

4. Land Use and Cultural Resources

Land Use

Cumberland's existing land use reflects its growth from a mid-eighteenth century stockade and trading post to a regional center of commerce and industry during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The City's basic land use pattern consists of a commercial and institutional core surrounded by residential neighborhoods between forested ridges, with industrial areas located adjacent to the Potomac River, Wills Creek, and rail corridors (see Figure 7). Defined by Queen City Drive/the CSX railroad tracks and Wills Creek, the downtown continues to function as Cumberland's urban center, focused on office and retail uses including the Baltimore Street mall and the Cumberland municipal complex. Located across Wills Creek from the downtown, Washington Street is also part of the urban center, supporting the Allegany County Courthouse complex and a number of professional offices located in former residences.

The downtown's role as a regional commercial center has been eroded in recent decades by automobile-oriented retail development both inside and outside of Cumberland. However, during the last several years the downtown has experienced an upswing in economic activity due to small business development and the emergence of the Canal Place Heritage Area. Highway-oriented commercial development is prevalent along Industrial Boulevard and the North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street corridor. In addition, the Rolling Mill industrial site is being redeveloped as a commercial shopping center, including a grocery store. Virginia Avenue, the traditional retail center of South Cumberland, has suffered from competition from the newer automobile-oriented businesses.

Cumberland's first residential neighborhoods developed on the relatively level land adjacent to the central core and in South Cumberland. During the twentieth century, residential development spread into previously undeveloped portions of the West and East Sides and South Cumberland, along roadways between ridges (for example, Bedford/Frederick Streets and Shades Lane in northeast Cumberland), and around the Kelly Springfield plant in southwest Cumberland. As the level land most suitable for development became scarcer and mountainside locations more desirable, residential and institutional development also spread onto steep slope and ridgetop areas, such as Haystack Mountain.

A significant feature of the traditional, pre-zoning land use pattern was the widespread occurrence of non-residential uses such as small industrial establishments (breweries, laundries, etc.); churches, schools, and other institutions; and neighborhood stores throughout residential areas, often in close proximity to adjacent residences. These uses have declined in recent decades, resulting in many vacant or underutilized properties scattered throughout the City, often in close proximity to adjacent residences. The former productive uses of these properties have in many cases been replaced by less intensive activities such as warehousing and storage.

Industry was historically a major force in Cumberland's economic development, associated with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (now CSX) and other competing lines such as the Western Maryland Railway. Cumberland's manufacturing base has declined in recent decades, most

recently precipitated by the 1980s closure of the Kelly Springfield tire plant in the southwest part of the City. The CSX yard and repair shops in South Cumberland constitute the largest remaining industrial property in the City. The former Kelly Springfield property is being redeveloped by the City and Allegany County as the Riverside Industrial Park and is largely occupied with warehouse, distribution, contracting, and light manufacturing uses. Other long-time industrial properties, including the land bordering the C&O Canal in South Cumberland south of the CSX tracks, land along the southwest side of Wills Creek bordering the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad right-of-way, and land between North Centre Street and the CSX tracks in the North End, are divided into relatively small lots accommodating activities often unrelated to their historic industrial use (warehousing, building trades, vehicle storage and repair, etc.).

Other major land uses in Cumberland include public/semi-public/institutional (government buildings, schools, medical facilities, religious institutions, etc.), recreation and open space, and agriculture. Public/semi-public/institutional facilities are located throughout the City with a major concentration in the downtown and Washington Street areas. Large recreation and open space properties include the City-owned Constitution Park in the East End and Gene Mason Sports Complex in the South End, both of which are developed with recreational facilities; an undeveloped County park on Haystack Mountain next to the Narrows; and the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Agricultural use in the City is limited to a large farm next to Valley Road in northwest Cumberland, the largest remaining undeveloped property in the City that is mostly unconstrained by steep slopes and/or the presence of 100-year floodplain.

