

REIMAGINE CUMBERLAND

BALTIMORE STREET REVITALIZATION PROJECT



TOOL KIT FOR SUCCESS



Cumberland is reimagining our historic downtown with reverence to its unique appeal. Our door is wide open to ideas and concerns from residents, merchants, food and beverage operators, and building owners as we enter construction.



This workbook offers ideas, guidance, suggestions and best practices to help existing merchants survive and thrive in the construction phase expected to begin in 2023.

- Introduction 03
- Executive Summary..... 04
- Plan for Success..... 05
- Tips for Businesses 06-08
- The City’s Commitment..... 09
- Five Ways To Win 10
- New Marketing & Grant Programs..... 11
- Comprehensive Investment Program 12-14
- Project Workgroup Contacts 15

CUMBERLAND
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
A Main Street Maryland Community





Dear Downtown Merchants, Building Owners and Residents,

We are very excited to announce the upcoming commencement of a project that has been in the works for many years. We are confident that the Baltimore Street Revitalization Project, “Reimagine Cumberland”, will make a tremendous economic impact on our city for generations to come.

Whether you are a downtown business owner, a resident, a building owner or an employee at a downtown business, road and sidewalk construction will have a major impact on your life. We hope this Mitigation Plan will serve as a valuable resource guide to help you survive and thrive. Inside you will find suggestions and tips on ways to enhance and promote your business leading up to and during construction, as well as, the many ways the City of Cumberland will be supporting you.

We will also be posting updates on our new website: www.historiccumberlandcitycenter.com. We will inform you when updates have been added, but be sure to check there often for information on the project.

We look forward to working with you as we embark on this amazing project that will elevate Cumberland to an even more attractive location for economic growth and prosperity.

Sincerely,

Matt Miller

*Executive Director
Cumberland Economic
Development Commission*

Melinda Kelleher

*Executive Director
Cumberland Downtown
Development Commission*



The Baltimore Street Revitalization Project began in 2014 with the adoption of a new strategic plan for our city. The Mayor and City Council tasked many entities to collaborate on design and construction of a space that is both beautiful and functional as a central gathering place for local citizens and a must-see urban space for visitors.

- Final project renderings were approved and a virtual public **kick-off event was held in March of 2021.**
- The **return of slow-moving automobile and bicycle traffic** to one lane on Baltimore Street will provide much needed access to our downtown storefronts.
- The replacement of aging infrastructure and the **addition of fiber optic internet service** will modernize our central business district. Adding aesthetic features will complement our beautiful historic architecture.
- Once completed, the project will also serve as **a catalyst for investment in our upper floors**, providing adequate capacity for fire suppression systems that will create flexibility for both commercial and residential use.
- The groundbreaking for the project is expected to take place in 2023, and **construction is estimated to take 12-18 months.**



With planning, you can lessen the impact of construction on your business. Construction is expected to begin in 2023, but starting now and working with your suppliers, partners and customers is key.

- **Help your suppliers** and their truck drivers identify alternate routes to your business before construction begins. We will communicate well in advance about any road closures or detours.
- **Make a map of your location.** Identify alternative routes, parking options, entrance and exit changes for your customers.
- **Make frequent posts** to your Facebook page to update customers and keep your business in their minds. Best practice is at least three posts per week.
- Keep your **message on point and positive.** “Excuse our progress.” “Making downtown better for you.” “Investing in our future.”
- **Extend your hours and days of operation.** Give customers more options to visit you.
- **Capture email addresses.** Share customer databases and do a cooperative mailer or e-newsletter with other businesses to make your ad dollars go further.
- **Create unique in-store events** – giveaways, drawings, sales, etc.
- **Send thank you notes** to customers with an incentive to return within a specific time frame, for instance, when your side of the street is being worked on.
- **Offer special services** as added value to the customer (curbside pick-up, delivery of purchases, etc.)
- **Offer demonstrations or free classes** that may lead to more business or new customers.
- **Become a destination** business who doesn’t rely on “walk-by” customers. Your clientele has to want to come and see you because you’ve created the type of business they want to patronize.
- If you’ve been thinking about remodeling or making upgrades to your space, this might be the perfect time to **coordinate your improvements** with the Baltimore Street Revitalization Project.



We're all in this together. Our workgroup understands that we can't lose sight of the big picture... and are ready to provide resources, marketing platforms and problem solving throughout the construction process. Here are some ideas that have been used effectively in other communities. We are ready to work with you in implementing them.

