

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY
NEW JERSEY**

CULTURAL PLAN

Nancy Moses,
Planning & Development Consultant
210 West Washington Square, Mezzanine Suite 10
Philadelphia PA 19106
Tel: 215-923-1621 Fax: 215-023-3850
Email: nancy@nancymoses.com Website: www.nancymoses.com

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THE VISION

Imagine yourself in Cumberland County in 2015...

...on a beautiful fall day. The 7th annual Cumberland County “Melting Pot” Harvest Festival just ended, an event filled with ethnic dance, crafts and of course, food. Attendees of the 5th annual American Organic Farmers’ Association were among the participants, drawn by the County’s growing reputation. The Conference was held at the expanded Cumberland County College, with the first three years of holders of associate degrees in Hospitality and in Specialized Agriculture Program in attendance. In conjunction with the conference, Bay-Atlantic Symphony commissioned a major work called “Cumberland Fall”.

Each of the major towns now sports a distinctive character: Millville as an artist’s colony, Bridgeton as a town noted for its historic architecture and Central American culture, and Vineland known for variety and excellence of its produce and culinary institute. While there are some concerns about gentrification, the Cultural Development Committee of the County’s Economic Development agency’s works diligently to mediate disputes.

The cultural community has never been stronger: Wheaton Village, Seabrook Cultural Center, and Millville Airfield Museum boast new facilities; the Bayshore Discovery Project is largely completed. Restaurants throughout the county are filled with local art, as are such public buildings as city halls, libraries, and even day care centers. The recently opened Rural Jewish Heritage Center near Vineland complements the Landis Theatre’s ongoing performance program that features musicians, dancers, and theatricals from Mexico, Eastern Europe, Africa, Iran, India, Japan and other countries which County residents come from.

Drawn by the charm of rural and maritime life, natural landscapes and cultural amenities, more people are coming to Cumberland County to live and to visit. There is a new contingent of recently retired second home owners, some of whom grew up close by. There’s also a small group of young professionals who commute both east and west on the improved highways and on the express executive bus lines to Camden and Philadelphia. Renovated farms and new housing have spurred new jobs in construction, landscaping and the personal services these residents expect.

Cumberland County’s remarkable transformation is the result of collaboration among government, cultural institutions, municipalities, community and educational organizations, tourism interests, the media and business. The County is not only a model rural cultural destination, but most importantly, a place cherished by those who live there.

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CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CULTURAL PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August of 2004, the South Jersey Economic Development District, in cooperation with the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission, retained Nancy Moses, Planning & Development Consultant and Dr. Thomas A. Reiner to develop a Cultural Plan for the County. Its primary goal is to use cultural and heritage resources:

- To strengthen the County's economic base, providing jobs for current residents, attracting new ones, and adding new enterprises.

Secondary goals are:

- To improve the quality of life for all those in the County, and
- To build the capacity of the cultural/heritage sector.

Recognizing the County's roots remain rural, the Plan draws from the field of rural cultural development, which is dedicated to revitalizing small towns, preserving farmlands and wilderness areas, and increasing economic activity through sensitive growth.

Strategic Analysis

From the perspective of cultural development, Cumberland County's greatest challenge is that, on average, its residents are among the poorest and least educated in New Jersey. Because cultural participation increases along with education and wealth, the County's cultural institutions are hard pressed to fill their seats and galleries or to secure individual donations. The County also suffers from a lack of collaboration within the cultural community, between the cultural and economic sectors, and across municipal jurisdictions. Unlike many successful cultural communities, Cumberland County lacks a dedicated tax that supports cultural organizations and marketing.

Despite these challenges, the County possesses a robust set of assets that it can use to turn into a rural destination. The most significant are Cumberland County's location and setting: it is a peaceful, largely unspoiled rural area on the periphery of a major metropolitan area close to the center of the nation's largest concentration of population. The County benefits from an exceptionally diverse ethnic history, a large collection of historically significant buildings, low-cost real estate where artists are beginning to live and work, and a small cadre of leaders dedicated to using arts and culture to build the economy and enhance the quality of life. In fact, many of what at first appears to be intractable challenges—slow population growth, empty land, low real estate values—are actually assets.

Implementation Plan

In order to reach its goals, a series of concurrent steps need to be taken:

- **Formulate an Identity and a Vision**
Cumberland County as a rural melting pot – a theme that is authentic, distinctive, inclusive, appealing and lends itself to cultural development.
- **Strengthen Cultural Assets**
Priority for initiatives advancing the “rural melting pot” theme: e.g. expanding Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center; agri-tourism; harvest festival; Vineland culinary institute; and Rural Jewish Heritage Center proposed by the Jewish Federation of South Jersey.
- **Put in Place Infrastructure and Amenities**
Completion of Route 55 together with improved links to the Jersey shore; installing a coordinated vehicular signage system that leads the public to and between cultural attractions.
- **Expand Marketing and Promotion**
A well-financed, continuous cultural marketing campaign directed towards residents and visitors that features a new “rural melting pot” slogan/logo, and marketing workshops for cultural attractions. Target Markets include:
 - Residents: patrons of existing cultural activities; students who represent the future cultural patrons; South Jersey families with school-age children; people from different ethnic group for ethnic-specific events.
 - Cultural tourists: Jersey Shore visitors and residents in inclement weather; older adults who enjoy educational leisure; day-tripping urbanites.
- **Develop a Leadership Structure**
A structure that: can receive tax-exempt contributions; draws on talented leaders from all constituent groups; taps others via task force participation and public meetings; and can forge links across the entire County and between Cumberland and its neighboring counties, the State and other leading rural cultural communities long into future.

The next steps are to create the optimum organizational structure, develop resources, and share the Plan’s findings with the wider community.

INTRODUCTION

In August of 2004, the South Jersey Economic Development District, in cooperation with the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission, retained Nancy Moses, Planning & Development Consultant and Dr. Thomas A. Reiner to develop a Cultural Plan for the County. This was not the first study of its type. In fact, over the last decade, other initiatives have examined various aspects of the County's cultural life, development needs, and economic impacts. This Cultural Plan, which projects out five to ten years into the future, builds upon past work.