The acreages and percentages of the various types of land use described above are shown in the Existing Land Use Table. As shown in this table, the majority of land in the City is undeveloped, encompassing just over 39 percent of Cumberland's land area. Prior to the annexation of the Evitts Creek area, single-family residential was the predominant land use in the City. Now this category ranks a close second to undeveloped land, encompassing 32.6 percent of the land area. The remaining approximately 30 percent of the City is occupied by other land uses, with public/semi-public/institutional and recreation/open space together accounting for 16 percent.

- Issues:**
- Cumberland is fortunate to possess a coherent land use pattern reflecting its natural setting and historic development as a regional center. However, this pattern has been affected by a variety of forces including the decline of traditional retail areas due to competition from highway-oriented businesses, the decline of Cumberland's industrial base, a decrease in the population of older residential neighborhoods, and development in the surrounding county and in West Virginia. Preserving and enhancing the best aspects of the City's land use pattern will help maintain and improve its attractiveness as a place to live and visit.
 - The traditional commercial center of the surrounding region, the downtown has declined due to competition from highway commercial development. However, the concentration of banks, financial/professional services, and government offices in the downtown indicate its continuing importance in the regional economy. Moreover, the Canal Place Heritage Area initiative is contributing to the revitalization of the downtown through the development of specialty retail and tourist-oriented businesses.

Legend

- Single-Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Retail
- Office
- Industrial
- Public/Semi-Public/Institutional
- Recreation/Open Space
- Agriculture
- Undeveloped

