakeholders along Main Street (i.e. hospital, library, etc.) to implement recommendations and to create a sense of community pride.		●		CDC, Borough Council, Institutions, Faith-Based Organizations	William Penn Foundation, Faith-Based and Community Initiative Grants (through federal agencies such as HUD)	Sec 7.5
Use future municipal facility with recreation center to establish youth and children's programs and to engage community in improving public services.			●	Borough Council, Volunteer Organizations	DCNR, William Penn Foundation	Sec 7.5
Use volunteers and civic associations to beautify Main Street in terms of trash clean-up, landscaping, gardens, etc.	●			Volunteer Groups, CDC	William Penn Foundation	Sec 7.5

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Potential Source(s) of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Support the development of a visitor/historic archives center at 1000 Main Street, and incorporate green building techniques into renovation.			●	Borough CDC, Delaware County Redevelopment Authority	Sustainable Development Fund, PEDDA, Energy Harvest Grant, Kresge Foundation	Sec 7.5
Work with the William Penn School District to expand opportunities for education and community activities.		●		Darby Borough, William Penn School District		Sec 7.5

## TRANSPORTATION

Implementation Measures	TIMETABLE			Responsibility For Implementation	Source of Funding	Index to Plan
	Adopt Within 1-2 Years	Next Five Years	Six to 20 Years			
Provide transit stop identification signs that guide transit users to trolley/bus/rail stops.		●		Main Street Organization, SEPTA	DCED, SEPTA, DVRPC	Sec 8.0
Enhance connections between the R2 Darby Station and Main Street by improving walkability and signage.	●			Main Street Organization, Borough Council	Delaware County, DCED, SEPTA, DVRPC	Sec 8.0
Incorporate cultural/artistic elements and amenities desired by the community into the proposed improvements at the Darby Transportation Center.		●		SEPTA, Main Street Organization, CDC, Historic Commission, Darby Borough Historical and Preservation Society	SEPTA, DCED, DVRPC	Sec 8.0
Create a Transit-Oriented Development district around the Darby Transportation Center.	●			Zoning Ordinance Task Force /Committee	Delaware County, DCED, DVRPC	Sec 8.0
Synchronize traffic lights along Main Street		●		PennDOT		Sec 8.0

DCED – PA Department of Community and Economic Development

DCNR – PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DVRPC – Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

HUD – Department of Housing and Urban Development

PEDA – PA Energy Development Authority

PCPC – Philadelphia City Planning Commission

SEPTA – Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority