

Canal Place Heritage Area

CUMBERLAND, MARYLAND

A Look Into The Future

This is the last of a three-part series about the Canal Place Heritage Area. In this edition, *Mountain Discoveries* takes a look at the future projects on tap for Canal Place.

Written by: Mike Dawson
Photography by: Lance C. Bell



While many of the Canal Place Heritage Area projects are already completed and several new projects are currently underway, the plans for the future of Canal Place are extensive and impressive. In the next few years, there will be dramatic changes in the landscape as the project comes together.

“I like to look at it as building critical mass,” says Canal Place executive director Dick Pfefferkorn, referring to projects in the works that will come to fruition in the years ahead. “The more things you add to the whole heritage area, the more things you will be able to do,” says Pfefferkorn. Here’s a look at some of the future plans for the Canal Place Heritage Area:

Rewatering the Canal – the centerpiece of Canal Place is the rewatering of the last two miles of the C&O Canal. The plan calls for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to rebuild the original main canal basin within the Crescent Lawn area and rewater the canal. When it is complete, visitors will be able to experience a boat ride in Cumberland much like those offered at Georgetown and Great Falls by the National Park Service. According to Pfefferkorn, it will offer a chance to travel the canal on a mule-drawn boat much like it was in the canal’s heyday. “The plan is to build two ‘packet boats’ that would carry about 60 people. They are much smaller than the cargo boats like the replica ‘Cumberland,’ which is currently on display at Canal Place.” In addition, he says visitors will eventually

be able to enjoy a variety of outdoor and water sports activities—including the possibility of paddleboats, canoes and kayaks—on the waters of the canal. Work on the first phase begins in September with a completion date of at least three to four years.

Crescent Lawn Festival Grounds – the major public recreation area planned for Canal Place is the Crescent Lawn area with festival grounds that will serve as a gathering place for outdoor concerts, major festivals, interpretive programs, canal boat rides and other exciting events. Located just South of the railway station and extending from the Interstate 68 underpass toward the canal, the first phase of the project has been completed with the addition of the Shops at Canal Place, which includes several retail shops and stores, a restaurant, public restrooms and visitor services like bike rentals and sales of outdoor equipment.

“The second phase of Crescent Lawn will start in the Spring of 2004,” says Pfefferkorn. “This will essentially be the lawn, the stage and the extension of the station plaza to the canal basin wall. Another building will be constructed which will be the boathouse for the canal operation.” Completion of the lawn and opening of festival grounds is scheduled for Summer 2005, when CanalFest will be held on the grounds. Next year, the popular CanalFest moves from May to July to take advantage of better weather and the summer tourist season.



The new water fountain falls at Canal Place Court provide hours of comfort and relaxation. The falls will eventually have marble facing on all cement areas.



The new shops at Canal Place glimmer in the dark.

Other projects in the works for the Canal Place are additional private development adjacent to the park including a hotel, restaurants, a museum, plus more parking. The historic Footer's Dye Works building, located next to the Crescent Lawn, would be part of the private development. Someday it could be the new home of the Allegany County Visitor's Center and a permanent home for the Thrasher Carriage Museum.

"There are so many opportunities for this project, not just Canal Place but the railroad, Allegheny Highlands Trail, the museums, the efforts underway on the Downtown Cumberland mall," said Pfefferkorn. "It's all here

and it can be as big as we want it to be." He says his target date for completion of Canal Place is 2008.

Pfefferkorn says the biggest thing once the major part of Canal Place is complete in five years, will be focusing on the programming and activities. He says joint efforts will continue with Downtown Cumberland and the Summer in the City schedule of events, plus more events will be held at Canal Place. "Once we have the festival area, we will have the opportunity to do many more things. It will be available for major festivals and different events, even new festivals," noted Pfefferkorn.

"Canal Place is going to be one of the premier historical sites in the East,"

says Senator J. Glenn Beall, a former United States Senator and Chairman of the Canal Place Preservation and Development Authority. "I think we are developing a very attractive destination that impacts very positively on the economic and cultural life of the whole region."

To find out more about the past, present and future of the Canal Place project, visit the Canal Place Historic Area web site at www.canalplace.org.

