



City of Laurel

Master Plan **Comprehensive Amendment** ***Executive Summary***

ADOPTED BY THE
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL
SEPTEMBER ____, 2007 – ORDINANCE NO. ____

8103 SANDY SPRINGS
LAUREL, MARYLAND

INTRODUCTION

This document amends the 1989 Master Plan and the 1997 Update. It stands alone as a total replacement for the goals, objectives and recommendations of the Plan and Update, providing a vision for the City of Laurel. It retains the overall concepts and all other aspects of both the Plan and the Update. The purpose of the Plan is to set forth a long-range guide, which will shape the form of new development/redevelopment and also provide a framework for providing a cohesive, well-balanced community. This Plan documents a number of goals and objectives that will serve to direct the various aspects of land use and development/redevelopment. Among the various segments addressed are the subdivisions and zoning of land, provisions for public facilities, transportation issues, housing components, economic analyses and recommendations regarding parks and recreation facilities. This Plan documents existing conditions as well as current and future trends, which may affect the City. It is the intent of this study to provide a general guideline for the formulation of public policy including future governmental action. It will also provide a direction for these policies to be translated into future land use development by the private sector.

BACKGROUND

The City of Laurel was incorporated in 1870. City Council established a Planning Commission on February 17, 1960. On October 15, 1962, the first Comprehensive Master Plan was adopted, with the first Zoning Ordinance adopted shortly thereafter on October 22, 1962. Subdivision Regulations were subsequently adopted on April 14, 1969. Subsequent comprehensive plans were adopted in October 1974 and September 1989 and a Master Plan Update was adopted June 1997. The last major revision to the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Regulations occurred with their adoption on December 12, 1974. Incremental changes to these respective texts have taken place since that time.

In 2005, at the direction of the Mayor and City Council, it was determined that an assessment of the adopted Master Plan should begin in preparation for the adoption of a new Master Plan. Periodic review of master plans and implementation measures help determine if desired results are being achieved and to respond to changes in state regulations on planning, changing conditions and trends, and to identify major issues regarding the City's achievement of its goals.

In October 2005 the Mayor appointed a Master Plan Review Committee. This Committee, with the assistance of City staff, met on a bi-weekly basis through May 2007, at which time recommendations were adopted for a new master plan. During this time notices were published in the local newspaper and letters were sent to various interest groups, homeowners associations, and community organizations soliciting their input. Two public hearings were held in which elected officials from adjoining jurisdictions were invited to address issues of mutual concern. A number of public and quasi-public organizations were also invited to address the Committee during weekly work sessions.

The recommendations from this Committee were then forwarded to the Planning Commission for its review and recommendations. Throughout this process, the Historic District Commission and a number of other Citizens Advisory Committees were also consulted.

Upon completion of these work sessions and public discussions, recommendations were formulated and incorporated into a draft text submitted to the Mayor and City Council. This draft text was also made available to the public for discussion and further recommendations and refinement.

PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY

The major area addressed by this document is that within the existing corporate limits of the City of Laurel. House Bill 1141, passed during the 2006 session of the Maryland General Assembly, requires a municipality to identify areas for future growth consistent with a long-range vision of its future. Future growth areas are determined based on population projections, assessment of land capacity and needs, and an assessment of infrastructure and sensitive areas. Recommendations are also established for those areas outside the City limits, which directly impact upon the City. Although these areas lie outside current boundaries, their development does have a significant influence on City services and infrastructure; studying these areas provides a mechanism whereby the City can plan for staged, orderly growth.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

STATE VISIONS

The Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Act of 1992 set forth seven “visions” which constitute a comprehensive set of guiding principles that all Maryland jurisdictions have a statutory responsibility to follow. In the 2000 Session of the Maryland General Assembly an eighth vision was added to the Maryland Code. Collectively, the visions represent an attitude toward growth management and resource protection that does not restrict economic development or local area needs, but rather permits development in a more logical and environmentally sensitive pattern. The City joins the State in acknowledging the general principles as well-founded visions for the future of Maryland communities. The following eight *Vision* statements based on the 1992 Planning Act and subsequent amendment are incorporated in this Master Plan as fundamental goals which will be achieved through a variety of objectives, policies, principles, recommendations, and implementation techniques.

- (1) Development is concentrated in suitable areas.

The Baltimore/Washington/Interstate-95 (I-95) corridor will continue to be a high growth corridor. Located in the center of this corridor, the City of Laurel will experience significant development pressure into the foreseeable future.

In the 1997 Master Plan Update the City designated areas representing a logical expansion of the corporate limits. The City had a fiscal analysis conducted to be used as an integral tool in reviewing annexation requests, and determine the timing and level of service demands by the City developing a cost/revenue process when annexations are considered.

In the 2006 Legislative Session of the Maryland General Assembly House Bill 1141 passed making several changes in local government planning in Maryland, including comprehensive plans and municipal annexation. The bill requires that municipalities that exercise zoning powers include a municipal growth element in their comprehensive plans.