Originally, the Plan was to cover a wide range of topics, but as work proceeded, the participating organizations decided it was most appropriate to focus on the relationship between culture and economic development, and to give particular attention to strategic analysis and implementation. Thus, the primary goal of this Plan is to use the County's cultural and heritage resources:

- To increase the County's economic base, providing jobs for current residents, attracting new ones, and adding new enterprises.

Secondary goals are:

- To improve the quality of life for all those in the County, and
- To build the capacity of the cultural/heritage sector

In this Plan, the term "culture" refers to a wide range of activities: heritage events and festivals, the performing and visual arts, collecting institutions including museums, zoos and historical societies, and historic buildings and places. It includes popular and high culture, preservation of the built and natural environments, and the traditions, lifestyles and values of the people who lived and continue to live there.

METHODOLOGY

This Cultural Plan began with an examination of past studies of Cumberland County on similar topics and then moved forward. The project team sought to intertwine analyses of the County's assets, challenges and potential along with determination of the organizational structure and resources needed to realize this potential. With this in mind, work included the following:

- Web research to obtain qualitative information on the County and its cultural sector.
- Presentations to boards and commissions. In-depth structured interviews with stakeholders selected by the client organizations (see Appendix 1).
- Collection and evaluation of socio-economic data sets for Cumberland County with particular emphasis on the cultural sector. Statistics on the County were compared with State-level data in order to establish strengths and challenges.
- Benchmarking Cumberland County against Chester County, PA, a place with many similar attributes that has become a successful cultural destination. Special attention was paid to Chester's developmental process and institutional structure.
- An intensive, day-long tour of Cumberland County led by the client organization.
- Design and implementation of an all day study tour of Chester County, for approximately thirty leaders active in Cumberland County's economic and cultural sectors. Meetings with Chester County's governmental, civic and tourism officials sharpened understandings and provided perspectives on Cumberland's path and potential.
- Research on the history of Cumberland County, the field of rural cultural development, trends on the horizon, and other related subjects.

Data from these sources were analyzed and findings presented in the Plan that follows.

THE BROADER CONTEXT

The project team began by studying the towns where most cultural organizations reside. But we soon realized that the Cumberland County experience is defined by not only its towns, but also by its farmlands, maritime setting, and natural resources. Town and countryside are intertwined: towns grew up to serve the farmers; people moved from farms to towns. Recognizing that Cumberland County's roots remain rural, this Plan is built around the emerging field of rural cultural development.

Rural cultural development is a movement that reaches throughout the nation and beyond, in which rural areas and small towns develop comprehensive plans and implement cultural initiatives. Artists are transforming declining communities into lively cultural districts, preservationists are restoring derelict but historically significant and attractive structures, and residents are staging heritage fairs and traditional crafts festivals. Communities are hosting touring performance series, re-introducing arts and local history into the school curriculum, establishing community arts centers and staging amateur productions. Many rural cultural communities are not only benefiting from such activities, but also from the outside dollars they draw from visitors. Moreover, rural cultural communities are attracting new residents including young entrepreneurs and the recently retired who cherish both the pace and peace of rural/small town living and a lively cultural environment in which to live, work, learn, visit and play.

There are a myriad of organizations, research studies, websites, seminars, and even university courses on rural cultural development and related subjects. Moreover, there is substantial public and private investment in rural cultural development. (See Appendix 3.) The Rural Information Center of the United States Department of Agriculture lists 29 Federal grant programs under the category "Arts." Rural Development Grants have already been utilized to fund the Bridgeton and Vineland Community Health Centers. Two national foundations, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the J. Paul Getty Foundation recently announced major grants to stimulate rural cultural development. The American Association of State and Local History and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are among the major players.

What is the reason for the surge of interest in rural cultural development? Bypassed by urbanism and as yet not afflicted by suburban sprawl, places like Cumberland County take on special meaning. While our image of life in a small rural town may be somewhat romanticized, it nevertheless offers a dramatic contrast to the high tech, mall-filled, over-scheduled and stressful lives of many Americans. In fact, it can be argued that intimate towns, green landscapes, productive farms, and preserved wetlands of Cumberland County are not only its most cherished, but also its most valuable assets.

Culture as an Engine of Social and Economic Change

In times past, economic development agencies focused on industry. Today the tables have turned. Throughout the nation economic development agencies are turning to the service components of their economies, in particular their cultural and heritage assets. These are

being used to spur gains in three key areas: community revitalization, tourism and residential development.

Community Revitalization. Millville is an example of a moribund downtown transformed into a vibrant cultural district, the result of careful planning, tenacity, and vision. Millville is restoring its riverfront, revitalizing its streetscape, and reaching out to artists with incentives to live and work there. Its Glasstown Arts District features dozens of shops, galleries, restaurants and museums. It has a ceramic studio, part of Cumberland County College, bike trails and the Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts. The monthly Third Fridays regularly draw 1,500 - 2,000 people. Forty-eight new businesses have located in the arts district, downtown property values have tripled and quadrupled since 2000. Fast becoming a national model, Millville's success carries special resonance for its neighbors in the County and inspires each to seek its own distinctive style.

Tourism. Rural America is a popular destination: according to the Travel Association of America, between 1999 and 2001 over 78 million people took a leisure trip to a rural destination. In New Jersey, tourism creates nearly 500,000 jobs that exceed \$12 billion in wages and salaries and contributes a total of \$30 billion to State revenues.

Cultural tourism can become an important source for Cumberland County jobs, especially for those with lower skills and levels of educational attainment, seasonal workers, part-time workers and students. It can become an important source of tax revenue, which in turn can lead to higher quality of public services. Cultural tourism can also improve the quality of local life and improve the cultural sector. It can spur reclamation of long-lost traditions, restoration of historic structures, and local conservation efforts. It can create markets for local crafts and foods. As place after place has learned, tourism also encourages existing cultural organizations to reach new standards of excellence.

