

11. Plan Implementation

Plans are turned into reality by taking action. The elements presented in Chapters 3 to 10 contain a complex set of actions that will test the resources of the City and its partners as they attempt to transform the Comprehensive Plan Vision into the real world of the Cumberland that will be by the year 2020. Priorities must be set so that the City's resources can be applied to working incrementally toward achieving this Vision and the supporting plan objectives. This will involve identifying the actions that the City and its partners can reasonably expect to accomplish and those that will make the greatest contribution towards achieving the future Vision of Cumberland.

The 1996 Comprehensive Plan included an Implementation Framework table that identified 24 new regulatory actions, 56 new actions involving planning and coordination, and 24 new actions involving operations or capital investment by the City and/or its partners. As an outgrowth of the 1996 Plan, the City prepared a Strategic Plan to focus and prioritize its role in achieving the goals and objectives of not only the Comprehensive Plan, but also of the related Canal Place Management Plan and Consolidated Plan. The Strategic Plan identified 21 action programs to be carried out over a five-year timeframe. A review of the progress made in implementing the Strategic Plan indicates that six of the action programs have been completed, 13 are in progress, and two have not been addressed. In 2001 the City updated the 1996 Strategic Plan through preparation of Community Legacy Five-Year Plan of Action, which identifies 25 action programs in the areas of administration, neighborhood revitalization, housing and human services, economic development, physical development pattern/access, and community facilities and services. The Community Legacy Plan has been used to guide city actions and commitments of resources since 2001.

Like the 1996 Plan, this Comprehensive Plan Update sets forth numerous recommendations for action by the City. A review of the eight plan elements reveals that many of these actions are intended to guide ongoing operations, decision-making, or support of other agencies and do not require a discrete commitment of resources for current or new initiatives. Two examples of such “policy directives” under Land Use Objective 2.1 are:

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.

Action 2.1.3

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

In contrast to the policy directives, many of the Comprehensive Plan actions – either individually or in combination with others – are current or new initiatives requiring that the City commit resources for a specific task or a program to be carried out over a period of years. Examples of such actions under Land Use Objective 2.1 include:

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 2.1.4

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

To provide a focus for implementation, the many actions contained in the Plan have been synthesized into a series of “action initiatives” that will require the commitment of city resources to carry out, either as discrete projects or as programs to be phased over a multi-year period. Reflecting the ongoing work by the City to implement the 1996 Comprehensive Plan through the Strategic Plan and its successor document, the Community Legacy Plan, many of these initiatives are in progress. Table 9 provides the following information for each initiative:

- Relevant action or actions (reference to number(s) in the plan elements)
- Status (whether the initiative relates to an action program contained in the Community Legacy Plan, is another city initiative currently in progress, or a new initiative proposed by the Comprehensive Plan Update. A number of the “new” initiatives are lesser priority or longer-range items from the 1996 Comprehensive Plan that have not yet been considered for implementation.)
- Relative priority (high, medium, low)

The priority rankings are intended to provide a general sense of the relative importance of the different action initiatives. They include several discrete projects that are either currently underway (e.g., pursuing National Register listing of eligible historic resources) or can be implemented as an “early action” (e.g., revising the Zoning Ordinance and map). Longer-term initiatives ranked high priority are heavily weighted towards the related topics of housing and economic development, reflecting the emphasis placed by the Comprehensive Plan Update on these topics and their perceived importance to the future of Cumberland. It should be noted that a medium (or low) priority ranking does not preclude the City from taking steps in the short term to begin implementing other long-term initiatives that may be phased over a number of years. Examples include beginning to define an action strategy for the Narrows and extending connections from the downtown to the immediately adjacent portions of priority gateway corridors.

Given the limited fiscal resources available to the City and declining budgets at the state and federal levels, the availability of funding will be a key factor affecting the City’s ability to carry out the action initiatives. To address this issue, the City must continue to seek opportunities for cost savings in internal operations and programs, partner with public and private sector agencies and organizations to leverage resources, and aggressively pursue grant-funding sources. Put in place as part of implementation of the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, the Capital Improvements Program should be used as a tool to prioritize and phase capital projects and to seek funding based upon the priorities (see Economic Development Action 8.2.8).

To succeed, any implementation program must be persistent. That is, individual actions and action initiatives must be agreed upon, put into motion, and either carried to a successful conclusion or modified to increase effectiveness. Because these activities continue over time in a changing environment, the action initiatives presented in Table 9 should be reexamined

periodically by the City to adjust the commitment of resources to reflect new priorities, to seize new opportunities, and to address emerging issues. Ideally, such a systematic review should take place on an annual basis in coordination with the capital budgeting process and review/ updating of the City's Strategic Plan.

