

2. Plan Concept

The Vision for the Year 2020

In the Year 2020, the City of Cumberland is recognized as:

Cumberland: A City that is an excellent place to live, an enjoyable place to visit, and a supportive place to build a profitable business.

The City's special resources - a strong sense of community, safe environment, rich history, and splendid natural setting - provide the key to a vital and prosperous future.

Canal Place and the downtown draw visitors to Cumberland to experience the historic C&O Canal, Arts and Cultural District, and other local and regional attractions, spurring economic development.

Economic opportunity is further expanded by public and private sector cooperation, state-of-the art telecommunications, and a spirit of entrepreneurship harkening back to Cumberland's industrial heritage.

The City's actions to strengthen existing neighborhoods, provide new housing choices, and preserve key environmental resources make it an ever more desirable place to live for current and new residents alike.

In 2020, the citizens of Cumberland share a sense of place and take great pride in their established and emerging neighborhoods, in their religious, social, and cultural institutions, and in the physical appearance of their whole City. Economic and educational opportunities are available to all residents. Every neighborhood is a safe and healthy place to live.

The perception of Cumberland as a place with a highly desirable quality of life has spread beyond the City. People who are free locators (that is, can choose to live wherever they wish) are moving into the community and contributing socially and economically to the City.

Long-time residents and recent arrivals are especially proud that families chose to visit Cumberland and are pleased that they return over and over again. Attracted by the City's presentation of its historic heritage, by the beauty of the Potomac River and the wooded hillsides, and by the hospitality of its citizens, visitors have made Cumberland a major magnet both for its own attractions and as a gateway to Western Maryland.

Other people have been drawn to Cumberland to turn their ideas into successful business ventures. The City's support for the investor and the versatile and productive work force in the region have made a number of those businesses successful. As these businesses grow in Cumberland, they have stimulated the creation of jobs and community wealth.

The Vision of the Year 2020 for the City of Cumberland is nothing less than the best of the past merged with the best of the future, where all residents can grow and prosper together.

Plan Concept

The Vision Statement expresses the desired future of Cumberland as developed through the 1996 Comprehensive Plan planning process and confirmed in the 2003 Update. Two additions to the original Vision Statement have been made to acknowledge key developments since 1996: 1) the emerging artists' movement and recently established Arts and Cultural District and 2) development of the state-of-the-art AllCoNet and AllCoNet2 telecommunications networks. The Vision Statement encompasses three major themes derived from the "Entrepreneurial" and "Quality of Life" strategic concepts (see Chapter 1):

- Cumberland as an excellent place to live (quality of life);
- Cumberland as an enjoyable place to visit (quality of life/entrepreneurial activity); and
- Cumberland as a supportive place to build a profitable business (entrepreneurial activity).