Sources:
 1982 Census, 1991, 2001
 Allegheny County Planning & Zoning Commission

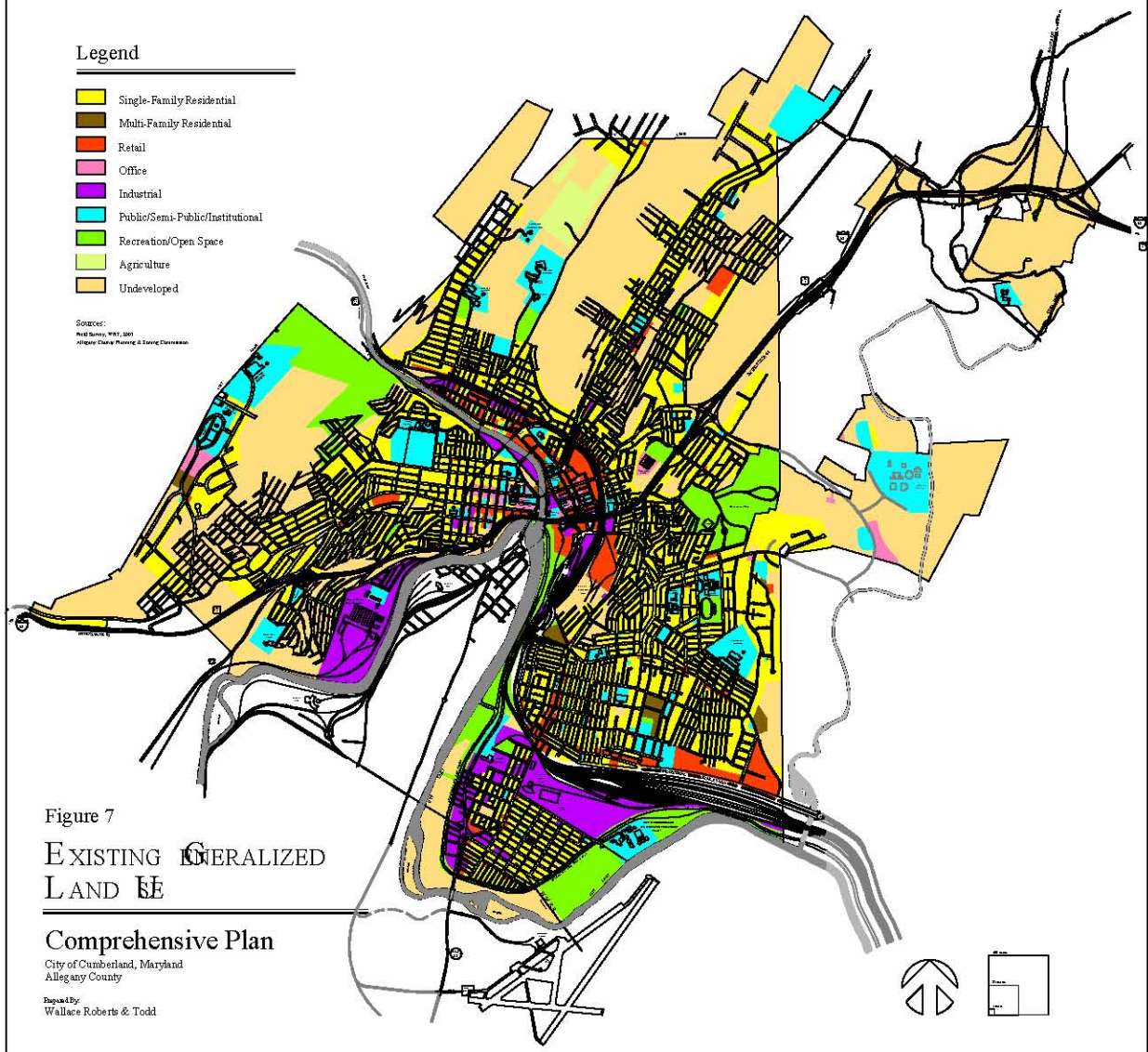


Figure 7
 EXISTING GENERALIZED
 LAND USE

Comprehensive Plan

City of Cumberland, Maryland
 Allegheny County

Prepared By
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Table 1. Existing Land Use

Use	Acres	% of Total
Single-Family Residential	1,835.8	32.6
Multi-Family Residential	33.8	0.6
Retail	210.8	3.7
Office	49.0	0.9
Industrial	338.7	6.0
Public/Semi-Public/Institutional	510.5	9.1
Recreation/Open Space	389.0 ¹	6.9
Agriculture	45.9	0.8
Undeveloped land without severe development constraints ²	1,136.9	20.2
Undeveloped land with severe development constraints ²	1,082.1	19.2
Total	5,632.50	100.0

¹An additional 357.2 acres is available in the Wills Mountain area, which is owned by the State of Maryland and leased by the City.

²Severe development constraints include greater than 25 percent slopes and 100-year floodplain.

- Issues:** (cont.)
- Highway business development has affected the character of the North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street corridor, a traditionally mixed-use commercial/residential area. The City adopted a Gateway Overlay District with design guidelines in the 1997 Zoning Ordinance Revision to address this issue.
 - Available land for industrial development is limited as a result of redevelopment of much of Riverside Industrial Park and the commitment of the Rolling Mill site for commercial uses. One possibility is the area between the C&O Canal National Historical Park and Virginia Avenue in South Cumberland, proposed as an industrial park in a 2000 feasibility study by the City.
 - Previously developed properties that are now vacant or underutilized are found throughout the City and are a particular problem where they occur close to adjacent neighborhoods. A flexible land use strategy is needed to promote redevelopment of these properties, provided that effects on adjacent neighborhood uses are controlled. The City adopted a Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Floating Zone District and Home Occupation regulations in the 1997 Zoning Ordinance Revision to address this issue.
 - Much of Cumberland's remaining undeveloped land is characterized by sensitive environmental conditions (e.g., steep slopes and forested cover). However, annexations have increased the supply of land that is not characterized by severe development constraints, resulting in approximately 390 acres added to this

category since the 1996 Plan. Strategies to facilitate appropriate development of this land are called for, compatible with protection of important environmental resources such as critical viewsheds. The Cluster Development, Viewshed Protection Overlay, and Steep Slope Development provisions contained in the 1997 Zoning Ordinance Revision provide guidelines to address this issue.

- Cumberland is a historically mixed-use city and could benefit from development patterns that bring together compatible uses (e.g., residential and neighborhood retail). Under the present Zoning Ordinance mixed-use applications are limited outside of the Gateway and CBD districts.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions (Land Use)

Goal 2

Reinforce Cumberland's historic land use pattern while encouraging compatible economic development.