- **Hold events prior to** construction to draw attention to the area – a hard hat sale or a jackhammer party.
- Run special promotions such as sales, cookouts, block parties, or offer prizes to customers who drop off an on-site entry each week. **Reward customers who continue to patronize your business during construction.**
- Offer a **“grand”** prize—a case of wine, free tacos for a year, or a trip to encourage foot traffic.
- **Sell hard hat lunches to go.**
- **Produce a placemat or map** that steers customers to parking areas.
- **Offer prizes for the most resourceful route** to your store. “Change your approach, not your destination.”

Start now to connect with your existing customers more strongly, via email, your websites and social media pages.

We are approaching the inevitable dust, noise, vibration, and traffic delays that surround construction as proof of progress. Keeping you, the public, visitors and vendors informed is a big part of our job and we encourage all businesses to help in that process.

- **Allocate more attention to cleaning.** Although there may be little you can do to reduce dust and noise, you can focus on keeping the exterior of your building as clean as possible.
- **Create a friendly rapport with construction workers.** While the on-site workers aren't the ones to talk to about concerns, it will improve your situation if you are nice to them. They may even be a source of income to your business during this time.
- **Meet the construction supervisors** and keep their contact information close at hand in case you have a problem.
- **Make sure signage is clear.** Look at the types of signs that are being used for traffic, pedestrian walkways, etc., and make sure your customers understand them. Make sure you know where other parking options are and inform your customers.
- We will make every effort to maintain access to your front door during business hours, but **please have a Plan B.** Locate alternative entrances and exits, rear parking lots, and alternative routes to your store and make sure your customers know their options. We expect disruptions to any business entrances to be very limited.
- **Provide directions and access information for your employees.** Help us reserve the parking closest to the downtown businesses for customers. Employees should park elsewhere.
- **Become active in local business groups** like the Downtown Development Commission or Chamber of Commerce. There's strength in numbers to communicate with local leaders, make your concerns heard, coordinate parking, events and collaborative advertising. There are monthly DDC meetings posted on the City website. Be sure you are following all of these organizations on social media.
- **Evaluate scenarios for how your business may be affected during construction.** Include analysis of the financial performance during the construction as well as previous years. This will help you identify opportunities or adjustments to make in your business plan to help your bottom line and allow you to address areas of concern in a proactive manner.

Think about ways to invite customers into your stores for special events or private sales during construction.

- **Reduce inventory**, if possible, to keep costs down.
- **Gather customer contact information before construction begins.** This way you can email, mail, or reach out on social media to inform your customers of road conditions, parking and promotional specials during construction. Inform your customers as much in advance as possible about any issues and solutions.

- **Work with your employees to develop a plan.** Talk to them about marketing efforts and allow them to share their concerns. They will appreciate the opportunity and the dialogue may produce creative ideas that will benefit your business.
- If you are planning any improvements to your property that might require construction within the streets, such as for a new water service line or sewer connection, **now is the time to get that done!**



SHARPEN YOUR ON-LINE MARKETING GAME!

The Power of Branding

<https://www.choosecumberland.org/brand-building/>

Content Marketing Courses

<https://www.choosecumberland.org/content-marketing/>

Website Design and Development

<https://www.choosecumberland.org/web-development/>

Digital Marketing

<https://www.choosecumberland.org/digital-marketing/>

Password for each session is Reim@gine1!



The City of Cumberland is committed to providing an environment where businesses and residential units can thrive in our Historic City Center during construction. You are not alone in facing the temporary disruptions that will come with the project. As such, the City and its partners are exploring ways to help during construction, including:

- Weekly or Bi-weekly Communication by email
- Virtual Town Hall Meetings Quarterly - Closed meetings for property owners, business owners and residents
- Website with Project Updates - Updates will be posted on the same day and time each week
- Co-op Advertising Opportunities
- Improvement Grants for Façade Improvements, Infrastructure Upgrades, and Outdoor Furniture
- Maps to Illustrate Street Closures and Route Changes
- Increased Signage
- Promotions to Attract Patrons Downtown
- Improving Rear Entrances and Access for Those Businesses with Rear Entrances
- Lighting Enhancements
- Easing the Parking Burden at Strategic Times (offer free or reduced parking)
- Extra Cleaning at Storefronts from the Mall Maintenance Team
- **Details will be shared as opportunities are finalized.**

FIVE WAYS TO WIN:

1 START NOW.

It takes time to build improved email and social media platforms and to build an audience for promotions that could become more important to your bottom line once construction begins.

