

The 2004 Greater Laurel Comprehensive Plan

VII. Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan

A. Town Government

- Town government should pay special attention to developing new revenue sources through which it can address infrastructure and program needs and instill confidence in its citizenry and outside agencies.
- Develop a tracking system to monitor progress on the action projects recommended by the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Town should strengthen the operation of the Planning and Zoning Commission by instituting training programs through the Town Manager's office. Speakers should be invited to discuss experience in special areas such as design review. Town Council, Staff and Board of Adjustment members should be invited to participate.
- In organizing its planned new Economic Development Program and Commission, the Town should target new job attraction in more technical, knowledge-based areas. It should add heritage- and eco-tourism, festivals, promotions and special events to the program for this new entity.
- Activate the Town of Laurel Park and Recreation Commission as authorized by the Town Council on December 1, 1975, and established by Chapter 25 of the Laurel Code, as updated through 2002. The Commission should be authorized by the Town Council to advise the Town on all capital and operating decisions pertaining to Laurel's Park and Recreation system.
- Identify a series of action projects to be completed over a series of short, mid and long-term time frames in order to begin the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan
- Develop a strong loans and grants program drawing on State, national and non-profit sources
- Prepare brief staff reports to accompany decisions on cases that go before the Planning and Zoning Commission, Board of Adjustment and/or Town Council.
- The Town should investigate the possibility of establishing a Design Advisory Panel to advise Town staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Town Council on design issues pertaining to projects under review.

B. Regional and Intermunicipal Cooperation

- Develop new opportunities for cooperation and coordination with nearby local governments and with Sussex County government. The Town should meet with these groups informally from time to time and should participate actively in other intermunicipal activities in the region. To the extent that Town festivals and

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special events can be coordinated with adjacent municipalities like Bethel or Seaford they should be.

- Work closely with Delaware State agencies like the Office of State Planning Coordination, the Delaware Economic Development Office, DNREC and DelDOT in advancing Laurel's programs.
- Become active in the Sussex County Association of Towns (SCAT)
- Explore service consolidation and sharing arrangements with Sussex County where they make good sense
- Work with regional entities such as Sussex County, area universities like Del Tech, the Chamber of Commerce and others on new approaches to regional cooperation
- Comprehensively revise the Town's Zoning Ordinance and other code sections
- Promote the Town and its Historic District in concert with the County and State
- Develop a Town 5-Year Capital Improvement Program that is coordinated with the C.I.P. program of Sussex County.
- Develop the Town's computer system capabilities, hardware and software in order to put into daily use the GIS – Geographical Information Systems mapping and database which has been prepared for the Town as part of the Comprehensive Plan

C. Land Use & Zoning

- Proceed with the Comprehensive Revision of the Town Zoning Ordinance in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Future Land Use Plan should be used as a guide in revising the Zoning Map.
- The Town should coordinate appropriate portions of this project with the Sussex County Zoning Revisions now underway.
- The Town should adopt a model Historic Preservation Ordinance for the Laurel Historic District
- Professional archaeological research should be encouraged within the Broad Creek Heritage Area
- Additional research should be done by appropriate groups or scholars, with encouragement by the Town, in specialized areas like African-American History and Nanticoke Indian History
- The Town should work with Sussex County, the State Historic Preservation Office and the Laurel Historical Society to complete reviews of the three proposed expansions of the Laurel Historic District and reach decisions on these additions.
- Create a special environmental, historic, land use and zoning designation for the Broad Creek Environmental and Heritage Area
- Review and update the Town of Laurel Subdivision Regulations, Housing and Maintenance Codes in coordination with the Comprehensive Zoning Revisions project

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- ❑ Consider developing legislation to provide the Town with quick-take power to condemn, acquire, dispose of and/or redevelop seriously deteriorated or abandoned properties.

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D. Economic Development

- Establish a new Town of Laurel Economic Development Commission and Economic Development Program
- Enter into a written public-private partnership agreement with the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation and other private investors
- Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Laurel Historical Society which addresses design review and adaptive reuse within the Historic District and other relevant projects and initiatives
- Work with DNREC to develop plans and a program for the Broad Creek Greenway within the Town, especially for the Nanticoke Small Boat Harbor proposed for the present site of Wastewater Treatment Plant lagoon #3.

E. Potential Growth and Annexation

- Undertake fiscal impact and cost of services analyses for proposed annexations, consistent with the requirements of House Bill 255, possibly using the cost/benefit model being developed by the City of Dover.
- Develop a fair policy for allocating the costs of new infrastructure between the general benefit district and specific development projects involved. The policy should be based on recognized concepts of “general benefit” for the Town as a whole versus “special benefit” for developers or users within a given project area. Developers should be expected to pay those portions of infrastructure costs that result in special benefit to the developer’s project.