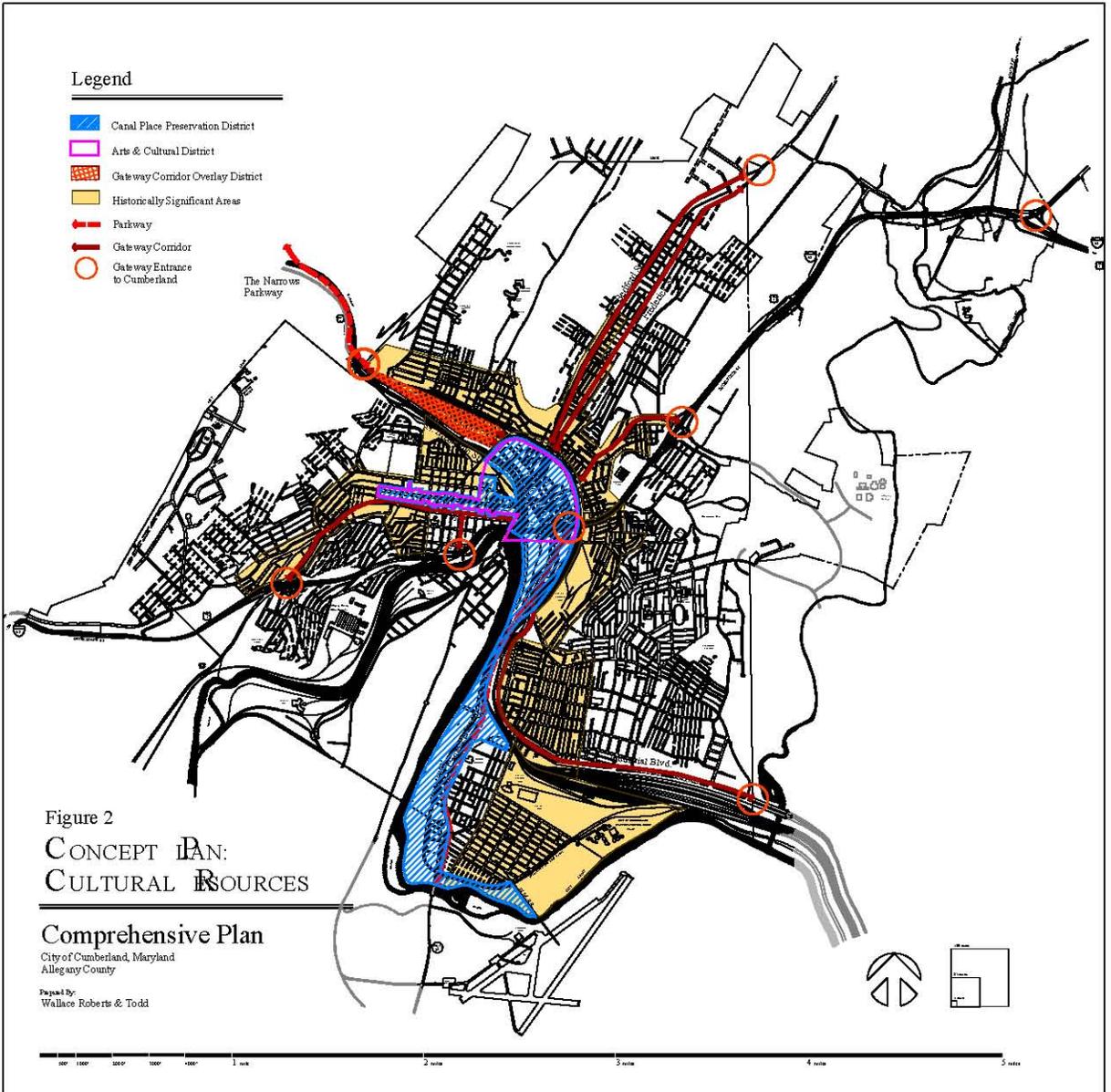
The primary spatial components of the City that support the vision are depicted in Figures 2 through 5. Figure 2 illustrates the key historic resources that help to define the character of City and make it an attractive place to live and visit. Further described in the Land Use and Cultural Resources Element, these resources include:

