



# Tennessee DOWNTOWNS Program

## Plan of Work Report

Community: Cumberland Gap, Tennessee

Mentor: Dr. Bridget Jones

Date: November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022

<p style="text-align: center;">Attendees</p>	<p><b>TNDT Steering Committee:</b>          Tony Maxwell, Guardians of the Gap, President and TNDT Committee Chairman          Neal Pucciarelli, Mayor of Cumberland Gap          Kimberly Kotler, Guardians of the Gap Project Coordinator          Bradley Smiddy, TDEC Recreation Services Grant Analyst          Grace Maheur, Lincoln Memorial, Arts in the Gap, Guardians of the Gap Member          Natalie Sweet, Lincoln Memorial, Guardians of the Gap Member</p> <p><b>TNECD Tennessee DOWNTOWNS Program:</b>          Bridget Jones</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Community Vision and Community Assets</b></p>	<p><b>TNDT Application Stated Objectives:</b>          “It is critical for the health and long-term survival of the town that tourism be encouraged, businesses recruited and retained, a robust sense of community and “place” created and cultivated, and multiple options for both indoor and outdoor recreation be made available to the people in and around Cumberland Gap”.</p> <p><b>Community Vision:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement recommendations contained in the adopted <b>Cumberland Gap Master Plan and Trailhead Development Plan</b></li> <li>2. Support the goals and objectives of Cumberland Gap leaders to build upon the town’s history, assets, culture, and people</li> <li>3. Position Cumberland Gap as a unique “<b>Trail Town</b>” and differentiate the community as “<b>Destination DOWNTOWN</b>” for visitors and residents</li> <li>4. Create continuing and new opportunities for community partnerships, positive energy, and strategic focus</li> <li>5. Create new opportunities for downtown reinvestment and expanded program support for existing and new downtown business and property owners</li> </ol> <p><b>Community Assets:</b>          Cumberland Gap was the first great gateway to the west. The Town of Cumberland Gap is located at a historic crossroads where three State lines meet, several significant trails come together, and is a confluence location for many pivotal historical events and movements. The US Cumberland Gap National Historical Park is located at the border between Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia, centered on the Cumberland Gap, a natural break in the Appalachian Mountains. This historic Cumberland Gap landmark reigns high over the historic downtown today. The Town of Cumberland Gap’s special events highlight and connect cultural traditions in East Tennessee, and its rich literary history and historic charm.</p>



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The Town of Cumberland Gap is located at the crossroads of three major trails: • Cumberland Trail • Daniel Boone Trail • Wilderness Road Trail. Notable statewide and national trails that are in development stages will also connect at Cumberland Gap in future years. These include Tennessee's new Cumberland Trail that begins in the Tennessee River Gorge and will end with its northern trailhead in the town. The Cumberland Trail is also a recognized segment of the Great Eastern Trail, which will provide a continuous foot path all the way from Alabama to New York.

TDEC's plan to create the Northern Terminus of Tennessee's Cumberland Trail in the town provides new opportunities to support local businesses and create new economic development. NPS leaders have also expressed interest in new partnerships. Recent expansion of LMU's graduate and professional programs at their campus adjacent to the Town of Cumberland Gap has resulted in an influx in Cumberland Gap's population.

As the first town on the Tennessee side of the Cumberland Mountain range and the iconic Highway 25 Tunnel, Cumberland Gap serves as both an entrance to the largest National Historical Park in the nation, and northeastern Tennessee. The town's location positions it as the first stop to refuel, dine, stay overnight, and obtain other amenities and services. Cumberland Gap has preserved much of its 19th century architecture and was declared a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. Due to its location and historic charm, Cumberland Gap can once again serve as both a destination and stopping point for those journeying through this unique tri-state region.

### **Cumberland Gap Tennessee Downtown Program Area:**

The Cumberland Gap Historic District - National Register of Historic Places.

### **Downtown Property and Business Characteristics:**

Many historic buildings are in place in the Cumberland Gap TNDT project area and the entire area is cool and walkable. Trail head connections exist in the town boundaries and just outside the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park areas. The town's proximity to an array of notable Trails and vast Outdoor Recreation assets provides a wide range of great opportunities for new business and downtown redevelopment investments to serve residents and tourists alike. Interest in Cumberland Gap is growing. Improvements in downtown properties in Cumberland Gap have been made in the past 5 to 10 years by individual property and business owners.