Recognizing that many visitors enjoy a variety of rural experiences, many successful communities have combined cultural tourism with agri-tourism, which offers opportunities for visitors to experience farm life, and eco-tourism, which capitalizes on people's interest in such nature activities as bird watching, hiking, rafting, and camping. Cumberland County should take a cue from such communities and create a comprehensive program that coordinates this trio of tourism strategies.

Residential Development. As city and suburban living becomes more stressful, many yearn for the quiet of a rural setting. There are three key residential markets. The first is the one so successfully tapped by Millville: visual artists and crafts persons that are drawn by the availability of low-cost real estate for housing and studios. The second market is comprised of the increasing number of workers who are able to use the Internet to telecommute for part or all of the business week. The third is the growing retirement market, which soon will include the "Baby Boom" generation, those born between 1946 and the 1960s, which is the largest, most educated cohort in the history of this nation. This includes people who grew up in the area and are returning as retirees. This seems to be a growing trend in Cumberland County.

Unintended Consequences

Economic development can create a boon for a community, but it also carries risks. When left unchecked, development can threaten the fragile character of rural communities. Revitalized towns can quickly fill up with chain stores and restaurants that drive out local merchants. Tourists can crowd streets and traffic corridors. Tract housings can eat up precious farmlands, strain local infrastructures, and transform the character of community life. The very process of attracting new people raises the value of property and taxes to the point where long-term residents can find it difficult to stay.

The United States is filled with rural areas suffering from the unintended consequences of economic development. In moving forward, Cumberland County should learn from such communities and set in place the regulatory and voluntary measures it needs to manage growth sensitively.

OVERVIEW OF CUMBERLAND COUNTY

To assess Cumberland County's potential, it is first important to view its features through the lens of rural cultural development. What follows is an analysis of four significant factors: location, population, land use, and housing.

Location. Cumberland County is located close to the center of the nation's prime "Megalopolis" stretching from north of Boston to south of Washington. This urbanized band contains the major concentration of the nation's population, economic activity, cultural, artistic, and heritage resources. The County is one hour by car from Philadelphia, less from Wilmington, not much more than two hours from New York and Baltimore, and three hours from the nation's capital. Cumberland County also lies adjacent to one of America's top attractions, the Jersey Shore. Insofar as "location, location, location" tells the story, the County has enormous potential. That potential is waiting to be realized

Population. Cumberland County has a population of about 150,000. The population is growing but at a rate below that of the State: at less than one percent per year or some 500 new households annually. The County is close to New Jersey averages in age distribution, average household size, and number of children per household. While the County is much more rural than the State as a whole, most people live in towns and cities.

	Urban	Rural
Cumberland Co.	80 %	20 %
New Jersey	94 %	6 %

Average income is among the lowest in New Jersey. In a recent year, one-sixth of the population of Cumberland County lived in poverty, twice the State average. In 1999, 31.2 percent of households had incomes of \$25,000 or less compared with 21.1 percent of households statewide.¹ While the County has a sizable middle class, there are few people of substantial means. In fact, only 8.6 percent of households have incomes in excess of \$100,000 compared with 21.2 percent for New Jersey.

	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
Cumberland Co.	\$ 39,150	\$ 17,376
New Jersey	55,146	27,006

¹ As an alternate index, 62 percent of County households had incomes less than \$ 50,000, while only 49 percent of households in the State had incomes below that threshold. These and other income data below are for the year 1999, from the Census of 2000. Other statistics are for the year 2000.

One of the most striking facts about Cumberland County's population is its educational deficit. Almost one in three never graduated from high school and less than one in eight graduated from college.

	High School Graduates	Bachelor Degree or Higher
Cumberland Co.	68.5%	11.7%
New Jersey	82.1%	29.8%

Low educational levels and relative poverty carry great importance because cultural participation increases along with education and wealth. In a place like Cumberland County, this means that existing cultural organizations and attractions must struggle daily for audiences, donors, and volunteers.

Cumberland County's population is "diverse" and has historically been so, as evidenced by the rich range of heritage resources. For example, data on race shows that the County is more diverse than the State.

	Cumberland County	New Jersey
White	65.9%	72.6%
Black	20.2%	13.6%
Hispanic/Latino ²	19.0%	13.3%

Such diversity has obvious impact on the programming of activities and events as well as significance for the organizational structure of nonprofits active in the cultural sector.

Given these factors, it should come as no surprise that Cumberland County has a relatively small cultural sector. Less than one in one hundred County residents is employed in "Arts, Entertainment and Recreation," while at the State level there were almost three times as many. To the extent that the cultural sector is largely characterized by not-for-profit organizations, we note that the County counts with more than 60 nonprofits in the arts and related fields.³ Six out of 18 in Bridgeton can be classified as heritage nonprofits, and one of the 30 in Vineland. There clearly is a potential for more such organizations.

Land Use and Housing. Cumberland County is effectively on the fringe of a major metropolis, the Philadelphia-Camden area. Yet, despite high urban population concentrations, Cumberland County is rich in farms, natural resources, and environmental amenities. Twenty percent of the land is in agricultural use and 1,500 people are employed in agriculture, double that number in food processing. About ten percent of New Jersey's wetlands -- some 100,000 acres -- lie within the boundaries of

² May be of any race.

³ Ones reporting more than \$ 25,000 in revenue, in the three larger urban places.

the County.⁴ About one-third of the acreage is heavily forested, and close to ten percent of the surface area is in lakes, ponds, streams and other waterways. While the County evidences increasing acres of commercial and residential development on former farmland, typical of the edges of large metropolitan areas, the overall land in farms has actually been increasing.

The value of housing units is just slightly more than half of the average of dwellings in the State. The housing vacancy rate is notably higher than the State's.

Value of Housing Unit

Cumberland Co.	\$ 91,200
New Jersey	170,800

The abundance of affordable real estate can serve as a drawing card attracting new residents and productive forces.