The City of Laurel has had a professional fiscal analysis conducted and revised its Urban Growth Boundary to provide a sound fiscal framework to annexation deliberations in the future. Growth areas are shown on the map contained within this document.

(2) Sensitive areas are protected.

Riverfront Park now extends along almost the entire length of the City's border with the Patuxent River. As a passive recreation area, the park provides a water permeable buffer and wildlife refuge for the betterment of the river ecosystem. Management of the park, especially with respect to fertilization and mowing, should balance the interest of passive recreational use and the river ecosystem. The Recreation Open Space (R-OS) zoning designation was established and approved for several locations within the City including certain environmentally sensitive areas.

The 1989 Master Plan acknowledged and reiterated the importance of the regional Patuxent River Policy Plan. Certain existing City regulatory measures, including the floodplain regulations by establishing buffer requirements, act to implement the Policy Plan's objective. The inclusion of a Sensitive Areas Element into the Master Plan along with coordinated flexible development regulations implements the Policy Plan's vision.

Chapter 4, Article III, Floodplain Management, of the City Code restricts development of 100-year floodplains and wetlands. These regulations require that, when alternatives exist, impacts to floodplains and wetlands be avoided. It requires that a 50' flood protection setback be maintained from the top of the bank of any stream, which has no designated floodplain and a minimum 100' setback from the edge of the banks of any watercourse delineated as having a floodplain on the Floodway map or Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), except where the setback may extend beyond the floodplain. Natural vegetative buffers along streams shall be maintained and, if needed, trees planted. The regulations state the need for a sensitivity to steep slopes and forested areas. Variances are required to deviate from the requirements.

Development restrictions (e.g., setbacks) are encouraged to be flexible in order to facilitate alternative designs that avoid impacting stream ecosystems. Disturbance to the 100-year floodplain and/or wetlands requires State and Federal approval, also.

Chapter 6.5, Forest Conservation, of the City Code encourages sensitivity to floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, streams, stream buffers and endangered species habitats. This chapter requires that prior to the approval of any subdivision, project plan, site plan, development plan, grading or sediment control approval on units of land forty thousand (40,000) square feet or greater, an applicant shall submit a Forest Stand Delineation (FSD) and a Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) for approval. Steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, critical habitats, etc. are required to be depicted on the conceptual plans so that decisions to avoid them can be made as early in the development review process as possible. These are priority areas for forest retention.

Chapter 15, Subdivisions, of the City Code regulates the subdivision of floodplain areas and unsafe land. The regulations prohibit the subdivision for development purposes any land, which lies within the 50-year floodplain. The 50-year floodplain shall be dedicated or placed under restrictive easement. Any lots impacted by the 50-year floodplain must contain, outside of the floodplain, a land area equivalent to the land area required for the lot to be buildable. The Planning Commission may restrict development on land it finds unsafe (e.g., erodible soils). The Planning Commission may restrict, control, or prohibit development within the 100-year floodplain, but the implied focus of these restrictions is on building design.

As outlined above, the City's existing regulations and policies that address the development of sensitive areas are substantial. The Sensitive Areas Element will direct development away from stream buffers, steep slopes, the 100-year floodplain, wetlands, and the habitat of threatened or endangered plant and animal species.

The City will include as one of the Sensitive Areas elements Laurel's Historic Districts. Contemporary land use planning policies are often directed toward neo-traditional development patterns. To a certain extent, neo-traditional development patterns attempt to emulate the spatial layout that exists in Laurel's Historic Districts. This spatial pattern is believed to be a cornerstone in the development of a sense of community among residents. This spatial pattern emulates the antonym of sprawl. Main Street, as the core of the Historic Districts, is particularly sensitive. To date, Laurel's policies toward the Historic District have been toward preservation of the spatial pattern. This approach needs to continue. Main Street and its historically-grounded development pattern, especially, needs to be maintained, but urbanization's

impact on the Patuxent River should be evaluated, minimized, and mitigated where possible.

- (3) In rural areas, growth is directed to existing population centers and resource areas are protected.

Laurel is not rural. If proper planning is implemented regionally, growth will and should be directed to the greater Laurel area. Laurel's role is to respond appropriately to imminent development.

- (4) Stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic.

The Bay is a resource to the citizens of Laurel. It is a place to fish, swim, boat, and it provides employment for some. It is a resource of biodiversity that provides for education and analysis of divergent ecological environments.

Protecting water quality means protecting the stream ecosystem as a whole, which includes the water itself, and vegetative "buffers" along the banks of rivers. In response to the 1984 Patuxent River Policy Plan, the City of Laurel's 1989 Master Plan recommended the creation of a preservation district in the Zoning Ordinance that would extend along the Patuxent River within the City. The single most important physical measure recommended for the proposed preservation district was the protection of the vegetated stream buffer.

As part of this effort certain regulations were incorporated into the Laurel Zoning Ordinance. The Open Space (R-OS) district extends along the Patuxent River within the City of Laurel and includes four main goals: a minimum setback for buildings along the Patuxent River; preserve existing natural vegetation; introduce vegetation where needed to help control erosion; and encourage the use of innovative designs and structures which increase storm water infiltration and water runoff quality.