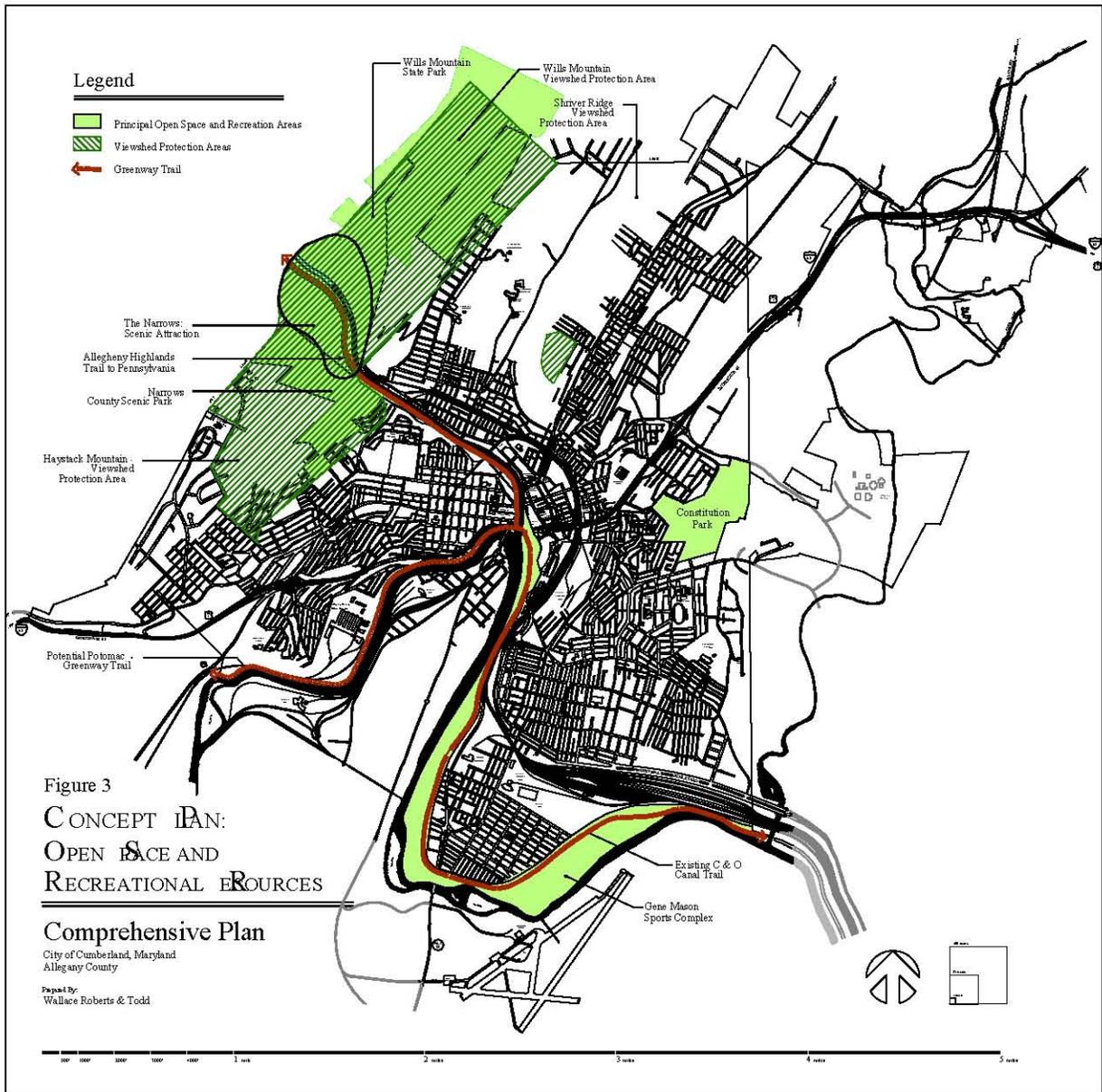
- the impressive buildings of the Washington Street and downtown historic districts, both listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- the Canal Place Heritage Area, established in 1995 to transform the western terminus of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and adjacent areas in the City into a major heritage tourism attraction; and
- a rich fabric of attractive and historic neighborhoods surrounding Canal Place.

Figure 2 also depicts **gateway entrances and corridors**. Gateway entrances are key access points into Cumberland from major roadways and I-68 interchanges. Gateway corridors are the routes by which visitors (and residents) travel to the downtown from gateway entrances and thereby gain their initial visual impressions of Cumberland. In the future vision of Cumberland, these corridors are visually attractive and interesting roadways that reinforce the image of Cumberland as an appealing place to live and visit. The corridors include one **major gateway corridor** - North Mechanic and North Centre Streets - and several **minor gateway corridors** such as Greene Street and Bedford Street/Frederick Street. Because of its strategic location connecting the scenic Narrows with the Canal Place Preservation District, North Mechanic Street/North Centre Street is designated a **gateway corridor overlay district** for City action to enhance the visual image of the corridor.

As shown on Figure 2, the plan concept includes two scenic parkways as gateway corridors providing visitors with a positive first impression of Cumberland. These parkways are the existing Canal Parkway parallel to the C&O Canal in South Cumberland and the proposed Narrows Parkway (implemented through visual enhancements to Alternate Route US 40) along Wills Creek through the Narrows.