⁴ Source: J. Hasse and R. Lathrop, *Measuring Urban Growth in New Jersey*, Rutgers University Center for Remote Sensing and Spatial Analysis, New Brunswick NJ, 2001

ISSUES ON THE HORIZON

Global technological developments and economic and social changes suggest cautious optimism for Cumberland County.

Graying of the population. As the Baby Boom generation ages, there is a significant increase in the proportion of senior citizens. This is a cohort which constitutes a major component of cultural tourism. Not only are the numbers growing, but an increasing proportion has sufficient discretionary income, time and mobility to make this a prime target for marketing, programming, and structuring of attractions. Furthermore, as the resident population grows older, a pool of expertise and of volunteerism emerges which can be tapped to enrich the cultural and heritage sector.

Telecommunication diffusion. There is an ever widening use and acceptance of electronic information. It has become possible to reach vast numbers of people cheaply, quickly and often, and in a targeted fashion. Marketing the County and telling the Cumberland story, and broadcasting its assets, has taken a completely new form in the past decade and is sure to face new opportunities in the coming years. Cumberland County's efforts to spread its message must remain on the cutting edge inasmuch as competing areas can do so too.

At the same time, the new information technology allows practitioners in many fields and occupations to relocate. The search for amenities, especially when coupled with lower real estate prices, could lead to a major influx into the County of productive and innovative talent. Nowhere is this more plausible than among the culture, arts, and crafts occupations.

Second home ownership. The continuing growth in second homes can only benefit areas such as Cumberland County. Once again, the low property prices are to the County's advantage. With a significant share of such dwellings owned and occupied by older Americans, ones who tend to patronize cultural activities, the direct and indirect impacts on the economy are sure to be positive. The challenge is to preserve the very amenities and resources which draw second home owners while facilitating their settlement.

Niche agriculture. Niche farm production, especially organic farming, which already exists in the County, is rapidly growing nationally. A precondition is proximity to major markets: a major asset of Cumberland County. A more qualitatively significant factor is the rich variety in cultural traditions, which can promote variety in crops.

STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

What are the characteristics of successful rural cultural destinations and how does Cumberland County measure up?

Cumberland County's strongest assets are its location and setting: it is a peaceful, largely unspoiled rural area, with a long bay shore exposure, and on the periphery of a major metropolis close to the center of the nation's largest concentration of population. But proximity is not the only attribute of winning cultural destinations; there are six other measures of success.

1. Identity and Vision
2. Cultural Assets
3. Infrastructure and Amenities
4. Marketing and Promotion
5. Leadership
6. Resources

What follows is an analysis of Cumberland County along these dimensions; the Implementation Plan that follows this section details recommendations on each.

1. Identity and Vision

Every community has a unique identity, a story rooted in its past and place in the national scene. The best cultural planning begins by diagnosing this identity, and then using it to unify existing efforts, set the direction for the future, and position the community in the destination marketplace.

Strengths

- A geography that combines wetlands, shorelines, farmlands and small towns.
- A long and colorful social history that features Native Americans, zealot patriots, slaves escaping along the Underground Railroad, and even witches and spirits.
- An occupational history that includes glass manufacturing, fishing, oyster fishing, and most importantly, agriculture and food processing.
- An exceptionally diverse ethnic history that spans the centuries up to today.

Challenges

- While some communities have carved distinctive images, the County as a whole has yet to identify an authentic, memorable and marketable identity that can unify existing efforts and set the direction for the future.
- The cultural sector does not share a vision of what it can become or how its future can support the economic development sector.

2. Cultural Assets

Successful cultural destinations feature a critical mass of appealing things to do, see, eat, purchase, experience and enjoy. These attractions and experiences include museums, historic sites, festivals and other events, and performance series. They also include towns and landscapes where people can discover and explore.

Strengths

- The opportunity to experience the authentic spirit of times past which is prized by cultural tourists. Bridgeton, for example, has New Jersey's largest historic district with over 2,200 homes and buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, and Greenwich is among the towns which has preserved its past.
- Towns and villages whose location on waterways led to their development and lends charm to this day.
- Two performance venues: Riverview Renaissance Center for the Arts in Millville and the Frank Guaracini, Jr. Fine and Performing Arts Center at Cumberland County College.
- Institutions such as the Bay-Atlantic Symphony and Wheaton Village with growing national reputations.
- Small and mid-size cultural institutions with the potential to grow into major attractions such as Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center, the Millville Airfield Museum and Bayshore Discovery Project .
- Natural attractions adjacent to cultural attractions: including the Wild and Scenic Maurice River that traverses Millville, and the wildlife management areas surrounding Bivalve with its Bayshore Discovery Project, Delaware Bay Museum, and New Jersey's Tall Ship, the A.J. Meerwald.
- Millville's success as a center for the arts can pave the way for other communities as they define and promote their own distinctive character.
- Low cost real estate in which artists can live and work, and galleries can flourish.

Challenges:

- Few cultural offerings that reflect the County's exceptional ethnic diversity and agricultural history.
- Limited programming, promotion, and other collaborations among cultural organizations.
- Inadequate investment in the preservation of historic structures and landscapes.
- More needs to be done to highlight and develop fledgling cultural festivals such as Bay Days.
- Lack of an active, comprehensive arts education program in the public schools or prison system.

3. Infrastructure and Amenities

Visitors need to be able to travel to and to locate cultural offerings. They need to feel safe, secure and welcome when they arrive. Infrastructure includes clean, well-marked restrooms, clear and coordinated vehicular and pedestrian signage, adequate parking and handicapped accessible buildings and streets.

Strengths

- Glasstown's coordinated streetscapes, restaurants and craft stores which show what is possible with careful planning and execution.
- Vineland's Regional Transportation Center which provides a gateway to the County.
- A tourism trainline proposed for South Jersey and the shore which could become a major draw.