The purpose of this zoning classification is to implement the water quality and environmental protection goals of the Patuxent River Policy Plan, and other established natural resource programs and policies for streams and their streamside environments within the City's Patuxent River Watershed and other designated streams or water bodies.

- (5) Conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced.

For the purposes of this plan, the primary focus of conserving resources is on land and land use management. The techniques of land use management for resource conservation are many, including clustering, transfer of development rights, transit/bikeway planning, urban growth boundaries, overlay zoning

districts, and adequate public facilities planning. In general, the intent is to plan communities that provide certain levels of mixed use, maintain pedestrian scale where appropriate, promote tree preservation and planting programs, protect sensitive ecological systems, and yield a density that can support transit services. These objectives all work to reduce air pollution, reduce energy consumption for heating and cooling, and protect water quality and biodiversity. City land use regulations should be reviewed from the perspective of these interests and future revisions, where appropriate, should be weighed against these interests.

Conserving resources can also include recycling programs, transit/car pooling programs, and energy efficiency building code requirements. The City has an extensive recycling program including yard waste, paper, plastic, glass and certain hazardous materials from residential and some commercial enterprises. The City supports a well-used local bus service (Connect-A-Ride) and provides on-call transit services for senior citizens. Efforts to accommodate Laurel's link with the Camden commuter rail line demonstrate a commitment to improving transit options.

- (6) To assure the achievement of items (1) through (5) above, economic growth is encouraged and regulatory mechanisms are streamlined.

In order to create additional economic development opportunities for property owners within the City of Laurel the Mayor and City Council amended the City Zoning Ordinance to include Revitalization Overlay Areas. Revitalization Overlay Areas offers flexibility by offering intensification or increased density of properties in Areas that are targeted for their potential economic development, for superior amenities, land uses, or achieving superior land design.

It is the intent of the Revitalization Overlay to be an alternative form of development designed to facilitate redevelopment and provide for specific land uses and configurations, which are recommended for the continued development and economic health, well being and stability of the neighborhoods of the City of Laurel.

It is the purpose of the Revitalization Overlay to:

- Enhance the business corridors within the City, and to allow the upgrading of various housing opportunities which, by their age or state of disrepair, may become obsolete, increasingly vacant, or contribute to the destabilizing of property values within the City;
- Enhance opportunities for improvement to the retail, housing, employment or entertainments offerings within the City limits, which are necessary to maintain economic balance and continued prosperity of the City;

- Allow for increased, consolidated, or integrated development in order to meet the need for certain targeted land uses, which may be deficient or missing with the current marketplace;
- Facilitate redevelopment and provisions of specific land uses, configurations, which are recommended for the continued development and economic health, well being and stability of City neighborhoods;
- Retain the stability of the retail, restaurant, and entertainment establishment by providing development consistent with the demographics and income characteristics of City residents and reduce the exportation of the consumer spending potential of City residents by providing improved offerings of consumer products and services within municipal boundaries.

Several business/economic development-minded organizations operate within the Laurel area including, the Baltimore/Washington Corridor Chamber of Commerce, the Laurel Board of Trade, and the Friends of Historic Main Street. The Baltimore/Washington Corridor Chamber and the Laurel Board of Trade are business minded organizations, the former for the greater Baltimore/Washington corridor and the latter for the Main Street business district.

- (7) Adequate public facilities and infrastructure under the control of the county or municipal corporation are available or planned in areas where growth is to occur.

Before preliminary approval may be granted for any subdivision plat or site development plan, regardless of the zoning classification of the property involved, the Planning Commission must find that sufficient public facilities and services exist or are programmed for the area. Additionally, all applications for approval of any subdivision or site development of residential land containing five (5) acres or more, or which provide for ten (10) or more dwelling units, or commercial, office, or industrial development which are proposed on an area which exceeds 25,000 square feet shall be accompanied by an adequate public facilities study and shall address the following:

- The traffic impact of the proposed subdivision or development.
- The impact on police facilities, fire and rescue facilities and other public safety facilities.
- The impact on all schools, libraries, parks and other public facilities within a reasonable distance of the proposed subdivision or development.
- A fiscal impact analysis which shall include anticipated revenues and costs for government services, capital improvements to be provided by the developer and government agencies, staging of development, and staging of programmed facilities.

- Estimations for fiscal impact and capital contributions for public facility impact shall be submitted to include, if applicable, prorated share, or estimated proportionate share of the applicant's impact, using applicable standards, on any particular service or facility.

(8) Funding mechanisms are addressed to achieve these visions.