Cumberland's special character is largely derived from the juxtaposition of the historic city in the valleys of the Potomac River and Wills Creek against the surrounding mountains. The attractive scene of the City's skyline silhouetted against the wooded mountainsides is greatly appreciated by visitors to the Cumberland. The preservation of the visual integrity of these





Legend

- Commercial/Industrial Reinvestment Opportunity Sites
- Development/Investment Opportunity Sites
- Residential Stabilization and Reinvestment Areas
- Potential Annexation Areas

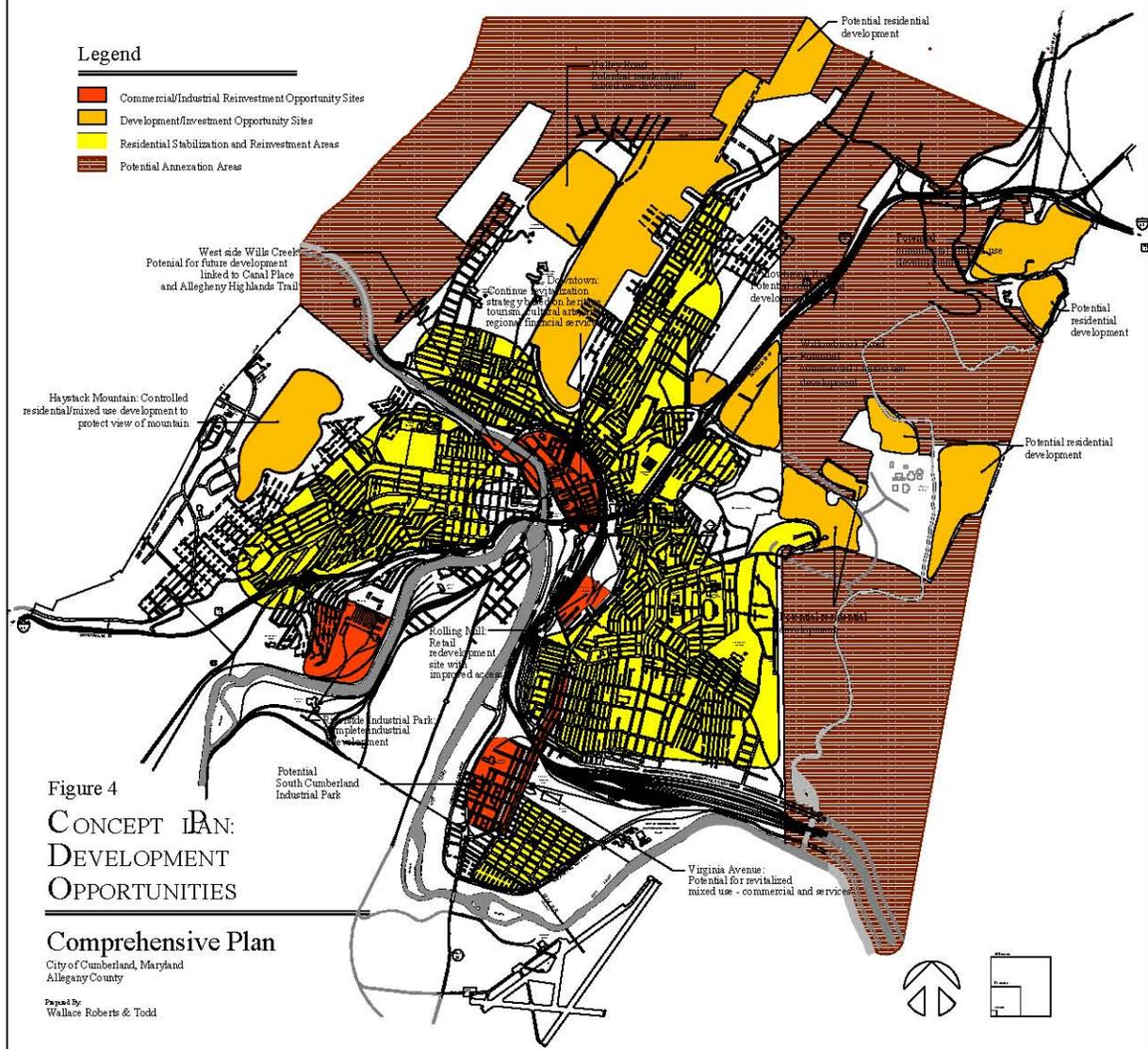


Figure 4

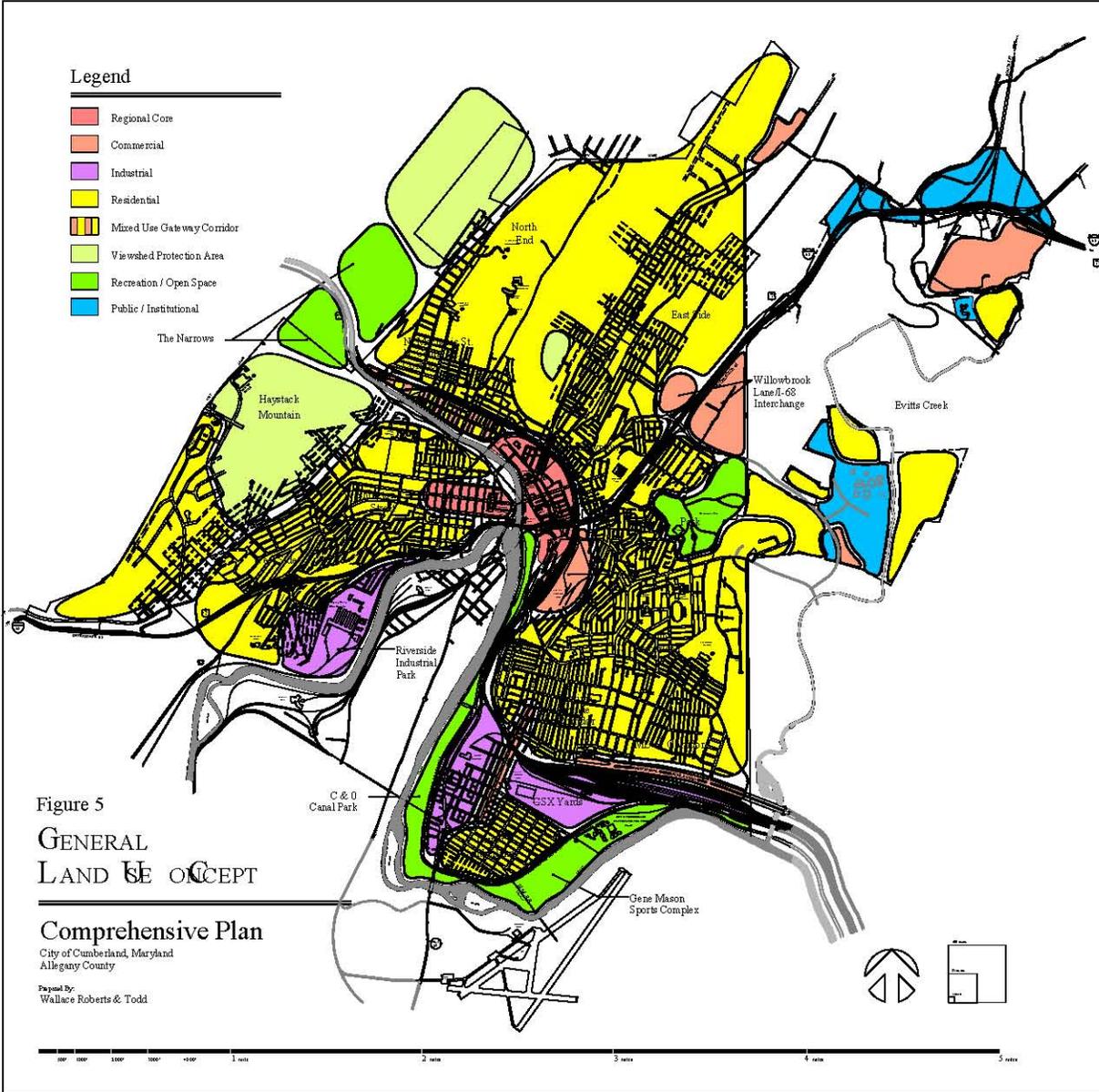
**CONCEPT PLAN:
DEVELOPMENT
OPPORTUNITIES**

Comprehensive Plan

City of Cumberland, Maryland
Allegheny County

Prepared By:
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mountainsides - specifically the steep slopes of Haystack and Wills Mountains, as well as the southern tip of Shriver Ridge visible from the downtown - is an essential part of the future vision, helping to attract outsiders to visit and settle in Cumberland. As depicted on Figure 3, the mountainsides (including Wills Mountain through annexation or cooperation with Allegany County) are designated as areas within which development is managed to protect views from the City.