F. Historic and Cultural Resources

- Plans should be developed for an Interpretive and Visitors Center on Broad Creek.
- Apply for the inclusion of Laurel in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and Water Trails program operated by the National Park Service. Laurel should apply for inclusion in this innovative program based on the environmental and heritage importance of the Special Broad Creek Environmental and Heritage Area. Laurel could become the first State of Delaware Chesapeake Bay Gateway Site.
- Commemorate the Nanticoke Indian pre-historic and historic presence in Laurel on The Wading Place Delaware Historic Marker now being designed
- The Broad Creek Bridges of Laurel – the Railroad Trestle, Poplar Street and Central Avenue – should be treated as a historic entity and be made part of a long-term restoration, repair and rehabilitation project

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G. Environmental Protection

- Use U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and DNREC approved Best Management Practices in decisions and policies pertaining to wastewater treatment, wellhead protection, ground-water recharge and surface drainage.
- The Office of State Planning Coordination asks that the following requirement of Title 7, Chapter 60, Subchapter VI, Section 6082 of State law be included in the Comprehensive Plan:

“The counties and municipalities with populations of 2,000 persons or more, with the assistance of the Department, shall adopt as part of the update and implementation of the 2007 Comprehensive Land Use Plans, the overlay maps delineating, as critical areas, source water assessment, wellhead protection and excellent ground-water recharge potential areas. Furthermore, the counties and municipalities shall adopt, by December 31, 2007, regulations governing the use of land within those critical areas designed to protect those critical areas from activities and substances that may harm water quality and subtract from overall water quantity.”

H. Open Space & Outdoor Recreation Program

- The Town and DNREC should work closely to coordinate the construction of new DNREC Boat Ramp and parking area improvements at the Park Lane end of Laurel River Park with new Town improvements in the remainder of the Park.
- Apply to DNREC and the Office of State Planning Coordination for funding assistance to prepare a Town of Laurel Broad Creek Greenway, Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Program. The program would implement the goals and policies of The Comprehensive Plan and raise public awareness about the Greenway.

I. Marketing, Promotion and Special Events

- Plan the design of the Laurel Gardens park in such a way that it can serve as a very special site for public gatherings and events on Broad Creek.
- Develop a new brochure and walking tour for both the Laurel Historic District and the Broad Creek Special Environmental and Heritage Area.
- Make a special festival out of the 2004 4th of July Festival, including innovative use of Town Center and Broad Creek sites, making Laurel’s history a major theme, having a booth marking Laurel’s new progress, dedicating the new Wading Place Delaware Historic Marker and inviting participation by the Nanticoke Indians.
- Demonstrate the reawakening of Laurel’s relationship with the Nanticoke River by creating a special event around a “Voyage to Laurel along Broad Creek.” This

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should consist of bringing a passenger vessel up the Creek with a ceremony in the Town Center area. Preliminary discussions suggest that this is feasible if the ship can clear the mouth of Broad Creek and if downed trees can be removed from the Creek between Bethel and Laurel. NOAA Nautical Chart 12261 Rev. July 2002 shows a 5' depth for Broad Creek between the Nanticoke River and Laurel, a 30' vertical clearance at the Shellbridge Road Bridge in Bethel and a 14' vertical clearance beneath the Railroad Trestle in the Town Center. The waterspace between the planned DNREC boat ramp in Laurel River Park and the Poplar Street Bridge is the effective harbor basin of Laurel.

- ❑ The Town should work with the Delaware Department of Agriculture to establish a weekly Farmers' Market in Market Square. The Town and DDA in turn should enlist the help of experts at the marketplaces on Route 13 (Dutch Country Market, The Route 13 Marketplace, Bargain Bill's Flea Market and The Laurel Auction Block) in the planning and operation of the market. This could take the form of technical assistance or even shared events, signage and advertising.

J. Periodic Review of the Comprehensive Plan

- ❑ Delaware's Planning Laws and Livable Delaware Program, as administered by the Office of State Planning Coordination, requires that Comprehensive Plans be reviewed and updated at least every five years.
- ❑ The State requires that the Town Zoning Ordinance be revised within 18 months after adoption of the Plan.

K. Town Code and Charter Review

- ❑ Chapter 25 of the Code of the Town of Laurel was added in 1975 to establish a Laurel Park And Recreation Commission consisting of five members appointed by the Mayor and Town Council for three-year terms. The Town should review this provision and implement it. A statement of purpose should be added to this provision.
- ❑ Laurel's Town Charter is a historic document that needs to be reviewed, updated and brought into line with modern law and practice. One major item for updating are the provisions for municipal annexation. The annexation provisions should be reviewed with the State of Delaware and revised in accordance with a more streamlined statewide practice.