



2 INTRODUCTION

The City of Cumberland is the county seat and largest municipality of Allegany County, Maryland and sits a convenient distance to major population centers of Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington DC, Northern Virginia, and Philadelphia. The City experienced rapid growth due to the presence of the C&O Canal, National Road, and B&O Railroad which propelled it toward extreme success throughout the early and mid-1900s.

The City of Cumberland has historically been a regional hub for economic and commercial activity within Allegany County and the larger Western Maryland region. The City's economy was largely built upon a manufacturing base that established the City of Cumberland as the second largest city in Maryland. Starting in the second half of the 20th century the city's economy experienced a fundamental transformation as global economic patterns shifted and caused traditional manufacturing based economies throughout the United States to see their foundations altered.

The City has made great strides to stabilize from the economic decline that marked the past 50 years, but much work is needed in order to establish an economic base that will fill the void created through the loss of major manufacturing employers. The City of Cumberland has made progress and seen success in many areas including, but not limited to, growth as a regional medical services hub, a steady arts and entertainment district, a strong collection of stable tourist attractions, a steadily growing outdoor recreation economy, and a viable location for information technology development and a variety of mid-high level skilled office operations.

The City recognizes that it is critical to update and synthesize its economic development vision from the 2004 and 2012 strategies, and create a more defined implementation strategy to guide future endeavors. This new city-wide Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) provides a framework to enable the City to pursue a proactive, comprehensive economic development effort aimed at increasing the local tax base, attracting new employers, enabling existing employers to grow, and supporting the continued development of the arts and tourism industries. The ultimate goal is to sustain and expand the economic base in order to provide for a high quality of life for all residents.

The City of Cumberland retained the services of RKG Associates, Inc. of Alexandria, Virginia to provide the technical analysis and consensus building within the City administration, the Cumberland Economic Development Commission, the EDSP Steering Committee, and the community as a whole. While RKG provided the technical analysis and guided discussions around defining and prioritizing implementation actions, it was the community as a whole that came together to define success. The four main questions this EDSP addressed are:

- What is the current economic base of the City of Cumberland and the surrounding region?
- What are the opportunities for economic base expansion in the region that Cumberland can look to capitalize on?
- What must we do in a coordinated effort to take advantage of all opportunities?
- How can we most effectively deploy our financial and other resources to achieve our goals?



The Economic Development Strategic Plan culminates in a dynamic economic development implementation plan that will guide the City's efforts over the next five to ten years. The strategies developed for Cumberland focus on the City's defined goals, and address both the needs and impediments for existing business while defining methods for attracting and growing new business areas of opportunity. Identifying and maintaining a balance between the two is, and remains, a priority for the City.

The Steering Committee presents this document to the City Council and recommends the Council adopt this plan to guide City economic development investments and efforts into the near future.

The report includes the following chapters:

Chapter 1	Executive Summary
Chapter 2	Introduction
Chapter 3	Socioeconomic Analysis
Chapter 4	Real Estate Market Analysis
Chapter 5	Target Industry Study
Chapter 6	Implementation Strategy