Other key open space and recreational resources depicted in Figure 3 include the Narrows, greenway trails along the Potomac River and Wills Creek, and the major City recreational areas, Constitution Park and the Gene Mason Sports Complex. In the vision for 2020, the Narrows, the dramatic gap between Haystack and Wills Mountains cut by Wills Creek, is a major scenic attraction. Among the facilities that draw visitors to the Narrows are a scenic overlook, private businesses offering the opportunity to dine and shop next to Wills Creek, and trail connections to the summits of Haystack and Wills Mountains within the expanded Narrows County Scenic Park and Wills Mountain State Park. Land owned by the City at the gateway entrance to Cumberland is a wayside park with information on Cumberland's resources and attractions. The Narrows is also a stop on the Allegheny Highlands Trail from Pennsylvania to Cumberland. In downtown Cumberland, this trail connects to the C&O Canal towpath, providing an important link in a 300-mile interstate recreational trail network extending from Pittsburgh to Washington, DC. Cumberland's position as a hub of recreational trails, including a greenway trail west along the Potomac River from Wills Creek, is reminiscent of its historic status as a transportation center and entices bicyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts to stop in the City or use it as a base for touring the surrounding region.

In the vision for 2020, the recreational opportunities provided by the C&O Canal, greenway trails, and surrounding mountains are an important part of the City's appeal for many current and new residents. In addition, Constitution Park and the Gene Mason Sports Complex continue to serve as the City-wide focus for active play in Cumberland, providing quality recreational opportunities for residents. The latter park is part of an expanded recreation and conservation area in South Cumberland that includes portions of the floodplain between the Potomac River and the boundaries of the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Figures 2 and 3 depict the key cultural, natural, and recreational resources that help to make Cumberland a desirable place to live and visit. These same resources, along with other factors such as a sound and affordable housing stock, low crime rate, excellent medical facilities, strong social institutions, and a hardworking, skilled, and productive workforce, also contribute to making the City an exceptional place to start and build a business. For example, by the year 2020 the Canal Place Heritage Area will have fully matured and spawned numerous opportunities for entrepreneurial activity catering to a thriving heritage tourism market, such as specialty retail shops and restaurants in a revitalized downtown, commercial recreation ventures, hotels, and bed and breakfast accommodations.

In the vision for 2020, Cumberland's economic vitality is not solely dependent upon heritage tourism. Efforts by City officials, working closely with the Allegany County Economic Development Department and other partners at the local and state levels, have succeeded in creating an atmosphere conducive to business start-up and development known well beyond the City limits. Although the City's traditional manufacturing industries have long since disappeared, smaller, more diversified businesses have emerged that cater to the new markets

of the twenty-first century. Entrepreneurs are drawn to start and develop businesses in Cumberland by a variety of factors, such as the excellent quality of life, a supportive attitude by City government including flexible regulations and streamlined review and approval processes, and assistance in business planning and securing financing. The combination of heritage tourism, new residents bringing financial resources into the community, and entrepreneurial activity have created a sound and growing economy, expanding employment opportunities and allowing many poorer residents to improve their standard of living.

Long-range opportunities for developing vacant land or reinvesting in existing commercial, industrial, and residential areas are shown in Figure 4. These opportunities include:

Downtown

Continue to promote revitalization based upon a combination of heritage tourism, cultural arts, specialty retail businesses, and the downtown's traditional role as a regional center of financial and professional services.

Commercial/Industrial Reinvestment

Promote redevelopment and revitalization of previously developed properties to accommodate new commercial and industrial uses, including the incubation, expansion, and consolidation phases of business development. Specific opportunities shown on Figure 4 include:

- Complete redevelopment of Riverside Industrial Park for industrial uses.
- Complete retail redevelopment of Rolling Mill site.
- Consider rezoning of land west of Virginia Avenue in South Cumberland from residential to industrial to increase availability of industrial land.
- Promote revitalization of Virginia Avenue as a mixed-use corridor.
- Redevelop underutilized land on the west side of Wills Creek for uses related to heritage tourism and recreation, based upon its proximity to the Allegheny Highlands Trail and Canal Place Heritage Area.

