

# Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

## WORK SESSION

City Hall Council Chambers  
57 N. Liberty Street  
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, October 27, 2021  
2:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, Joseph George and Laurie Marchini.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Ken Tressler, Interim City Administrator; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk; Matt Miller, CEDC Executive Director; Stu Czapski, Economic Development Specialist; Mike Getty; Kyle Talente and Matt Cardin, RKG Associates; Jonathan Hutcherson, CEDC Board Chair

Media: Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News

### I. UPDATE FROM RKG ASSOCIATES ON CEDC STRATEGIC PLAN REASSESSMENT

Matt Miller introduced Kyle Talente and Matt Cardin from RKG Associates, advised that they had done the initial study for the Strategic Plan, and said they are here to revisit where things stand, and added that this is not a final product, but is just half way through.

Mr. Talente advised that they will be going through the analytical process and recommendations for the City to take forward. He stated that they have bi-weekly discussions with Mr. Miller and Mr. Czapski. Mr. Talente provided a **PowerPoint Presentation**, and advised on the Study Area Boundaries, that included the counties of Allegany, Garrett, Mineral, Somerset, and Bedford, with Washington County not being included in the region because it's a different market, but added that it was used as a means of comparison:

### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND CONDITIONS:

#### *POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS*

- Cumberland continues to lose population – declined by 7% between 2010 & 2021
- Average household sizes remained stable – consistent with job losses in previous decade
- Entire 5-county region – same issue; decreased by 7402 people
- Washington County – population growth + job losses = suburbanization

#### *HOUSEHOLD TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS*

- Cumberland household base declining – 616 households lost between 2010 & 2021
- Similar situation regionally – ratio of populations/household losses vary
- Impact reveals household sizes growing outside City
- Washington County growth consistent with population growth – household sizes not changing much

### *AGE COHORT TRENDS*

- Population increased among seniors – retired or transitioning; decreased spending
- Slight increase in millennial generation – much larger in other locations
- Population decreased among the working age – impacts of Gen-X
- Regional age changes consistent with Cumberland
- Natural progression of generations adversely impacting child numbers

### *RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION*

- Roughly 10% of population in Cumberland represented by minorities, but larger than region
- Foreign-born population low in Cumberland; resettlement activity low

### *HOUSEHOLD INCOME TRENDS*

- Cumberland has lower median income compared to region
- Allegany County median income increased by 30.1%
- Bedford and Mineral counties, largest increases among counties in region
- Projection data show income stagnation, except Mineral

#### *IMPLICATIONS:*

- Decline in labor force shaping economic development opportunities
- Fewer workers to support aging population – fiscal implications
- Decline in job/population growth having ripple effects
- Economic development & place making need to occur concurrently

## **ECONOMIC BASE AND CONDITIONS:**

### *UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS (2018 – 2021)*

- Covid-19 had typical impact on region
- Regional impact greater than Allegany County
- Washington County's economy more resilient

### *LABOR FORCE TRENDS (2018 – 2021)*

- Covid-19 impacts had multiplier effect – unemployment increase; labor force decrease
- Since January 2021, participation steadily increasing
- Allegany County reported lower rates of labor force participation than comparable counties across region

### *EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT*

- Cumberland and Allegany County highest in region
- Contrasts earnings, with City having lower median household income – higher unemployment and higher concentration of very low earners
- Washington County – higher attainment levels

### *COMMUTING PATTERNS*

- Cumberland is a net importer of workers
- Most workers traveling in from other parts of the County
- More residents work outside than within City limits, reinforces need to create jobs for City residents

### *RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT SHIFTS IN CUMBERLAND*

- Job losses during 2010s for residents consistent with regional impacts, with Retail, Admin, and Support hit hardest
- Construction industry declined, with slight increases among a few industries
- (impacts of Covid-19 *not* included in this data)

### *EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY SHIFTS IN CUMBERLAND*

- Reduction in jobs in Cumberland reflects economic & fiscal impacts
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation growth coincides with increasing attraction to region's natural amenities
- Growth in government partially reflects recovery

### *EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY SHIFTS IN ALLGANY COUNTY*

- (*this data includes impact from Covid-19*)
- Job losses occurred across several industries, some heavily influenced by Covid-19
- Some industries experienced job gains

### *EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY SHIFTS IN REGION*

- Job losses uniform across region, some heavily impacted by Covid-19
- Growth in employment pre-Covid-19 not uniform across region
- Garrett County, only county in region with net job gains – mostly accommodation & food services