Addressing funding for development and infrastructure planning involves a broad number of issues including coordination of capital programs, mitigation by developers, bond ratings, fluctuation in the assessable base and the politically sensitive tax rate. Certainly, an initial approach is to simply maintain a fiscally strong organization. To accomplish this, the growth anticipated through the Master Plan must be phased in accordance with the implementation of public facilities. Subsequently, coordination between the Capital Budget and the Master Plan is important. The assessable base is affected by vacancies and property standards. Ardent and impartial property standards enforcement should continue in order to maintain and increase the tax base. Balancing high service oriented/low assessable land uses such as residential development with lower service oriented/high assessable land uses such as research and technology will precipitate a sounder financial base for the City. Finally, developments should pay their fair share as required through the City's adequate public facilities regulations and impact fees on new residential, commercial, and industrial development and any additions to existing residential, commercial and industrial development as imposed by the City's building regulations.

PLANNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR LAUREL

Fundamental to the City of Laurel's Master Plan is the need for a broad community vision of a future Laurel. The vision in this plan is stated in the form of goals and objectives that are easily understood and generally accepted by the citizens of the City.

Goals are long range, generalized statements that represent the ultimate desires of the City. Goals are normally achieved through a sustained series of actions over a considerable period of time. The goals are meant to be sufficiently broad to remain valid as values change over time. As values change, the interpretation of the goals may change also.

Objectives are more immediate and specific in nature and are intended to be intermediate steps toward achieving the goals. Where possible, objectives are measurable and tied to specific time periods. For each goal, several objectives have been developed.

Recommendations define the specific actions needed to accomplish the overall goal as well as the objectives.

Goals and objectives are an important component of a Master Plan. Each Plan element describes the issues, trends and planning considerations facing the City in the context of the identified objectives and provides specific recommendations. These goals and objectives should serve as an initial reference in the detailed decisions that will need to be made regarding the future use and management of City resources during the years following Plan adoption.

GENERAL GOALS

1. Develop Laurel as a comprehensive balanced community with a full array of integrated and complementary land uses.
2. Retain and enhance Laurel's image as an incorporated City and community providing a full range of services and functions and striving to provide a quality living and working environment for all of its citizens.
3. Conduct growth and development in an orderly manner predicated upon the provision and sequencing of required public facilities.
4. Provide for a quality living environment by continuing to upgrade existing neighborhoods, and by providing necessary infrastructure and facilities including active and passive parkland areas.
5. Provide for and promote a balanced economy with a mix of office, retail and industrial uses in order to ensure continued fiscal well-being and to provide employment opportunities for City residents.
6. Encourage a diversity of housing types in order to provide a variety of residential alternatives for City residents.
7. Encourage the development of care facilities for residents at both ends of the age spectrum, to include infant and child day care, before and after school and other appropriate programs.
8. Encourage continued development to create a place where people can live and work without having to depend on an automobile.
9. Promote and Implement environmentally sustainable design and development.
10. Support mass transit as well as the community-based Corridor Transportation Corporation (CTC) bus service in order to provide regularly scheduled transportation in and around the City.

LAND USE

Goal:

Provide a quality living and working environment through the effective utilization and implementation of land use practices.

Objectives:

1. Preserve and enhance the character of existing residential neighborhoods.
2. Provide adequate open space in regard to both acreage and quality for each neighborhood and community area.

3. Ensure the compatibility of land uses and the placement of adequate buffering and open space between non-compatible land uses.
4. Consider future annexations with regard to of the relative costs and benefits to the City, including the City's ability to service such areas and the potential attributes of the proposed annexed land as it relates to the existing City.
5. Encourage the use of Revitalization Overlay Areas and Neo-Traditional Overlay Areas in order to encourage comprehensively designed development, site assembly, higher standards of design and site planning and the comprehensive provision of publicly mandated capital improvements.
6. Require controlled quality development through flexible zoning and subdivision regulations.
7. Undertake a comprehensive coordination effort with adjoining jurisdictions to ensure an orderly, compatible and quality-minded development process.
8. Encourage the use of LEED-based (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design - the national standard for green building projects) or similar standards for building construction.
9. Promote the use of "green" technology and practices in industry, business and construction.
10. Develop design criteria that maximize energy conservation.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Goal:

Safeguard Laurel's heritage by preserving sites, structures, or districts, which reflect elements of cultural, social, economic, political, archeological, or architectural history.

Objectives:

1. Expand the program of rehabilitation and restoration within the Historic District in order to maintain the existing single-family housing stock. The City's tax incentive program should be expanded in order to encourage this effort and discourage demolition by neglect in all structures in the Historic District. The use of tax credits for certain necessary structural improvements should also be considered where appropriate.
2. Continue the Village Commercial Zone within the Main Street environs in order to help maintain the physical setting and traditional land use mix necessary for the living and economic vitality of the area.
3. Review development, including aesthetic or architectural improvements, based upon Historic District Commission guidelines and within the context of both the individual site and its relation within a particular block.
4. Undertake a historical structures survey and analysis to document historically significant properties within the Historic District, as well as properties located outside the District, that warrant consideration for preservation, which reflect elements of cultural, social, economic, political, or architectural history of the City.

MUNICIPAL GROWTH

Goal:

Encourage development and economic growth in areas designated for growth in the plan and protect agricultural and forest lands.