Objective 2.1

Building on Cumberland's existing land use pattern, guide development and redevelopment activities to achieve a balance of residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed uses; community facilities; and open space and recreation areas.

Action 2.1.1

Maintain and update a Future Land Use Plan depicting the desired general pattern of residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed uses; community facilities; and open space and recreation areas (see Figure 8).

Action 2.1.2

Amend regulatory mechanisms such as the Zoning Ordinance and Map as necessary to implement the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Plan.

Action 2.1.3

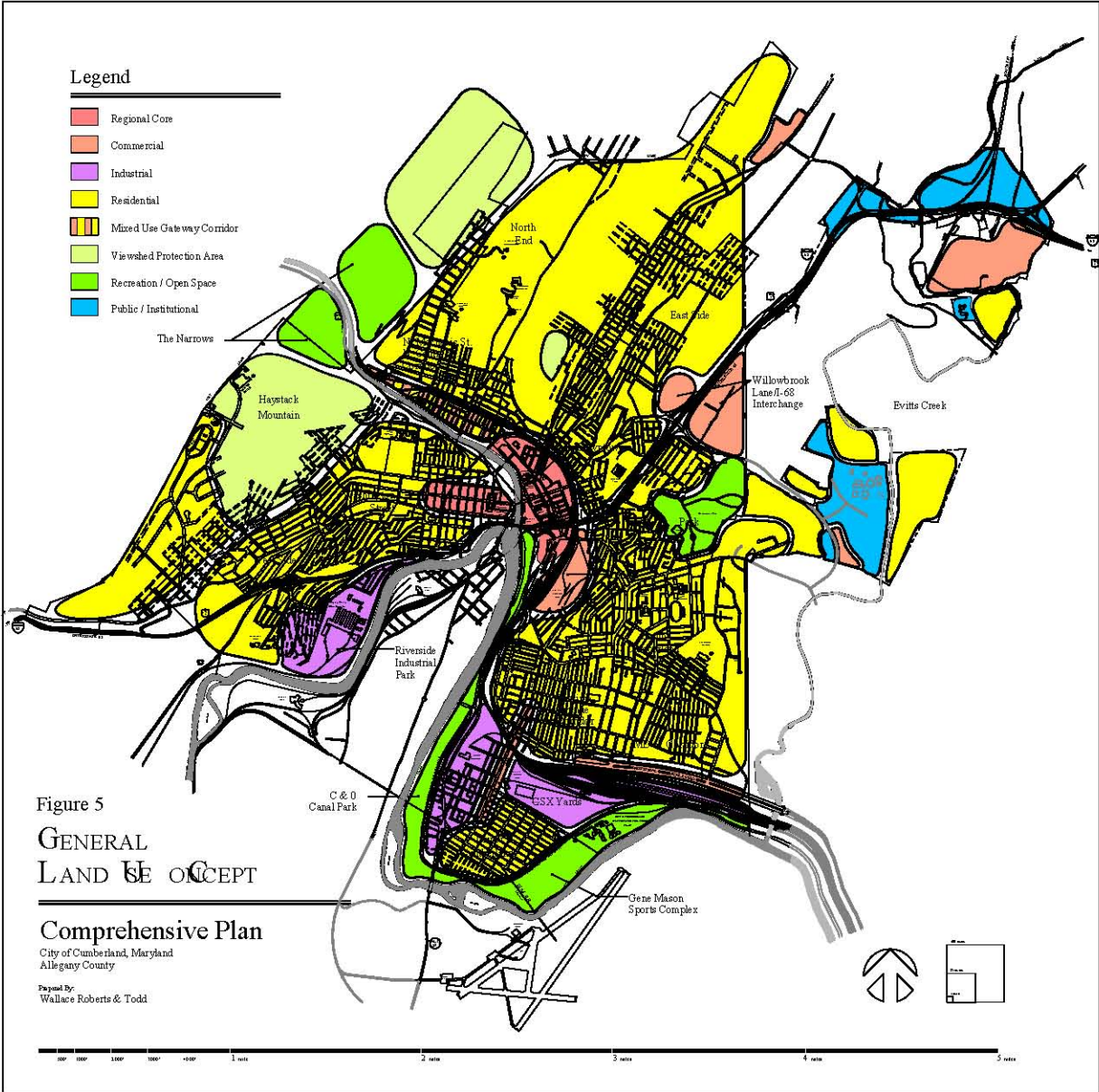
Evaluate future land use policy and regulatory decisions for consistency with the Future Land Use Plan.