Challenges

- Route 55, the major highway, does not have direct connecting links to the Jersey Shore.
- No coordinated vehicular signage system on major highways directing the public to cultural attractions.
- Inadequate public transportation within the County that impedes mobility and access to activities and venues.
- Limited handicapped accessibility to and within some places.
- Some historically significant communities are places where outsiders do not feel welcome.
- Swarms of insects during some seasons which draw wildlife to wetlands but also limit tourist appeal.
- Few overnight accommodations and limited options for night life.

4. Marketing and Promotion

Marketing is essential for rural destinations. Effective campaigns target prospects and use a variety of media to communicate to them about a community's identity, attractions and experiences. Because the most trusted information source is a knowledgeable individual, destination marketing campaigns often combine tourism promotion with a "local pride" effort directed to residents. The most successful campaigns feature marketing training for individual cultural organizations and ongoing systems that track progress. While marketing campaigns may appear expensive, they are well worth the investment. Glasstown Arts District, for example spends \$215,000 for annual marketing and advertising campaign.

Strengths

- Three major newspapers and multiple publications and websites promote cultural offerings.
- A number of cultural organizations have school outreach programs.
- Marketing expertise in Glasstown Arts District that can set a County-wide standard.
- Substantial State investment in tourism promotion at all levels.

Challenges

- The County has yet to strategically target key market segments and develop the value propositions to attract them.

- Promotional materials lack consistency in content, tone and design.
- Cultural attractions could benefit from marketing and promotional support.
- No standardization of operating hours which makes it more difficult to promote historic houses, museums, and other attractions as a package.

5. Leadership

Cumberland County's Cultural Plan cuts across multiple jurisdictions and interests: business and governmental leaders, cultural boards and cultural alliances, arts, humanities, and historical commissions, tourism and economic development entities, educational and civic groups, and downtown and business associations. Broad-based leadership is essential to success.

Strengths

- Organizations like the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission and South Jersey Cultural Alliance which could spearhead Plan implementation.
- Talented and committed volunteer Board members from the Bay-Atlantic Symphony, Wheaton Village, and other cultural organizations who represent a core group that could lead a broader initiative.
- Growing awareness of cultural development's potential as evidenced by leadership participation in the Chester County tour, which was a part of this project.
- A Leadership Institute at Cumberland County College dedicated to training and inspiring local leadership.
- Expertise upon which to draw and other cultural organizations, case studies of winning rural communities within the County and beyond, and national organizations which focus on rural cultural development.

Challenges

- The County has yet to unify and inspire diverse cultural and economic interests and focus them on a coordinated plan.
- A perception that the County lacks key resources to launch a major initiative including funding, tenacity, and a critical mass of business leadership
- No ongoing mechanisms that allow diverse interests to spend the time together needed to develop trust.
- No umbrella organization to coordinate the cultural and economic sectors

6. Resources

Cultural development is an expensive, long-term proposition: substantial resources are needed to launch, implement, and sustain it over time. Resources include funding from government and private sources. Resources also include in-kind services and volunteers from civic associations, preservation and historical societies, cultural and educational organizations and private businesses.

Strengths

- A solid record of funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. During the last three years, the County has secured a total of \$364,120 in support. The New Jersey Historical Commission has also provided close to \$200,000 in the past year.
- Expertise in County government, Cumberland County College, in major cultural organizations and in some municipalities in securing economic development and other types of grants.
- Funding opportunities from public and private sources (See Appendix 3).

Challenges

- No dedicated public funding source that subsidizes cultural development or marketing. Many communities have municipal and/or county taxes such as the hotel occupancy tax that support arts and cultural organizations and cultural/tourist marketing.
- Limited philanthropic resources to re-envision the County.
- Lack of a current comprehensive plan that can set the direction and coordinate economic and cultural development.
- Limited funds to invest in arts education in the schools.
- No County staff with full-time responsibility for implementing a cultural development plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The time is right for Cumberland County to launch a Cultural Plan. Cumberland County College and the Arts and Heritage Commission of Cumberland County are slated to update their strategic plans within the next year and the Board of Freeholders has publicly announced its interest in a county-wide plan. These initiatives could raise cultural development and tourism high on the agenda. What follows are recommended implementation tactics for the six measures of success noted above.

1. Identity and Vision

Cumberland County has a rich past. There are places to explore and experience, historic towns, cultural activities, and people of many legacies. It is a place with many appealing stories to tell. Capturing the diversity of life in a single identity is a difficult challenge. But it is one that deserves to be pursued.

The story that is both most memorable and marketable grows out of the County's long agrarian and maritime heritage. What is distinctive about Cumberland County is the remarkable diversity of ethnic groups that have come to fish, farm and to work in food processing and related rural occupations and have remained there.

While many North American cities boast a rich mix of ethnic groups, it is rare to find such diversity in a rural setting. From original Native Americans, to the Quakers from the earliest days, on to the Swedes of the 17th century, the Africans, English and Irish of the 18th, German and Irish of the 19th, the Ukrainian, Russian and other Jews, Italians, Japanese, and Hungarians of the 20th century up to the Hispanics and Southeast Asians of a more recent past, Cumberland County's story is the classic story of the American melting pot.

Many immigrants have fascinating stories that speak to the reasons they came and the struggles they encountered: the former African slaves who escaped North along the Underground Railroad; the Ukrainian/Russian Jews who settled in communes around the turn of the 20th century; the German POW's and interned Japanese-Americans whom the government brought to work in the Seabrook factory during World War II; the Italians who established farms around Vineland; the Mexican and Central Americans who work the farms today. All came in search of a better life; most found it. And although many immigrant families are now thoroughly assimilated, traces of their national roots remain. They can be found throughout the county in its places of worship, in music, food, the architectural aspects of the towns and villages, and the design of homes. They are embedded in traditions and in family stories and heirlooms.

Cumberland County as a "rural melting pot" carries strong potential.

- The theme is authentic; it reveals the most apparent, indigenous character of the County throughout the entire span of its history and up to today. It resonates

throughout all the County's townships. It is visible from the miles of countryside roads. Cumberland County's agricultural workforce is the largest in New Jersey. The Vineland Auction is the biggest of its kind in the country. Cumberland County College has a strong program in agriculture and horticulture.