Objectives:

1. Develop and enact programs and strategies that support the urban growth boundary and target density established for residential development within the boundary.
2. Periodically examine the urban growth boundary along with its supporting programs and strategies. Determine if ongoing development trends dictate a change in the boundary, and amend the Master Plan whenever the boundary line is changed. Determine if changes in ordinances or other implementing mechanisms are necessary to advance the goal of the urban growth boundary.
3. Encourage changes in the municipal boundaries that foster more comprehensive and/or efficient provision of fundamental local government services.

Goal:

Provide public facilities and infrastructure in a manner that supports the urban growth boundary's delineation of growth areas.

Objectives:

1. On sensitive lands lying within the urban growth boundary, determine which portions of each sensitive area should be excluded from development and which can be developed given proper management procedures.
2. Develop within the urban growth boundary in a pattern that will present the least amount of storm water runoff threat to water quality.
3. Adopt flexible and innovative regulations that facilitate development within the urban growth boundary in a manner that achieves density targets, protects sensitive areas, and generally reflect stewardship of the environment.

HOUSING

Goal:

Encourage a diversity of housing types, styles and price ranges to provide adequate housing for all residents.

Objectives:

- 1. Encourage a substantial portion of future housing stock to be single-family detached homes, including high-quality custom-built homes.
- 2. Encourage an adequate supply of affordable housing, especially for households at the median income and below.
- 3. Encourage affordable and accessible housing opportunities for all residents, including families, the elderly and the physically handicapped.
- 4. Preserve and restore single-family residences within the historic district.
- 5. Encourage new residential developments to be placed in a manner sensitive to the environment and existing land uses.
- 6. Require noise attenuation measures where residential development is permitted to occur near major noise generators such as highways.
- 7. Identify housing not meeting minimum standards and, through education, technical assistance, code enforcement and the use of available rehabilitation programs, to be brought to minimum adequate standards, such as those contained in the BOCA, Fire, and Livability Codes.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Goal:

Provide the necessary public facilities and services for the health, safety, and welfare needs of the City's residents and workers.

Objectives:

- 1. Subdivision applications and other development approvals will be reviewed for adequacy of sewer and water infrastructure and streets and roadways. Approvals may be deferred, phased in or conditioned upon the availability of adequate capacity.
- 2. Vehicular, biking, and hiking linkages to community facilities within the City and to major activity centers shall be encouraged in the review of development proposals.
- 3. Improve existing substandard public infrastructure through the funding and prioritization process of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).
- 4. Plan and develop expanded City facilities in order to provide for the more efficient provision of public services.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Goal:

Ensure cost-effective provision of public safety facilities and services to support the needs of the City's neighborhoods, residents, and businesses.

Objectives:

1. Ensure that public safety agencies are trained and staffed to provide professional resources based on levels of crime and demand for services.
2. Evaluate the need for a new police station adequate to meet the future needs of Laurel's police force.
3. Continue improvement of automated police information and record management system to increase efficiency.
4. Continue to focus on crime prevention and community policing programs that allow police officers to work in partnership with neighborhoods to solve crime and improve the quality of life.
5. Dedicate appropriate resources to expand school liaison programs and strengthen other proactive programs.
6. Adjust services and programs to accommodate an increasingly elderly and diverse population.
7. Provide additional traffic enforcement resources to address the increase in traffic in residential communities and on major through roads.
8. Evaluate the need for improved facilities and programs to ensure provision of effective fire protection and emergency services for the City of Laurel.
9. Ensure that fire and rescue training needs are adequately funded.
10. Enhance the volunteer recruitment program and increase retention of trained and experienced volunteers.
11. Expand public education programs.
12. Initiate post-occupancy inspections for commercial uses.
13. Examine methods of protecting historic structures from fire damage through such means as encouraging installation of sprinklers and using fire suppression techniques that minimize damage.

TRANSPORTATION

Goal:

Establish and maintain an effective multi-faceted transportation system for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods through, within and around the greater Laurel area.

Objectives:

1. Alleviate areas of traffic congestion and hazardous traffic conditions.
 - a. Support the development of the Contee Road interchange with I-95, to be located south of MD 198 and the Kenilworth Avenue extension in order to accommodate the future increase of both regional and local traffic.
 - b. Analyze selected projects for potential improvements to MD 198 and its major intersections within the City.

- c. Analyze selected improvements for US 1 as it traverses the City in order to improve circulation at its major intersections and to increase capacity potential within its limits.
 - d. Support the establishment of special funding methods to fund local and regional mass transit.
2. Encourage the State to improve and coordinate public MARC, Metrorail and Metrobus, and Baltimore Metro transit opportunities including the bus lines, the local Connect-A-Ride Bus System and the proposed local Metrorail station.
 3. Provide for the implementation of Transportation Systems Management measures for all new projects involving substantial development or redevelopment.
 4. Improve the efficiency and safety of the local roadway and circulation system within the context of the annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process.
 5. Endorse the completion of proposed County and State road networks improvements with private participation in order to meet traffic demand from local and regional growth.
 6. Continue to closely monitor the Inter-County Connector and support the development of Corridor #1 of the ICC that would extend easterly beyond I-95 and terminate at either Kenilworth Avenue extended or US Route 1. (City Resolution No. 19-03).