Action 2.1.4

Consider hiring a professional planner within the Department of Community Development to proactively address short and long-range planning and development issues (see Action 8.1.5).

Objective 2.2

Promote land uses in the downtown which strengthen its traditional role as a regional center, in the context of an economic development strategy focused on tourism, specialty retail, cultural arts, and financial services (see Objective 8.3).



Action 2.2.1

Work with the Downtown Development Commission to maintain first floors of downtown buildings in retail, service, and related customer-oriented uses, through approaches such as incentives and marketing.

Action 2.2.2

Work with the Downtown Development Commission to promote the conversion of vacant and underutilized upper floors of downtown buildings to residential and other viable uses through the application of Maryland Building Rehabilitation Code (Smart Code) provisions, incentives, marketing, etc. (see Action 7.2.3).

Action 2.2.3

Encourage uses related to the visual and performing arts in the downtown, including artists' live-work spaces.

Action 2.2.4

Encourage governmental agencies to remain or locate in new offices as tenants in the downtown.

Objective 2.3

Encourage redevelopment of vacant and underutilized developed properties where compatible with adjacent land uses.

Action 2.3.1

Promote use of the Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Floating Zone District and other approaches to encourage appropriate redevelopment of vacant and underutilized developed properties.

Action 2.3.2

In cooperation with local realtors, develop and maintain an inventory of vacant and underutilized developed properties as a tool for use in promoting appropriate redevelopment opportunities (see Action 8.2.2).

Action 2.3.3

Initiate discussions with realtors and owners of key vacant and underutilized developed properties to explore the City's role in promoting appropriate redevelopment.

Objective 2.4

Encourage appropriate uses of undeveloped land.

Action 2.4.1

Continue to increase the City's supply of undeveloped land suitable for development through annexation.

Action 2.4.2

Pursue innovative approaches to developing vacant land that provide "niches" not currently offered in the City or region (e.g., cluster, assisted living, mixed-use

development) while meeting other Comprehensive Plan objectives such as attracting new residents and protecting sensitive environmental resources (see Action 7.2.1).

Action 2.4.3

In cooperation with local realtors, develop and maintain an inventory of undeveloped properties, including information on development suitability (e.g., presence of steep slopes or access to utilities), as a tool in promoting appropriate development opportunities (see Action 8.2.2).

Action 2.4.4

Initiate discussions with realtors and owners of key undeveloped properties to explore the City's role in promoting appropriate development.

Historic, Cultural, and Visual Resources

Historic/Cultural Resources: As described above, Cumberland's existing land use pattern is closely linked to its historic development, particularly during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much of the historic core of the City is surprisingly intact despite infrastructure improvements, a major urban renewal effort in the downtown in the mid-1970s, and demolition of a number of older buildings. Sixteen buildings, two historic districts (Washington Street and a portion of the downtown), and the C&O Canal National Historical Park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, two National Register nominations (George Washington's Headquarters and the Greene Street Historic District) are pending.

Cumberland contains a variety of distinct older neighborhoods, differentiated by age, geographic setting, and socio-economic forces at work during the period of development. A survey conducted in the 1970s concluded that a number of these areas are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. Illustrated in Figure 2, these areas are generally as follows:

West Side: portions of the West Side surrounding the Washington Street Historic District.

Decatur and Front Streets: an area focused around Decatur Street and adjoining streets, including portions of Bedford Street, Frederick Street, Baltimore Avenue, and Maryland Avenue.