- The theme is distinctive because few rural places can claim such a rich mix of nationalities. It can set Cumberland County apart in the marketplace of rural destinations.
- The theme is inclusive, it embrace all residents regardless of when their family arrived in the County. It has meaning for all visitors from afar.
- The theme is appealing to visitors. A large percentage of residents of East Coast cities have the same ethnic roots as residents of Cumberland County. For these, the “rural melting pot” theme carries special appeal.
- The theme lends itself to cultural development. A number of institutions and emerging ethnic cultural groups already focus on this theme: Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center tells its story through the lens of ethnicity. Wheaton Village recently staged an art exhibition of the work of the Mexicans from Oaxaca, the origin of many of today's farm workers. Other emerging ethnic organizations could benefit as well.

This umbrella identity can complement the efforts of individual towns and cultural attractions, each of which has its own identity. Nevertheless the “rural melting pot” theme can become a powerful tool, a memorable brand that sets the County apart in the destination marketplace. This theme can become the centerpiece of the marketing strategy used to attract new artists, cultural organizations, residents, investment, businesses, and visitors. It can become the focus of a long-term vision, the inspiration for new activities, and the benchmark against which all cultural initiatives are measured.

2. Cultural Assets

Over the next five to ten years Cumberland County should expand its cultural activities and create new ones that will make the County a special place to live and visit.

Existing cultural offerings. Some of the County's cultural organizations could benefit from further development and a greater focus on enhancing the visitor experience. What follows are some suggestions along with examples of outstanding similar institutions.

- Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center could institute a structured program of demonstrations of ethnic craft, music and food traditions. Example: Wheaton Village, www.wheatonvillage.org.
- Millville Army Air Field Museum could institute re-installation and reinterpretation of its holdings, using contemporary exhibition design media that

bring its story to life. Example: [Boeing Museum of Flight, www.museumofflight.org](http://www.museumofflight.org) .

- Bayshore Discovery Project could create hands-on educational activities where visitors replicate the traditions of oyster harvesting and processing. Example: “Kids Cannery,” Baltimore Museum of Industry, www.thebmi.org .
- Greenwich’s re-creation of its historic Tea Party could grow into a major annual heritage festival. Example: Chestertown, Maryland Tea Party Festival, www.chestertownteaparty.com .

New cultural offerings. Cumberland County could benefit from new offerings such as:

- A new school curriculum, in line with the State’s curriculum standards, that surveys the County from the perspectives of social, ethnic and occupational history.
- Enhanced cultural programming in libraries, including art exhibits, lectures, book signings, book clubs, etc.
- An annual harvest festival that highlights local agricultural products and features ethnic food, crafts and performances. This event could launch a series of local community fairs held simultaneously over a weekend and packaged and promoted as a single event.
- An American classical music festival built around Bay-Atlantic Symphony.
- Continued recruitment of artists and craft persons, coordinated by multiple institutions.
- A Rural Jewish Heritage Center that brings together, on a single site, the region’s many unique rural synagogues along with an interpretative center, an initiative being planned by the Jewish Federation of Cumberland County.
- A new museum featuring classic cars, motorcycles, and also tractors and other farm machinery from the 20th Century that would complement Vineland’s annual “Thunder on the Avenue & Poker Run” and the Motor sports Park now being planned. Example: Shelburne Museum, VT, <http://www.shelburnemuseum.org/?flash=true>, and Minnesota Machinery, Museum <http://www.mnmachinerymuseum.com/welcome.html> .
- An Open House day for Cumberland County farms and nurseries.
- A prison based cultural arts program which would employ artists.

- A Bridgeton neighborhood featuring South and Central American restaurants and galleries.
- Coordinated tour packages, such as:
 - A tour of Millville area artist studios, homes and galleries
 - A tour of historic places of worship highlighting the County's diverse religious and ethnic traditions
 - A tour of Bridgeton's architectural treasures
 - A Cumberland County Glass tour that combines Wheaton Village, operating glass factories, and Millville galleries
 - A walking tour of the 500 and 600 blocks of Landis Avenue that highlights the diversity of ethnic establishments.

3. Infrastructure and Amenities

As noted above, successful cultural destinations have infrastructure and amenities that help visitors feel safe, secure and welcome. Cumberland County is especially challenged in this area. Over the next five to ten years the County should:

- Complete Route 55 so that it has direct links to the Jersey shore.
- Design, test and install a coordinated vehicular signage system that leads the public to cultural attractions.
- Provide the amenities that visitors need to feel safe, secure, and welcome, including rest rooms, pedestrian signage, shaded benches, police presence, casual food, interpretative plaques, water fountains, etc.
- Audit handicapped accessibility to cultural attractions and take remedial action.
- Initiate hospitality industry and specialized agriculture curricula at Cumberland County College, initiatives already under consideration.
- Provide further tax incentives to owners of property who restore and maintain their facades in designated historic districts.
- Aggressively recruit and provide further financial incentives for, operators of camp grounds, inns, bed and breakfasts, quality restaurants and farms stays.
- Determine whether there is a need to mitigate environmental challenges such as insects that may discourage some visitors.

4. Marketing and Promotion

Target Markets. There are three markets for Cumberland County's Cultural Plan:

1. Artists, craftsmen, and related enterprises.
2. Current residents of Cumberland County and adjacent counties
3. Cultural/heritage visitors

The first market is the one tapped so successfully by Glasstown's Arts District. The second two are "cultural patrons," people who attend arts, cultural and heritage attractions and events at home and on vacation. While cultural patrons include people of all ages, races, ethnic groups and sexual preferences, they are better educated and more affluent than the average population. In fact, educational level is the most common predictor of cultural participation.

Artists, Craftsmen, and Related Enterprises. Research illustrates that artists and craftsmen are flexible in their decision where to live and work. They can be attracted by factors such as environmental amenities, financial incentives, and perhaps above all by inexpensive places in which to live, work, and sell their product. Continuing to create a welcoming setting for artists and craftsmen should be a central component of any implementation plan.