RECREATION

Goal:

Provide for a comprehensive recreation environment and open space to meet the needs of all segments of the population.

Objectives:

1. Ensure the continued acquisition of usable parkland to meet current and future needs of Laurel residents.
2. Continue to maintain and upgrade established parks.
3. Prepare plans to develop the City owned property contiguous to Alice B. McCullough Field into a citywide park with ball fields, parking, and other assorted recreation needs facilities for citizens of all ages.
4. Maintain the balance of active and passive parkland as recommended by professional guidelines and standards.
5. Ensure the preservation of open-space and the conservation of natural assets.
6. Provide open space for non-traditional recreation activities such as a community garden and sensory garden.
7. Designate all public parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and other public recreational areas, excluding commercial recreational uses, as R-OS Zone – Open Space on the City Zoning Map.
8. Complete the expansion of Riverfront Park through land acquisition and

development. Work with neighboring counties to promote an inter-county park system.

9. Direct the future acquisition and development of land designed for recreational use towards active indoor and outdoor facilities.
10. Design for and provide for multi-use facilities to accommodate a variety of traditional and specialized program areas. Include activities for the handicapped and disabled at parks and recreation facilities.
11. Continue to maintain, upgrade, and preserve facilities on current city inventory.
12. Require facility development to be part of future annexation and development.
13. Work with developers and City staff to explore recreation activities such as ice-skating, skate parks etc. in areas of high retail development.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Goal:

Establish a range of services to enable senior citizens to remain as independent as possible within their own homes.

Objectives:

1. Establish a liaison within the City government to work together with the Prince George's County Department of Family Services and Maryland Department of Aging to jointly provide the maximum level of needed service for the City's senior citizens.
2. Encourage the creation of affordable and accessible housing such as congregate living facilities for senior citizens.
3. Continue to provide specialized transportation service for transit dependent senior citizens.
4. Encourage the provision of adult daycare facilities within the City for those that require more constant care.
5. Provide meeting and program space for senior citizen activities.
6. Continue to assist Prince George's County in providing medical information and testing for senior citizens.
7. Encourage participation of senior citizens in all phases of community activity.
8. Coordinate provision of services for senior citizens with the surrounding counties.

SENSITIVE AREAS

Goal:

Protect and enhance the physical environment of the City, protect sensitive areas from the intrusion of urbanization, and balance the extent and nature of affected public interests and the relative resource value when conflicts arise.

Objectives:

1. Protect the Patuxent River Watershed through the coordination and enhancement (including enhanced stream buffering) of existing zoning mechanisms, public education/awareness, storm water management retrofit improvements, stream restoration and monitoring, and the development of a passive Riverfront Park to improve water quality, reduce sediment and erosion, and control storm water runoff.
2. Continue to enforce the R-OS - Open Space zoning regulations to preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the City’s ecological balance and heritage, while providing for the proper use and enjoyment of natural resources and to provide an opportunity for creative site design to avoid sensitive areas and enhance their protection from urbanization.
3. Review of site plans for proposed development to ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to protect sensitive areas both during and after development.
4. Develop broader community awareness and sensitivity to the importance of sensitive areas and the way residents and businesses can participate in lessening the flow of nutrients, toxins, and sediment into the Patuxent and its tributaries.
5. In order to mitigate or minimize existing and future effects of noise intrusions, including design objectives, within future residential areas, implement a program combining source and land use controls with a goal not exceeding the normally acceptable standard as defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
6. Promote volunteer efforts for stream monitoring and cleanup.

LAND USE

SPECIAL STUDY AREAS

There are currently several areas within the City that warrant study as special study areas. The purpose of a special study area is to study in greater detail a certain area, in order to proffer ideas to the citizenry or private sector for long-range plans or goals for improving the particular area. It is also an opportunity for the public sector through governmental action to initiate needed improvements. In some cases these initiatives may be of either an aesthetic or functional nature. In other cases they may be related to health, safety or welfare concerns. Two areas have been chosen for study in greater detail, the Washington Boulevard - Second Street corridor, and the Main Street area.

Route 1 - Washington Boulevard/Second Street Corridor

Recommendations:

1. Continue to coordinate with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to provide streetscape improvements, better directional signs, and intensified landscaping.

2. Encourage the SHA to link existing disconnected sidewalk and pathway segments and add new sidewalks/pathways to create a well-defined network that facilitates access to transit stops and to major residential, employment and activity centers.
3. Institute appropriate zoning and land use controls, and provide incentives for the assembly of parcels, the redevelopment of underutilized land and the revitalization of derelict sites.
4. Amend the City Zoning Ordinance to require the dedication of land to the City for the purpose of providing right-of-way for new sidewalks/pathways as a condition of redevelopment.
5. Pursue a tax credit program for businesses to improve the private property landscaping.
6. Aggressively pursue any State grants or other programs dealing with revitalization, community development, or the like.