Canada/Viaduct: the North Centre Street/North Mechanic Street corridor.

North End: the portion of North End between the CSX tracks and Shawnee Avenue/Fairview Avenue/Independence Street.

Rolling Mill: the Rolling Mill site and some adjacent residential areas, including Maryland Avenue.

South Cumberland: the area of South Cumberland generally north of the CSX tracks, west of South Street, and south of Oldtown Road.

Lower Cumberland: South Cumberland south of the CSX tracks.

Kelly Springfield: the former Kelly Springfield tire plant and adjacent housing built for workers.

The City's Historic Preservation Commission is evaluating the potential National Register nomination of several of these neighborhoods (South Cumberland, Decatur Street, and possibly Rolling Mill).

Cumberland's historic resources were a major focus of the state legislation passed in May 1993 to establish the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority. The Authority is charged with promoting preservation and economic development within an area focused on the terminus of the C&O Canal National Historic Park, referred to as the Canal Place Heritage Area. In 1995, an ordinance was created that established Canal Place as a locally regulated historic district (Preservation District) and gave enabling powers to establish the Historic Preservation Commission. In 1996, Preservation District Design and Preservation Guidelines were adopted, establishing the boundaries of the district and regulations under which the Historic Preservation Commission reviews proposals for exterior building alterations within the district. The ordinance also established local historic district incentives for rehabilitation, including property tax credits and freezes. Following the recommendations of the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, the City has established a Historic Planner/Preservation Coordinator position to assist the Commission in administering the ordinance. Illustrated in Figure 2, the Preservation District encompasses the C&O Canal National Historical Park and some adjacent areas of the City, including the downtown and the Washington Street Historic District.

The City of Cumberland's historical and cultural resources include institutions and attractions related to the cultural and performing arts, such as the Allegany Arts Council and Cumberland Theater. Cumberland is attractive to artists looking to purchase buildings for workspace because of the low cost of living, low building costs, and live-work opportunities. In response to this demand, the City has established a local and state-designated Arts and Cultural District in the downtown area (see Figure 2) to accommodate artists' needs and encourage use of upper stories in the downtown while regulating potentially intrusive work practices.

- Issues:**
- Cumberland's rich historic and architectural heritage, in particular the downtown, Washington Street, and adjacent residential neighborhoods, help to define the City's identity and attractiveness as a place to visit and live. The Canal Place Preservation District is helping to preserve Cumberland's historic character and is contributing to an economic development strategy based on heritage tourism.
 - Based upon experience since 1996, the Preservation District regulations and design guidelines have been working well and merit minor adjustments rather than major revision. The conditions under which demolition of buildings for uses such as parking should be permitted is one issue of concern.
 - A number of neighborhoods within Cumberland are historically significant but are not included in the Canal Place Preservation District. A variety of preservation approaches are available that can help maintain the historic character of these neighborhoods while providing financial incentives to assist property owners with the repair and maintenance of buildings. Available approaches include:
 - *Listing on the National Register of Historic Places:* Acknowledges the importance/increases awareness of historic properties and makes them eligible for federal tax credits but does not provide regulatory protection. Approach currently being used by the Historic Preservation Commission.
 - *Local Historic Designation/Ordinance:* Establishes regulations to protect the integrity of historic resources and can provide additional incentives (state tax credits) for rehabilitation of historic properties. The Canal Place Preservation District is Cumberland's current example.

- *Neighborhood Conservation District:* A regulatory approach geared toward protecting the character of existing neighborhoods with less stringent requirements than a local historic district ordinance. Typically incorporate more flexibility than historic ordinances, containing less detailed design guidelines to address specific neighborhood concerns and features, but do not provide any financial incentives.
- The cultural arts movement is an emerging asset that has the potential to enhance Cumberland’s visitor appeal. It has contributed to a new demand for artists’ workspace and government offices in the upper floors of downtown buildings.