Current Residents. Most patrons of a community's cultural attractions live very nearby. Studies suggest that people are most likely to travel no more than 30 minutes to visit a cultural event or attraction like a historic house, museum, or site. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of Cumberland County residents possess the demographic characteristics of the cultural patron. Only 12 percent of residents have bachelor degrees or higher and only slightly more than 68 percent are high school graduates.

Given these factors, target markets include:

- Patrons of cultural organizations and events including Millville's Third Friday.
- Research suggests that patrons of one type of cultural activity are more likely to be interested in others.
- Elementary, high school and Cumberland County College students who represent the future cultural patrons.
- Families of school-age children from Cumberland and surrounding counties whose parents have some college education.
- For ethnic-specific activities, people from all ethnic groups.

Cultural Tourists. Today more people take short vacations near their homes rather than longer vacations to distant locales, which is certainly an advantage to conveniently located destinations like Cumberland County. Notably, cultural tourists spend more than other kinds of tourist on such items as admissions, food, souvenirs, and lodging.

For Cumberland County, there are three prime visitor markets:

- **Jersey Shore Residents and Visitors in Inclement Weather.** Communities along the Jersey shore are prime markets for Cumberland County if it becomes a cultural destination. This is especially true during periods of inclement weather when visitors, second-home owners, and permanent residents are seeking alternative activities. In fact, Wheaton Village reports an increase in visitation on rainy summer days. A large percentage of people sample cultural activities while on vacation. These represent a prime seasonal market for Cumberland County.
- **Older Adults Who Enjoy Educational Leisure.** These people are ages 60-75 with higher educational levels and incomes of \$50,000 and above. They have larger disposable incomes and greater stamina than their counterparts in days gone by. They fill the classrooms of non-credit college courses and the hotel rooms of educational travel tours. “Baby boomers” represent a lead growth market since this cohort is the largest and best-educated in the history of the nation. Philadelphia has a sizable senior citizen population, and Pennsylvania has the second largest elderly population in the nation (after Florida). This population is especially interested in heritage activities since as people age, they become more interested in history and their own roots.
- **Day Tripping Urbanites.** City and suburban residents, Day Tripping Urbanites enjoy spending a days exploring a charming but not-too-distant locale. They now visit places like New Hope, PA, Lambertville, NJ and the Brandywine Valley which intersects Pennsylvania and Delaware. These millions of residents include many with the same ethnic backgrounds represented in Cumberland County. For these, the County can become an appealing place to reconnect with their roots.

Marketing Tactics. The County’s marketing program could benefit from:

- A powerful and appealing new slogan and logo design that expresses the “rural melting pot” theme and fits within the New Jersey tourism nomenclature.
- Graphic standards for use on signage, printed materials, Website, and other communications vehicles.
- A series of technical assistance workshops led by experts on marketing techniques for cultural organizations, along with financial grants for implementation.
- A continuing, well-funded cultural advertising and public relations campaign targeted to the key audiences noted above.

5. Leadership

This Cultural Plan was commissioned by the South Jersey Development District, in cooperation with the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission. These organizations should determine the organizational structure best suited to implementing

its recommendations. Because each community is unique, each one should find its own path to the future.

Accordingly, what follows is not a recommended structure, but rather a set of standards or criteria to guide the County, based upon the experiences of other communities.

The organizational structure should:

- Possess the tax-exempt standing to receive philanthropic and government grants.
- Combine the interests and talents of the economic and cultural sectors with others, including education, business, agriculture, the media, philanthropists and others.
- Feature broad geographic, art form, and ethnic representation.
- Be chaired by a leader from the private sector who is able to encourage people to reach beyond their parochial interests and focus on the common good.
- Be organized by task forces corresponding to the topics in this plan.
- Provide opportunities for participants to build trust and learn more over time.
- Possess the power to coordinate activities within the County and beyond with other counties nearby
- Take advantage of the expertise in marketing, fundraising and other aspects of cultural development already in the County.

Next Steps

In the short-term, next steps in four areas will move the Cultural Plan forward.

1. Organization.

- Create organizational infrastructure, assemble a leadership board.
- Secure tax-exempt status.
- Set up Task Forces corresponding to the operational imperatives of the Plan.
- Hire a fund-raiser/tourism coordinator to staff the effort, secure funding, and track progress.
- Establish priorities and develop an implementation time-line.

2. Resource Development

- Identify and apply for governmental and private funding sources for Implementation Plan.
- Assist cultural organizations in funding searches for collaborative projects.

3. Outreach

- Promote this Cultural Plan with governmental, philanthropic and cultural leadership in the County, South Jersey, and State.
- Promote the Cultural Plan via media coverage.
- Launch monthly cultural/economic development round-table breakfasts to share ideas, learn from outside experts, and build trust.
- Hold meetings with ethnic leadership regarding cultural development.
- Attend meetings of associations that focus on rural cultural development.

In addition, further research should be considered:

- Audit of State tourism and other promotional media to assure Cumberland County and its attractions are listed and information is up to date. Audit County tourism and other promotional media to eliminate duplication and increase readability.
- Survey of attendance at cultural attractions and events to set benchmarks against which to measure future growth.
- Analysis of seasonal visitation to cultural venues adjacent to wetlands to identify impact of insects.

TRACKING PROGRESS

Progress will be tracked based upon the Cultural Plan goals stated on page 5 above:

Increase the County's economic base, providing jobs for current residents, attracting new ones, and adding new enterprises.

Measures of Success:

- Growth in hospitality industry jobs.
- Growth of employment in cultural sector.
- Growth in visitor amenities, including hotel rooms and white table cloth restaurants.
- Increase in property values in targeted communities.
- Growth in tax revenues.

Improve the quality of life for all those in the County.

Measures of Success:

- Growth in agri-tourism activities including farmer's markets, roadside stands, and pick-your-own.
- Implementation of new curriculum about the history and people of Cumberland County at grade levels per mandated State curriculum standards.
- Implementations of special events open to the public.

Build the capacity of cultural/heritage sector.