Main Street

Recommendations:

1. Continue preservation efforts, and permit redevelopment, where appropriate to compliment existing buildings.
2. Continue Code Enforcement programs for compliance with building and fire codes.
3. Continue participation in the State of Maryland's Transit Station Development Incentive Program, or any other revitalization programs conducted by State agencies to encourage the revitalization of the Main Street area.
4. Coordinate a unified marketing and urban design program for the entire Main Street corridor, including plans for lighting, street furniture, banner and promotional programs, and identification of parking and other transit resources for potential business and patrons.
5. Pursue all reasonable mechanisms to provide adequate parking and continue to give due consideration to motor vehicle and pedestrian safety issues.

MUNICIPAL GROWTH

CITY URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY

The study area is depicted on the Growth Areas Map illustrates the areas that are being studied. These areas may or may not be synonymous to a more formalized urban growth boundary study, or an "ultimate expansion limit" study at some point in the future.

To the extent that the program is meant to create rational municipal limits, the process now ongoing should be continued, if for no other reason than to provide a sound fiscal framework to annexation deliberations in the future.

Recommendations:

1. Continue efforts to study areas around the periphery of the City.
2. Create a formal fiscal analysis process to be used in the annexation of any additional land or buildings.
3. Create a policy to completely analyze service impacts of both City and County facilities within the study area, with due emphasis on police, fire, and rescue services.
4. Develop procedures to refine revenue estimates resulting from annexation of property.
5. Initiate service requirements into Operating and Capital Budgets.
6. Coordinate these procedures through the City's Adequate Public Facilities process.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the Prince George's County Fire Department estimate the projected calls for service and the projected average response times over the next five (5) years and provide a report with supporting data.
2. It is recommended that the Prince George's County Fire Department evaluate the current and anticipated BLS/ALS service performance levels in the City of Laurel through 2009 and provides a report with supporting data.
3. It is recommended that the Prince George's County Fire Department establish a joint EMS "task force" to further study the long-term impact of growth within the Laurel region and develop a long-term strategic plan to address the future needs of EMS service within the Laurel region. Representatives from the Emergency Services Commission, Laurel Volunteer Fire Department, the Laurel Volunteer Rescue Squad, the City of Laurel, the Health Care Community, and citizen members of the Laurel Community should be involved.
4. It is recommended that the Prince George's County Fire Department meet with representatives of the Laurel Regional Hospital to determine what procedures can be implemented to reduce the amount of BLS units re-routed to other hospitals.
5. It is recommended that the Prince George's County Fire Department provide an annual Fire Suppression Service, ALS, and BLS performance level report with detailed supporting data for the City.
6. It recommended that each year, the Emergency Services Commission (ESC), in cooperation with the City Department of Community Planning and Business Services and the local public safety agencies or corporations, review the report in depth to determine if the performance levels are adequate for the residents of the City, in light of development projects that are anticipated within the next three (3) year period. Upon completion of this review, the ESC should provide written guidance to the Mayor and City Council for consideration and use in making specific land use decisions.

7. It is recommended that the Laurel Police Department provide an annual performance level report with detailed supporting data to the ESC.
8. It is recommended that each year, the ESC, in cooperation with the City Department of Development and Planning and the Police Department, review the report in depth to determine if the performance levels are adequate for the residents of the City, in light of development projects that are anticipated within the following three (3) years. Upon completion of this review, the Emergency Services Commission should provide written guidance to the Mayor and City Council for their consideration and use in making specific land use decisions during that calendar year.

TRANSPORTATION

General Recommendations:

1. Continue to closely monitor the Inter-County Connector and support the development of Corridor #1 of the ICC that would extend easterly beyond I-95 and terminate at either Kenilworth Avenue extended or US Route 1 in order to accommodate desirable employment development that has the greatest benefit to the City of Laurel and the surrounding communities (City Resolution No. 19-03).
2. Continue to support the development of the Contee Road interchange with I-95, to be located south of MD 198 and the Kenilworth Avenue extended in order to accommodate the future increase of both regional and local traffic.
3. Work with the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration and Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation to facilitate traffic flow on the arterial and collector roads within the City.
4. Work cooperatively on regional transportation planning and infrastructure issues having inter-jurisdictional implications with Anne Arundel, Carroll, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties (Memorandum of Understanding).
5. Promote access management by limiting the number of conflict points that motorist experience during travel; separating conflict points as much as possible when they cannot be eliminated; and control turning movements so as to facilitate traffic flow on affected roadways.
6. Improve the safety and preserve the integrity of the arterial and collector street system with an effective traffic signal control program and with the use of traffic operations features to maximize the capacity of the existing street system.
7. Continue the maintaining and/or reconstructing of City roads on an "on-going" basis through implementation of the City's Capital Improvement Program.
8. Participate and cooperate with Maryland Department of Transportation study to extend the Washington Metro's Line (Green Line) from Greenbelt to Laurel, Fort Meade and Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport.