Visual Resources: The visual character of Cumberland is defined by the interplay of its varied natural topography with the built environment, including historic buildings and districts, residential neighborhoods, and corridors such as the railroad lines and I-68. The surrounding forested mountains form a dramatic natural backdrop to the City that is especially enjoyed by visitors. Expansive views of the City nestled in the mountains next to the Potomac River and Wills Creek can be enjoyed from roads and buildings developed on some of Cumberland's mountainsides and ridgetops. Eastbound I-68 is remarkable for a panorama that includes sights such as the Potomac River, church steeples (lighted at night), and Fort Hill.

The forested mountainsides facing Cumberland's historic urban core are the City's major visual landmarks. Of particular importance are Haystack and Wills Mountains and the dramatic gap cut between them by Wills Creek, referred to as the Narrows. The south end of Shriver Ridge and Knobley Ridge in West Virginia are also prominent from the downtown and South Cumberland, respectively.

The Narrows is both a dramatic natural landform and a feature of historic significance, used by explorers and traders seeking to connect the settled East Coast with the Ohio River Valley. At one time the route of the National Road from Cumberland to Wheeling, West Virginia, the country's first federally funded public works project, the Narrows today is traversed by a rail line and US Alternate Route 40 along the narrow valley floor adjacent to Wills Creek. Several commercial properties have been developed between Route 40 and Wills Creek. On the northeast side of Wills Creek, 357.2 currently undeveloped acres on the steep face of the Narrows and the adjacent Wills Mountain are owned by the State and leased to the City of Cumberland Parks and Recreation Department. On the southeast side of the creek, the County owns a 96-acre undeveloped park on Haystack Mountain adjacent to the Narrows. However, some land on the wooded mountainsides adjoining these two parks remains in private ownership.

The Narrows is the most dramatic example of a visual gateway marking vehicular entry into Cumberland. This gateway is currently used mostly by local traffic between Cumberland and LaVale. Interstate 68, the City's primary linkage with the outside world, provides most visitors with their first visual impression of Cumberland. The visual gateway on westbound I-68 is marked by a sweeping view from the Monroe Street overpass at the top of a ridge from which drivers descend into the City.

Gateway corridors are the routes by which visitors travel from entry points to the core of the City. In addition to I-68, these corridors include Canal Parkway and MD Highway 51/Industrial Boulevard from the southeast, Bedford Street/Frederick Street from the northeast,

North Mechanic Street/ North Centre Street from the Narrows to the northwest, and Greene Street, South Lee Street, and Baltimore Avenue from I-68 to the downtown.

- Issues:**
- Incompatible development on the mountainsides and ridges surrounding Cumberland could have significant impacts on views from the City. The 1997 Zoning Ordinance Revision established Viewshed Protection Overlay Districts for critical portions of Haystack Mountain, Wills Mountain, and Shriver Ridge.
 - Both the Narrows and most of Wills Mountain are located outside the City limits in Allegany County. Given the importance of these resources to the visual setting of Cumberland and as heritage tourism assets, a coordinated strategy is needed to prevent incompatible development and to capitalize on the potential of the Narrows as a destination for tourists. This strategy should address the visual quality of North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street/US Alternate Route 40, the primary linkage between the Canal Place Preservation District and the Narrows.
 - The visual environment of gateways and gateway corridors into Cumberland is of uneven quality. For example, the character of Baltimore Avenue from I-68 to the downtown is affected by deteriorated housing. In another example, the appearance of US Alternate Route 40 from the Narrows to North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street is affected by several large billboards.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions (Historic, Cultural, and Visual Resources)

Goal 3

Develop a balanced approach to preserving and enhancing significant historic and visual resources in the context of a City-wide strategy that encourages appropriate economic development.

Objective 3.1

Preserve the key historic resources of the Canal Place Preservation District.

Action 3.1.1

Evaluate the Preservation District regulations and guidelines based upon the Historic Preservation Commission's experience in working with them since 1996. Make revisions as necessary to address issues such as demolitions and parking (see Action 8.2.6).