2 RECRUIT PARTNERS.

If your business is of interest to potential customers with other common bonds (like outdoor enthusiasts, train riders, history buffs, educators and writers) think about ways to cross promote with other local organizations or businesses who serve those groups.

3 THINK OLD SCHOOL.

Even though today's commerce is more and more focused on online promotions, effective out-of-home promotion like posters, signs and billboards still work! In-market coupons do, too. A coupon to get a free dinner when you buy a couch is a real thing!

4 EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE.

The dust, noise and debris from construction is a temporary, but very real, barrier to relaxed foot traffic and drive-up convenience. Face it head-on and share your commitment to serve your customers by telling them what you're doing to encourage their patronage.

5 BE NIMBLE.

The downtown redevelopment workgroup is committed to being innovative and original in creating retail opportunities that bring you sales during the disruptive months of construction. Your participation in DDC, CEDC and DCBA marketing campaigns is important!

STAY TUNED to CEDC, DDC and DCBA outreaches, so you can take full advantage of co-op marketing campaigns and special events.



This redevelopment project will provide Downtown Cumberland improved retail access, reliable fiber telecom and a more aesthetic streetscape.

REGIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

The workgroup understands that Cumberland's downtown serves three rings of customers – City residents and downtown office workers, near-market Tri-State day-trip visitors, and destination vacationers. We are already working on ideas for each market and will be refining those campaigns to your benefit.

RENT AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE

The committee is also in the process of determining funding sources, mechanisms, and eligibility criteria for business survival grants during construction. Our goal is to ultimately help our current retailers thrive, knowing full well that you must first survive.

REACHING TOURISTS ONCE THEY ARRIVE

While the downtown construction period of 12-18 months is certain to suppress visitor traffic to our core district during portions of peak visitor seasons, the committee is committed to enhancing the dialogue and creating in-market cross promotions with city-based tourist attractions that could include pop-up retail events outside of construction areas, developed in cooperation with attractions and events like Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, Canal Place and Heritage Days.

PHASE ONE

Application Timeframe:

Closed

Downtown Façade Improvement Grant

- **Available Funds:** \$400,000
- **Purpose:** to provide funding to improve the aesthetic appearance of the buildings located within the Primary and Secondary DDC Taxing District. The program will be designed to assist property owners with rehabilitating the facades of storefronts, businesses and mixed-use properties to create a positive visual impact, stimulate private investment, and complement the overall revitalization efforts of the downtown district.
- **Applicant Match:** No match requirement up to \$7,500. 1:1 match for every dollar after \$7,500 (\$20,000 would require a \$12,500 match = \$32,500 project)
- **Grant Limits:** Minimum \$2,500, Maximum \$100,000 per application (1 application per address)

Downtown Technical Assistance Grant

- **Available Funds:** \$20,000
- **Purpose:** to provide financial assistance to downtown building owners to support the necessary investment needed to investigate potential development or activation of unused space in buildings located within

the Primary and Secondary DDC Taxing District. The grant can be used for planning, architectural/engineering design, feasibility studies or any other predevelopment support that enables a project to be conducted more efficiently.

- **Applicant Match:** 1:1 Match requirement for all eligible projects
- **Grant Limits:** \$5,000 Maximum per application (1 application per address)

PHASE TWO

Application Timeframe:

Opens - Jan. 9, 2023 • Closes - Feb. 10, 2023

Downtown Infrastructure Upgrade Grant

- **Available Funds:** \$150,000
- **Purpose:** to provide reimbursement funding to building owners who take advantage of the infrastructure upgrades (Water and Fiber Internet) that will be taking place during the Baltimore Street Access project. This will prevent future disruption to the new street façade after completion of the project and will encourage upper story development with adequate water capacity for fire suppression systems allowing more flexibility in terms of usage.
- **Applicant Match:** None
- **Grant Limits:** \$5,000 grant per applicant (30 grants)

For more info visit www.choosecumberland.org or call 301-722-4173

PHASE TWO (cont.)