Measures of Success:

- Increase in number of cultural offerings.
- Increase attendance at cultural offerings.
- Increase in aggregate grant amounts awarded for cultural activities.
- Give cultural agenda high priority within County's economic development plan.
- Increase in regional and national print, broadcast and web-based media coverage of County as a rural cultural destination.

Appendix 1

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CULTURAL PLAN

INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

Cumberland County, NJ

Kimberly Wood, Manager of Marketing and Business Retention, Cumberland County Department of Planning and Development

Suzanne Merighi, Former Chairperson, Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission

Linda Schimmel, Executive Director, Vineland Downtown Improvement District/Main Street Vineland

Clarena M. Snyder Farina, Executive Director, Bay-Atlantic Symphony

Susan Gogan, President, Wheaton Village

Kenneth L. Ender, PhD, President, Cumberland County College

Marianne Lods, Coordinator, Glasstown Arts District

Chester County, PA⁵

Greg Edevane, Director of Sales & Marketing, Chester County Conference & Visitors Bureau

Jean Krack, Acting City Manager, Coatesville, PA

Andrew E. Dinniman, Chester County Commissioner

Nancy Mohr, Chester County 2020

Malcolm Johnson, Executive Director, West Chester Business Improvement District

⁵ On April 12, 2005 the consultants organized and led a tour focusing on cultural tourism in Chester County. 34 officials and leaders from Cumberland County took part. This phase of work was directly supported by the Cumberland County Department of Economic Development.

Appendix 2

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CULTURAL PLAN

COMPARISON COMMUNITIES: CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

To gain perspective on Cumberland County's opportunities and challenges, the project team examined cultural development in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

As is evident from Table A that follows, there are many similarities. Both counties are at the edge of the Philadelphia-Camden metropolitan area, and in close proximity to other urban centers (e.g., Wilmington, Atlantic City). Both show a combination of a rich rural legacy and urbanization based on a challenged industrial past. Both Cumberland and Chester are mid-sized in area, with Chester about half again as large as Cumberland. But the population density of Chester is almost twice that of Cumberland. Chester County shows a more vigorous growth rate and a significantly higher (and rising) set of economic indicators. Each has a number of urban places, many notable for their historic assets. There are more towns in Chester than there are in Cumberland, though Vineland is larger than any in Chester. Each of the counties shows evidence of a rich past --- highly capitalized in the case of Chester, more subdued and latent in Cumberland.

Chester County appears to have environmental advantages over Cumberland County: its rolling hills, its visible affluence, its somewhat greater proximity to major markets - Philadelphia and Wilmington. Yet Cumberland's assets --- a coastal area, much lower real property prices, more elusive amenities, the tranquility and attractiveness which come from being off the beaten path --- suggest that it could match, in balance, what Chester has to offer.

Comparative statistics for the three larger towns in Cumberland and Chester counties show they are rather similar in their population composition and even household incomes. See Table B.

The counties do have differences. Chester County is more integrated into the development of the nation's major urban development axis, as with its transportation infrastructure. Thus it is able to attract more tourists and visitors. The data reflect the higher wealth and levels of educational attainment in Chester County: attributes related to the larger number of cultural assets in place. Chester County is much further along in the cultural development path. These are factors which should be taken into account as Cumberland County forges ahead with its plan. Chester County can serve as an inspiration to Cumberland County.

Chester County's strengths as a cultural destination are evident in the following:

- A clear vision of Chester County's assets, identity, and drawing power.
- Broad recognition of this vision by diverse interests, including tourism, governments, community and advocacy organizations, and business groups.
- Strong entities dedicated to implementing the vision over time; the development organizations are well staffed, and visible.
- Functional working relationships across municipal boundaries and among diverse sectors.
- Staff specifically assigned to the planning, administration, and development of the cultural sector and cultural tourism.
- Dedicated resources, from Accommodations Tax, to allow focused and targeted projects and programs.
- County-wide amenities like signage that reflects county-wide programming and exhibit coherence.

TABLE A
CUMBERLAND AND CHESTER COUNTIES COMPARED
(Data for 2000)

	<u>CUMBERLAND</u>	<u>CHESTER</u>
Area, Square Miles	489	756
Population, 2000	146,438	433,521
Population Change, 1990-2000	6.1%	15.2%
Population per Square Mile	300	573
Population Less Than 18	25.4%	26.2%
Population 65 or More	13.0%	11.7%
High School Grads as Share of Population over 25	68.5%	89.3%
Labor Force	59,129	221,655
-Artists and Designers	314	2,360
--Arts Occupations	149	779
--Designers	165	1,585
Share of Labor Force	.0048%	.0103%
Median Household Income	\$ 39,150	\$ 65,295
Nonprofits in Arts and Humanities ⁶	17	35
Art Galleries ⁷	20	24

⁶ In 3 largest cities; annual revenue in excess of \$25,000, 2004 data. Source: "Guidestar".

⁷ In 3 largest cities. Source: Telephone Directories.

Table B

**COMPARISON OF TOWNS IN CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
AND CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

(Data for 2000)

	<u>Cumberland</u>			<u>Chester</u>		
	Bridgeton	Millville	Vineland	Coatesvl.	Kenn.Sq.	W.Chest.
Pop.2000	22,700	26,800	56,300	10,800	5,273	17,900
65+	10.90%	12.90%	14.20%	12.20%	13.90%	9.00%
17 or Less	26.10%	27.90%	25.80%	31.71%	24.80%	13.40%
\$ Income (med.HH)	26,900	40,400	40,100	29,900	46,523	37,800
HS Grad (pop>25)	57.60%	74.10%	67.80%	70.70%	75.50%	84.10%
Owner occupied	48.40%	63.90%	63.00%	45.70%	57.20%	37.20%
Vacancy	9.00%	5.70%	4.90%	9.60%	5.00%	4.20%
Arts and Humanities Nonprofits	9	5	6	7	0	17
Art galleries	5	6	6	8	3	24
All galleries	99	124	114	88	12	176