New Development/Investment

Pursue opportunities for development of suitable vacant land. Specific opportunities shown on Figure 4 include:

- Accommodate new residential development, including housing types attractive to smaller households and active retirees. Opportunities include Haystack Mountain and Shriver Ridge (both in a manner compatible with maintaining views of wooded hillsides from the downtown); Valley Road; land on the east side of the I-68/Willowbrook Road interchange; and recently annexed lands to the east.
- Accommodate new commercial/mixed uses in the vicinity of the I-68/Willowbrook Road and Route 144 interchanges, as allowed by topography.

Residential Stabilization/Reinvestment

Implement a coordinated, public/private sector strategy to stabilize and encourage reinvestment in older residential neighborhoods. This strategy includes rehabilitation of existing housing stock, proactive demolition of substandard housing, and encouraging new infill development. In addition, entrepreneurs are to continue to be allowed to start businesses in their homes provided they do not adversely affect adjacent properties.

In addition to the above development opportunities, Figure 4 indicates areas outside the current City limits that may be considered for future annexation. These areas include:

- The Narrows and southeast slope of Wills Mountain, both of which are critical to the City's visual image and heritage tourism strategy.
- Areas to the north and east of the City, which provide the potential for future residential and commercial expansion.

Figure 5 summarizes the physical concept for Cumberland's future in terms of overall land use. Building on the City's traditional land use pattern that reflects its natural setting and historical development as a regional center, the general land use concept is comprised of the following elements:

- The downtown and Washington Street, including the terminus of the C&O Canal, are the **regional core** for professional and financial services, cultural arts, specialty retail, and heritage tourism.
- **Healthy residential neighborhoods** - the West Side, North End, East Side, and the South End including Lower Cumberland - surround the regional core. Additional, currently undeveloped areas are designated for future residential development in accordance with the Development Opportunities Map (Figure 4).
- A balance of **commercial and industrial uses** are provided, including the Virginia Avenue corridor, the MD 51 corridor, the I-68/Willowbrook Road and Route 144 interchanges, Riverside Industrial Park, Rolling Mill site, and areas in Lower Cumberland.
- Constitution Park, Riverside Recreation Area, the C&O Canal National Historical Park, and the Narrows are the major **recreational and open space anchors**.
- North Mechanic Street and North Centre Street are a **mixed use gateway corridor** connecting downtown Cumberland with the Narrows.
- Portions of Haystack Mountain, Wills Mountain, and Shriver Ridge are **viewshed protection areas** where development is managed to protect views from the center of the City.

The Development Opportunities and General Land Use Concept Maps underscore the need to work with Allegany County to solidify Cumberland's role in the region as envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan. Issues requiring cooperation between the City and the County include strategies both to protect Cumberland's natural setting and to reinforce its role as a regional center.

Achieving the Vision

To fully implement the Vision for 2020, the City and its partners at all levels of government and in the private sector will need to undertake a series of specific actions ranging from changes in existing regulations to new capital investments. These actions are presented in the eight plan

elements that follow this chapter. In accordance with the requirements of the State Planning Act, each of these elements addresses a particular area of concern. The eight elements are:

1. Sensitive Areas
2. Land Use and Cultural Resources
3. Transportation
4. Community Facilities
5. Mineral Resources
6. Housing
7. Economic Development
8. Energy Conservation

Each element proceeds from a description of existing conditions and issues to prescriptions for change to achieve a desirable future. This progression takes place in three steps:

- A **goal** that establishes a general direction for the City to follow to achieve a positive outcome with regard to the subject area of the element.
- Multiple **objectives** in support of the goal statement. These objectives flow from the overall Vision for 2020 and from issues identified during the planning process.
- **Actions** to be taken by the City (often with the cooperation and assistance of other public agencies and private organizations) to reach the objective by transforming the existing situation to the conditions desired in the future.

Although the actions are grouped by subject area and objective, they will all ultimately help to implement one or more of the three major components of the vision statement: *Cumberland as an excellent place to live, an enjoyable place to visit, and a supportive place to build a profitable business.*