



Cumberland's Historic City Center Reveals New Look

Cumberland, Maryland (November 14, 2024) – This morning state and local officials gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony that revealed an all-new look to the historic downtown of one of Maryland's most celebrated cities. After a process that stretched across a decade – from initial dreaming to final implementation – downtown Cumberland has begun the next chapter in a story that's been unfolding since the nation's infancy.

This redevelopment project was stimulated by the need to replace aging infrastructure along Baltimore Street, the main route through the city's historic downtown. In addition to replacing water, sewer and electric lines, the project included the introduction of fiber optic cable under the street. The underground construction brought water lines right up to historic buildings that date from 1895 to 1940, helping them prepare for the installation of modern sprinkler systems. This allows for the redevelopment of upper stories for residential purposes and upgrades to lower levels for increased and improved commercial use. Already 15 new businesses, ranging from shops to restaurants, have staked a claim in the redeveloped downtown since construction began in 2023, and seven more are slated to open in the coming months. By this time next year, a new 20-room boutique hotel will have opened in a historic building that had stood vacant for years.

The major goal of the redevelopment project was to focus attention back on the historic downtown, breathing new life into old buildings and truly looking at how people shop, dine, live and travel in the 21st century. That vision was shared and embraced by the community, with entrepreneurs creating new business opportunities and people getting excited about moving into those architecturally significant buildings, which now offer an array of modern amenities that appeal to businesses and residents alike.

As a key part of the revitalization, one lane of slow-moving automobile and bicycle traffic is returning to Baltimore Street, which had been a pedestrian mall for the past several decades. The

new street is flanked by wide sidewalks that allow for plenty of pedestrian passage, as well as outdoor dining space for the many restaurants that were already operating downtown or that have decided to open thanks to the redevelopment. Baltimore Street now boasts a curbsless design, which contributes to safer passage for pedestrians and offers a level of inclusiveness. The goal is for the street and the entire historic downtown to once again serve as a central gathering place, both for residents of the region and for the many visitors who come to Allegany County, affectionately dubbed the “Mountain Side of Maryland,” to appreciate not only its historic charm, but also its incredible natural beauty.

This historic city is the place where George Washington began his career, pioneers began their long journeys westward, and freedom-seekers passed through a tunnel that was part of the Underground Railroad. Now it’s a place where new stories can begin, both for the people who live and work here and for modern-day travelers.



The \$17.2 million project was funded by government entities and an array of federal and state grants, with local organizations and civic leaders collaborating with residents and business owners to find ways to balance the needs of all stakeholders to create a safe, vibrant and livable downtown that’s both functional and attractive.

“The revitalization of Baltimore Street is setting a new vision and clear path forward for our downtown business district,” says Cumberland Mayor Ray Morriss. “We have built on our proud history to create a bright future, and it is time for visitors and residents alike to Rediscover Cumberland.”

To learn more about the revitalization of downtown Cumberland and the people who are committed to making it a phenomenal place to live, work and visit, please check <https://reimaginecumberland.com/>.

Photo Credit: MDMountainside.com