9. Continue the City's practice of providing or requiring the provision of non-motorized transportation facilities to link residential areas with recreational and commercial areas in a safe manner. This may include the construction of sidewalks, bike lanes, installation of signage, striping of roadways, or the like so as to accommodate non-motorized transportation facilities.
10. Implement a neighborhood traffic management program, traffic calming, for existing residential streets that provide direct access to homes. Usually traffic-calming projects are set-in motion by residents submitting a petitioning to the City outlining the traffic problems affecting their neighborhood or the City initiates a project to mitigate a problem.
11. Implement a "wayfinding" signage system within the Main Street Historic area to provide more consistent, clear and attractive signage, and help make the Main Street area friendlier and more accessible.
12. Work with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and the Corridor Transportation Corporation to place bus shelters at Metro Bus and Connect-a-Ride bus stops throughout the City.
13. Future mass transit planning should include the relocation of the transit hub, currently located at the Laurel Mall, to a central location and the construction of a new transfer center.
14. Request the Corridor Transportation Corporation (CTC) conduct an assessment of existing public and private transit programs with an analysis to determine any unmet needs. A strategy should be developed to meet identified unmet needs with an emphasis being given to meeting the needs of the transportation disadvantaged (i.e., those individuals who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation).

RECREATION

STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING ADEQUATE RECREATION FACILITIES

In instances of small-scale development, where the required percentage of dedicated land is not sufficient for traditional uses, the fee-in-lieu-of mandatory dedication scale can be used to determine the amount of land or fee paid for developing recreation areas. The fee paid by the developer is used to acquire and or develop parkland in the vicinity. This plan and policy should be reviewed periodically to determine if the recreation needs of the community are being met.

Developers should be encouraged to propose joint development of active areas to include recreation facilities and equipment. This will lessen the burden on the City for incurring the total cost of park development and maintenance.

The City should explore the feasibility of jointly developing recreation facilities with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) in areas nearby to the City.

The provision of recreational parks and facilities should be phased in with development in order to meet the needs of the population, and to increase the inventory of recreational facilities. Additional recreation programs should be added, as necessary, to serve an expanding senior citizen population, as well as other age segments of the population.

Additionally, the City should maintain the balance of active and passive parkland as recommended by professional guidelines and standards.

1. Parkland, facilities, open space and stream valley networks should be an integral part of land development.
2. Future recreation areas should be developed in terms of site design where possible, with a linkage to other open space and stream valley areas via walking and bike path systems.
3. Stream valleys should be preserved in their natural state as permanent open space areas.
4. Developers should be encouraged to develop an internal system of trails to serve the area and to link with other trails.
5. Purchasing parkland in older, built-up neighborhoods should be considered as properties become available.
6. Further annexations should contain recreation space/facilities, which help reduce the existing deficit as well as adequately, serve new residents.
7. A plan should be developed for park and facility renovation and upgrade to meet the future needs.
8. Land use according to these guidelines will help provide adequate recreational opportunities in terms of active or passive outdoor activities or to provide for outdoor/indoor multi-use facilities to accommodate a variety of traditional or specialized programs.
9. The Capital Improvement Program will continue to be a significant tool in helping the City to attain the goals, objectives and standards set forth in this document.

FUTURE PLANNING ACTIVITY

Functional Plans

The Master Plan sets forth goals, objectives, and strategies for the City of Laurel. Among the available tools for implantation is the functional plan process. Functional plans focus on citywide systems such as the environment, transportation, public facilities, parks, or historic sites and districts.

The Mayor and City Council, in the annual budget process, should decide which areas of the City and subjects to be studied. The basis for these decisions should be grounded in the long-range goals and objectives contained within the Master Plan. The overall criteria for determining which plans will need to be prepared in the future is as follows:

1. The need for new functional plans in order to achieve the Smart Growth Goals of the Master Plan.
2. The need to update current plans due either to the age of the plan or new growth policy directions and priorities.

The criteria for establishing future planning priorities include the following:

- Potential for significant infill and redevelopment or where revitalization programs are needed to achieve the goals of the Master Plan.
- Need to preserve sensitive environments.
- Need for public facilities to serve new or emerging development patterns (public safety, libraries, schools, parks and recreation, trails, etc.).
- Need for the protection of historic resources.

Regulatory Revisions

Implementation strategies in this Master Plan cite the need to review and amend the City's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, adopt new regulations to help implement the Plan's recommendations, or streamline the development review process in order to accomplish the goals of the Plan.

In addition to specific regulatory improvements recommended in this plan, there should be a comprehensive review and, where necessary, revision of the City's regulations and development review processes. Revisions should be guided by the recommendations of this Master Plan and reflect the following criteria.

1. Promote development in corridors.
2. Conserve and enhance existing neighborhoods.
3. Conserve and enhance the City's fiscal resources.
4. Protect environmentally sensitive areas.
5. Ensure that development controls are fair and appropriate.
6. Streamline regulatory processes to facilitate appropriate development and reduce development costs.