Table 9. Comprehensive Plan Action Initiatives

Initiative (Relevant Action #)	Status¹	Priority
1. Actively promote viable new uses (residential upper stories, artist live-work spaces, business incubators) in downtown buildings (2.2.2, 2.2.3, 7.2.3, 8.3.2)	CLP	High
2. Update the traffic, parking, and pedestrian circulation recommendations of the Downtown Design and Development Plan (4.1.1, 4.3.1, 4.3.3, 4.3.4, 4.5.2)	CLP	High
3. Complete the Allegheny Highlands Trail with clear connections to Canal Place and the downtown (4.5.3, 4.5.4)	CLP	High
4. Use the provision of water and sewer service to reinforce the City's position as a regional center, including annexation policy and investigation of impact fees for county users (5.5.2, 5.5.3)	CLP	High
5. Implement a strategy to promote the renovation of existing housing (7.1.4)	CLP	High
6. Implement a strategy to promote development of new infill housing in established neighborhoods (7.2.2)	CLP	High
7. Implement a phased neighborhood revitalization/improvement strategy (7.4.1 to 7.4.7)	CLP	High
8. Implement a strategy to market Cumberland as a place to live to targeted groups (7.5.1, 7.5.2, 7.5.3)	CLP	High
9. Continue to build linkages between Canal Place and the downtown to maximize private sector development (8.3.1)	CLP	High
10. Implement a targeted economic development marketing program (8.5.3)	CLP	High
11. Develop a plan and action strategy to establish the Narrows as a visitor attraction (3.4.1, 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4)	CLP	Medium
12. Implement a gateway corridor improvement/signage program, starting with the connections of Greene St. and N. Mechanic St./N. Centre St. to the downtown and blighted properties on Baltimore Ave. as priorities (3.5.1, 3.5.3, 3.5.4, 8.3.3)	CLP	Medium
13. Work with the Allegheny County Transit Authority to improve public transit (4.4.1)	CLP	Medium
14. Implement the 2002 Comprehensive Plan for Parks and Recreation (5.2.1)	CLP	Medium
15. Continue to implement the Long-Term Control Plan (1.1.3, 5.6.1)	In Progress	High
16. Pursue National Register listing of eligible historic resources (3.2.1)	In Progress	High
17. Continue to prioritize and address problem intersections (4.2.2)	In Progress	Medium
18. Revise the Zoning Ordinance and Map, including rezoning Evitts Creek floodplain areas to Conservation (2.1.2, 1.2.2)	New	High
19. Revise the Canal Place Preservation District guidelines (3.1.1)	New	High
20. Consider hiring a professional planner (2.1.4, 8.1.5)	New	High
21. Develop and implement a strategy to promote new housing construction on vacant (undeveloped) property (7.2.1, 2.4.2)	New	High

¹ CLP = Related to action program(s) contained in the 2001 Community Legacy Plan. In Progress = Other city initiative that is currently underway. New = Initiative proposed in Comprehensive Plan.

Initiative (Relevant Action #)	Status¹	Priority
22. Update/revise the City's Fair Housing Plan (7.3.1)	New	High
23. Develop a comprehensive economic development strategy, including application of the concept of sustainability (8.1.1)	New	High
24. Expand/develop recreational access/linkages to state park on Wills Mountain (1.3.3, 3.3.1, 3.4.5, 3.4.7, 5.3.4)	New	Medium
25. Maintain/use an inventory of vacant/underutilized land to promote (re)development (2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.4.3, 2.4.4, 8.2.2)	New	Medium
26. Explore the feasibility of annexing Wills Mountain to the top of the ridge (3.3.1)	New	Medium
27. Work with the Maryland SHA to improve the safety and capacity of I-68 through Cumberland (4.1.2)	New	Medium
28. Work with the Allegany County transit and human service providers to coordinate transportation services (4.4.2)	New	Medium
29. Upgrade roadways to increase bicycle compatibility (4.5.5, 4.5.6)	New	Medium
30. Establish and meet level of service standards for police, fire protection, and emergency services (5.4.1)	New	Medium
31. Develop a revitalization strategy for the Virginia Avenue Corridor (8.4.1, 8.4.2)	New	Medium
32. Develop a Potomac River Greenway Plan (1.1.1, 1.1.2)	New	Low
33. Develop a long-term strategy for Wills Creek (1.1.4)	New	Low
34. Expand/develop recreational access/linkages to county park on Haystack Mountain (1.3.3, 3.4.6, 3.4.7, 5.3.4)	New	Low
35. Explore the application of local regulatory approaches to historic areas other than Canal Place (3.2.2)	New	Low
36. Coordinate with Allegany County and Mineral County to protect views of Wills Mountain and Knobley Mountain from downtown (3.3.1, 3.3.3)	New	Low
37. Explore the feasibility of improving the I-68/Seton Drive interchange (4.1.3)	New	Low

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