Downtown Residential Development Grant

- **Available Funds:** \$350,000
- **Purpose:** to provide financial assistance for projects that include the development of market rate residential units located within the Primary and Secondary DDC Taxing District. The program will further encourage building owners to activate unused/underutilized space



with market rate housing. The increase in residents downtown will promote the sustainability of downtown businesses, attract new businesses to the area, and increase revenue streams to property owners – leading to future investment/reinvestment back into the buildings.

- **Applicant Match:** 1:1 Match requirement for all projects
- **Grant limits:** \$5,000 minimum, \$100,000 maximum per application (1 application per address)

We are here to help
guide you and answer
your questions
about the grant
opportunities.

COMPREHENSIVE
INVESTMENT PROGRAM

For more info visit www.choosecumberland.org or call 301-722-4173

PHASE THREE

Application Timeframe:

Opens - Mar. 6, 2023 until funds are exhausted

Business Attraction Grant for Downtown

- **Available Funds:** \$30,000
- **Purpose:** To assist new and expanding businesses with rental reimbursement in return for locating their business or service in our downtown district. The program will serve multiple needs including, but not limited to:
 - *New Job Creation (a minimum of 30 FTEs if 100% successful)*
 - *Activating Empty Store Fronts and/or Office Space*
 - *Supplementing Private Capital for other Start-up Costs*
 - *Increasing Foot Traffic Downtown*
- **Amount: Primary District:** \$500/month – Fixed Amount - for 6 Months (\$3,000)
Secondary District: \$400/Month – Fixed Amount – for 6 months (\$2,400)
- **Eligibility (Generally):**
 - Must be at least a 1-year lease for \$800 or more/month

- Business must be open for 40 hours/week
- Must be commercial space – retail, office, restaurant, etc. (for non-residential purposes)
- Must be located in the primary or secondary taxing district
- Must be a new or expanding business (cannot be relocating from an existing office in Cumberland unless for expansion purposes)
- Must show proof of rental payment – funds will be reimbursed upon providing proof of payment
- Must consist of at least 3 FTEs or 6 PTEs (NEW Jobs)
- Program will remain open until funds are depleted
- Other requirements TBD



BALTIMORE STREET PROJECT WORKGROUP

Matt Miller, Chair

Executive Director, Cumberland Economic Development Corporation (CEDC)

William Cochran

Project Designer, Cochran Studio

Stu Czapski

Economic Development Specialist, CEDC

Melinda Kelleher

Executive Director, Downtown Development Commission (DDC)

Laurie Marchini

Councilwoman, Cumberland City Council

Becky McClarran

Partner, McClarran and Williams

Dave Romero

Owner, Vibrant Image Productions

Downtown Development Commission Board Member

Downtown Property Owner and Resident

Sandi Saville

Board Chair, Downtown Development Commission

Downtown Property Owner and Resident

Doug Schwab

Board Vice Chair, Downtown Development Commission

Downtown Property Owner

Bobby Smith

City Engineer, City of Cumberland

Julie Westendorff

Executive Director, Allegany Arts Council

Marketing Sub-Committee

Melinda Kelleher

Executive Director, Downtown Development Commission (DDC)

Allison Layton

City Clerk, City of Cumberland

Laurie Marchini

Councilwoman, Cumberland City Council

Becky McClarran

Downtown Cumberland Business Association

Matt Miller

Executive Director, Cumberland Economic Development Corporation (CEDC)

Sandi Saville

Board Chair, Downtown Development Commission

Downtown Property Owner and Resident

Doug Schwab

Board Vice Chair, Downtown Development Commission

Downtown Property Owner

Leigh Ann Sipple

Founder and Content Marketer, Original Copy Company

Julie Westendorff

Executive Director, Allegany Arts Council

Questions? Please contact:

Matt Miller

Matt.miller@choosecumberland.org

301-722-4173

Melinda Kelleher

Melinda.kelleher@cumberlandmd.gov

301-759-6443

DON'T BE SHY about contacting our committee about urgent challenges to your business's viability during construction and to offer ideas that could help you and your fellow business owners.



Cumberland Economic Development Corporation

3 Pershing Street, Suite 105, Cumberland, MD 21502
matt.miller@choosecumberland.org • 301-722-4173

CUMBERLAND

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

A Main Street Maryland Community

Downtown Development Commission

57 N. Liberty Street, Cumberland, MD 21502
melinda.kelleher@cumberlandmd.gov • 301-777-2800