

Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman, neighbors, family, and friends. It is a distinct honor and privilege to be with you today and to accept this manifestation of your trust. As I walked the streets of this fine city over the past few months, I came to appreciate your kindness and generosity, your concern for the welfare of our city, and your ideas about how we can thrive and develop. There is much too that has been accomplished by this past administration as the Times-News so eloquently pointed out in this morning's editorial and they have earned our respect. But, as we know much work also that remains to be done. That's why we are here today: to transfer the baton from this group of runners and to finish the race.

Mayor Fiedler has outlined a new vision of how we will begin to tackle some of the problems before us. The themes as you now know are: Economic Development, Permitting, Blight, Downtown, and Finance. They come from a careful analysis of what is needed to continue the revival of this city. But, the process is as important as the themes raised. You will be asked to participate in the process: to help identify the problems, brainstorm about the solutions, and to implement the remedies.

As we all know our City values its history and this history is one of our major assets. So allow me to digress briefly on the subject and what it might tell us about our future. To do this, one could do no better than consult: Harry Stegmaier, et al.: Allegany County: A History, Joseph Weaver: Cumberland, MD: The Birth and Growth of a Victorian City

As we already know, Cumberland was a stomping ground for our nation's founding father George Washington. What we might not know is what he had to say about our city.

"This wonderful country impresses me more and more each time I go through it. . . . To the right of our camp on the slightly sloping plateau between the Savage mountain and Will's Creek mtn., is a wondrous site for a city and as I muse by the campfire, I imagine that here will be the metropolis of His Excellency's Lord Baltimore Colony."

Well, not quite. But, the story is not over either.

During the next two and a half centuries, the city evolved:

- (1) Frontier Town Era
- (2) Evolution into a transport hub with Natl. Road, C&O Canal, and B&O railroad
- (3) Industrial Diversification. Glass, Breweries, Tanneries, Dye works, Rolling Mill and Railroad
- (4) Last great Boom era: Celanese and Kelly Springfield. Substantial relocation subsidies
- (5) Slow decline during nationwide economic restructuring.

The books stop there (the mid 70s/mid 80s) and leaves one with a sense of pessimism.

But, there is no reason for pessimism because change occurs in perpetuity and , besides, the a new era is on the horizon and one can already begin to detect its contours and give it

a name: Its called the post-industrial era: In this era, Innovation, research, and learning, Internet and wireless technologies (B2B), services, travel and tourism, and a light manufacturing sector (populated by networks of agile small and medium sized firms) will be the defining features.

So the question becomes what can government (particularly city government can do):

- (1) It can create an environment of trust, cooperation, and democratic participation.
- (2) It can provide the public services that residents want and need as efficiently and cost effective as possible.
- (3) It can provide leadership by identifying the trends and galvanizing its citizens to purposeful action.
- (4) It can team with businesses and employee groups to ensure a stable investment climate and that channels of communication and cooperation remain open.
- (5) It can get out of the way. Sometimes, the best thing to do is to give citizens and business as wide a scope of action as possible and allow them to use their creative energies rather than micromanage things. Sometimes government, and that includes municipal government, can obstruct rather than facilitate.

Of course, many of the specifics remain to be worked out. We don't have all of the answers. That is why we will be coming to you. You know the problems and have the answers and only you can ensure that General Washington's vision becomes complete.

Cumberland is and will be a wondrous city. Indeed, it is a city on a hill. We are surrounded by mountains which conceal this magnificent splendour that have sometimes proved a blessing and sometimes a curse. But as a wise man once said, "a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."

I thank you for making me a big part of this magnificent project. Right here. Right now.