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	<p><b>Community Leadership and Business Assets:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guardians of The Gap 501c3 organization in place and serve as the 2022 – 2023 TNDT Committee</li> <li>• Members are very committed and represent public and private sector partners</li> <li>• Several lodging, retail and food and beverage businesses operate successfully in Cumberland Gap</li> <li>• New businesses such as outdoor outfitters, breweries and distilleries have indicated interest in opening locations in the Cumberland Gap TNDT program area in recent years</li> <li>• The Town of Cumberland Gap is highly supportive of the TNDT Program</li> <li>• Several short-term lodging venues operate in Cumberland Gap and environs</li> <li>• <b>Cumberland Gap Master Plan and Trailhead Development Plan</b> - Funded by the Tennessee Department of Health – Healthy Communities Grant – Prepared by Community Development Partners</li> <li>• Lincoln Memorial University leaders are highly supportive of Cumberland Gap efforts and provide Faculty and Student Internships on a regular basis</li> <li>• Good working relationships in place with nearby towns in Kentucky and Virginia. Most are Kentucky and Virginia Main Street communities</li> <li>• Actively involvement with local and regional Tourism Associations in the Cumberland Gap Region of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia</li> </ul>
<p><b>TNDT Priorities</b></p>	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design issues (wayfinding signs, sidewalks, outdoor amenities, utilities)</li> <li>• Cumberland Gap Destination Brand, Marketing and Promotions Resources</li> <li>• Create a strategy to create new staffing for program growth and future implementation</li> <li>• Capitalize on Outdoor Recreation and grow Tourism revenues</li> <li>• Implement recommendations in the adopted <b>Cumberland Gap Master Plan and Trailhead Development Plan</b></li> <li>• Downtown WiFi in partnership with area providers</li> <li>• Town of Cumberland Gap grant funding for future Infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Prepare for the future construction of the Northern Terminus of Tennessee's Cumberland Trail Center</li> <li>• Build upon strong NPS and TDEC partnerships for implementation</li> </ul>



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<p><b>Initial Grant Ideas</b></p>	<p>Implement aspects of Cumberland Gap Master Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wayfinding Signage for Downtown Pedestrian and Highway Entrances</li> <li>• New Downtown Destination Branding</li> <li>• Website and Social Media Promotions Systems</li> </ul>
<p><b>2023 TNDT Plan of Work Items</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focused 2023 TNDT Program Plan of Work – Matched with grant funding and technical resources</li> <li>2. Cumberland Gap Marketing and Promotions System to include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Destination Downtown Brand/Logo Resources</li> <li>• Website/Integrated Digital Marketing and Social Media Systems</li> <li>• Rack Cards/Tear-Off Maps for Town and Cumberland Gap Area</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Cumberland Gap Gateway and Pedestrian Signage to include:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two Gateway Signs at Highway 25 Entrances</li> <li>• Three to four Pedestrian Signs at Entry Points and Center of Town,</li> <li>• Branded Sidewalk Sandwich Signs for Events and Business Uses</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Organizational Development - Strategy and Funding to Create Tourism/Downtown Development staffing and/ or consultants</li> </ol>
<p><b>What do they need from TN ECD to help?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gateway and Pedestrian Wayfinding Signage</b> (Best Practices Sweetwater, Winchester, and Natchez Trace Parkway/NPS Monument Signage)</li> <li>• <b>Destination Branding</b> (Best Practices Demastus Virginia “Trail Town” and Watertown)</li> <li>• <b>Website and Social Media Promotions</b> (Share Providers Contacts – Locable and Bob Hilbreath)</li> <li>• <b>Outdoor Recreation Tourism Marketing</b> (Assistance to work with the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development – Rural Tourism and Claiborne County Tourism for potential 2023 TDTD Outdoor Recreation grant funding)</li> <li>• <b>Funding and Staffing Strategies</b> (Best Practices Mount Pleasant, Giles County/Pulaski Chamber/Main Street, Sweetwater and Madisonville)</li> </ul>



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