#### *IMPLICATIONS:*

- Cumberland & Allegany County's ability to weather economic downturns is tested
- Economic lag in local economy – Covid-19 most likely made situation worse
- Labor force below pre-Covid-19 levels – “Great Resignation” rippling through US
- Economic development focus on industries serving larger market areas will create greater economic stability
- Cumberland's diverse workforce is an asset, supporting variety of business types
- Small and shrinking workforce a challenge

### **REAL ESTATE ANALYSIS:**

#### *BUILDING USES*

- Oversupply of retail/service uses may exist in City's boundaries – consuming most of the building space

- Manufacturing and warehousing uses maintain high proportion
- “Other” category includes mixed-use buildings, with many located on Centre Street in downtown

*LAND USES*

- Retail/Service use consume the most land area-330 acres – reinforces that City may be overserved with those uses
- Office uses consume 15% of non-residential land area
- Restaurant/Lodging uses represent approx. 4% of total non-residential land

*VACANT LAND*

- Vacant land parcels unevenly divided between commercial and industrial
- Most vacant land properties are smaller than 1 acre – development efforts should focus on infill development for commercial use
- Use of temporary structures (food trucks, pop-up tents) could create new activity that can lead to more permanent users
- High proportion of vacant acres have construction limitations due to environmental constraints
- Opportunities: competitive sports complexes, land swaps with existing sports facilities and parks that are not constrained

*VACANT COMMERCIAL PARCELS*

- Minimal land area for large scale commercial developments
- Many opportunities for infill development scattered throughout the City – near downtown and east of I-68

*SALES TO PROPERTY VALUES*

- Market value can be measured by comparing sales prices to their assessed values
- Highest demand for mixed-use development and highway commercial uses

*IMPLICATIONS:*

- New commercial development since 2011 – concentrated in highway service businesses
- This activity a small increase over existing commercial space
- Does not account for rehabilitation investment downtown
- Future economic development diversification going to be dependent on building the market; strengthening supply of industrial space; infill development and adaptive reuse to diversify the marketplace

**II. DISCUSSION**

Councilman Cioni inquired about how to attract artisan businesses, considering the current workforce problems. Mr. Talente replied that the City already has resources to train people, and suggested a County and Allegany College partnership for workforce training.

Councilman George asked about the Footer building, and about using it as an example, or something else on a different scale. Mr. Talente explained that the Footer building is a perfect example for downtown, but said he's not sure it would work elsewhere. He said there was a missing middle-market housing, which could be townhomes or rowhomes. He added that the City's housing stock is good, but the question is how to keep and improve upon it, and discussed programs to help buy old properties, which he advised would make people outside the community be attracted.

There was discussion about double-taxation in the City which some people don't understand and don't want to pay, in spite of the services Cumberland provides. There were questions about what can be done to change that. Mr. Talente suggested a better marketing campaign that advertises those services to make potential buyers aware of the value they are getting. He added that Cumberland has a marketing and problem that transcends all aspects of economic development, and said there is a lot of "positive" here that doesn't get out. Mr. Talente advised that people need to be educated so they can make an informed decision, and said marketing will cost money, so the M&CC will have to consider investing more funds.

Greg Larry discussed high-speed broadband coming to the downtown with the Baltimore Street Revitalization Project, and asked if, along with improving the streetscape and upgrading utilities, would that bring something similar to what's happening at the Footer building. Mr. Talente advised that it's something that should happen, and stated that one of the fundamental needs of someone who wants to live here is reliable high speed broadband connectivity. He added that the Baltimore Street Revitalization is nothing but positive for economic development.

Councilman George inquired about a community of "rural sourcing" individuals that network, that are available to tap into as part of future marketing program. Mr. Talente explained that across all industries there is the realization that workers don't have to be in the office at all times, and they are looking at that to reduce costs with less physical space and non-essential jobs off-site. He said there is a pool, but not one specific industry over another. He added that there are opportunities in almost every white-collar industry.

There was discussion about attracting businesses, but there is the need to build space. Councilwoman Marchini advised that with rural sourcing it seems logical to start with housing. Mr. Talente explained that for rural sourcing the business structure is broadband, and said the most immediate opportunity is to bring people here to work remotely and provide them with the opportunity to create their own business. He added that creating opportunities here for people to create a lifestyle they want while still working is the first step, and then begin working with property owners early on to create strategies for housing that will be attractive to these people.

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marjorie A. Woodring  
City Clerk

Minutes approved March 15, 2022