Action 3.1.2

Support the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority in implementing actions to preserve, enhance, and interpret the historic resources of the Canal Place Preservation District.

Objective 3.2

Encourage designation of historically significant areas outside of the Canal Place Preservation District as historic districts if desired by local residents.

Action 3.2.1

Pursue National Register listing of eligible historic resources. Provide information and technical assistance to residents of potentially eligible neighborhoods, including the benefits provided by such designations (tax credits, neighborhood pride and awareness, etc.).

Action 3.2.2

Explore the feasibility, costs, and benefits of applying local regulatory approaches (historic district ordinance, neighborhood conservation ordinance) to areas of the City other than Canal Place.

Objective 3.3

Preserve views of the wooded mountainsides from the Canal Place Preservation District.

Action 3.3.1

Develop a strategy to prevent development on Wills Mountain that adversely affects views from the Canal Place Preservation District, including:

- working with Allegany County to establish regulations controlling the visual impact of new development on Wills Mountain;
- exploring the feasibility of annexing Wills Mountain from the existing county line to the top of the ridge; and
- working with the Maryland DNR to continue to acquire land and/or easements through Program Open Space.

Action 3.3.2

Enforce the Viewshed Protection Overlay District provisions for portions of Haystack Mountain, Wills Mountain, and Shriver Ridge.

Action 3.3.3

Coordinate with Mineral County, WV to protect the visual quality of Knobley Mountain as viewed from the Canal Place Preservation District.

Objective 3.4

Preserve and enhance the Narrows as a scenic resource and visitor attraction.

Action 3.4.1

Explore the feasibility of annexing the Narrows from the existing county line to and including the railroad bridges at Eckhart Junction.

Action 3.4.2

Initiate discussions with owners of developed properties along US Alternate Route 40 in the Narrows to explore the following:

- actions to improve the visual appearance of their properties; and
- the possibility of land acquisition to create a scenic overlook of Wills Creek and the Narrows incorporating interpretive exhibits.

Action 3.4.3

Work with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to develop US Alternate Route 40 through the Narrows as "The Narrows Parkway" through right-of-way investment (i.e., special aesthetic treatment of pavement, curbs, guardrails, lighting, landscaping, signage, and utilities).

Action 3.4.4

Develop city-owned land at the gateway entrance to Cumberland from the Narrows as a wayside park with interpretive materials.

Action 3.4.5

Work with the Maryland DNR to expand the parkland on the northeast (Wills Mountain) side of the Narrows through land acquisition and recreational development funded by Program Open Space. Explore the feasibility of acquiring road/trail access to the top of the mountain.

Action 3.4.6

Work with Allegany County and the Maryland DNR to expand the existing county park on the southwest side of the Narrows through land acquisition and recreational development funded by Program Open Space.

Action 3.4.7

Work with Allegany County and the Maryland DNR to implement the Allegheny Highlands Trail through the Narrows. Explore the feasibility of establishing connections to the adjacent summits of Wills and/or Haystack Mountains (see Action 5.3.4).

Objective 3.5

Maintain and improve the visual character of Cumberland's gateway entrances and corridors leading to the downtown.

Action 3.5.1

Designate the following roadways as **gateway corridors** to be targeted for action to enhance their visual appearance (maintenance, streetscape improvements, rehabilitation/demolition of blighted properties, etc.):

- Baltimore Avenue from I-68 to the Baltimore Street mall (priority);
- North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street from the county line to downtown Cumberland (priority);
- Greene Street from I-68 to the bridge over Wills Creek;
- South Lee Street from I-68 to the bridge over Wills Creek; and
- Industrial Boulevard from the county line to downtown Cumberland.

Action 3.5.2

Enforce the Gateway District regulations and design guidelines for the North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street gateway corridor.

Action 3.5.3

Develop distinctive signage and landscaping features at gateway entrances to Cumberland, coordinated with the signage treatment in place in the downtown.

Action 3.5.4

Install signs to orient visitors at key locations along gateway corridors, coordinated with the signage treatment in place in the downtown.