



The **Laurel Redevelopment Corporation**, a nonprofit 501(c) 4, has been instrumental in the revitalization of the Town's commercial district and waterfront since 1992.

Unique among small towns in Delaware, the LRC has acquired and cleared more than 30 parcels along Broad Creek, rehabilitated historic buildings when feasible, established public parks along the waterfront, stabilized the shoreline, and constructed new residential and commercial properties.

Laurel Redevelopment Corporation is committed to acquiring and cleaning up strategic commercial properties within Old Town, including a certified Brownfield at the corner of Central Avenue and East Front Street.

The LRC already owns several parcels within Old Town, including the tract where The Ramble and market - rate waterfront cottages are envisioned.

Other targets include two abandoned, deteriorating properties and a storefront church at a key intersection.

ORGANIZATION, HISTORY AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS 1992 - 2016

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

From a group of local citizens attempting to halt the deterioration of Downtown Laurel's commercial district in 1992, the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation (LRC) has evolved into an active and effective grass-roots community group of donors, workers, and leaders, all striving to work cooperatively with government leaders, economic development officials, local groups, and private investors to make Laurel a better place in which to invest, live, work, and visit. Its key elements are:

- The purchase and accumulation of 30+ parcels in key Downtown and Creek side areas of Laurel, most having derelict commercial or residential buildings
- The clearing and/or cleanup of acquired properties, including the rehabilitation of vintage buildings when financially feasible
- The use of grants and LRC funds to stabilize the shoreline properties along LRC Broad Creek properties

- The use of grants and LRC funds to establish permanent public parks, with the purpose of protecting and beautifying the Creek side parks in perpetuity. (Developed parks have sometimes been gifted to the Town or other non-profit organizations.)
- The use of LRC funds and grants for economic development, including the construction of new commercial properties and the support of its Entrepreneurial Incubation Program.
- **Beginning in 2016, the use of LRC funds and grants for neighborhood residential redevelopment and revitalization, participating with the Town and additional non-profit organizations to develop a master-plan for addressing this pressing community need.**

ORGANIZATION

The LRC is a private IRS-approved Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Corporation. It has more than 120 stockholders/members, and these private donors/families/businesses have charitably contributed nearly \$300,000 to date. In addition, substantial grants and 20+ years of owned-property rental income have resulted in assets of nearly \$4million, with no debt at this time.

- The LRC is managed as a conservative business enterprise, with its Officers and Board made up entirely of non-paid Members.
- A paid staff consisting of a Property Manager and a Secretary/Bookkeeper oversee the management of the LRC's properties and projects, as well as coordinating large-scale projects
- The LRC is not a governmental body or subsidiary, nor has it ever asked for or received financial operating assistance from any governmental unit.
- The LRC pays all property taxes and related local governmental fees, as well as school, county, and state levies, even on its parcels designated public parks.
- No principal, interest, dividends or any other remuneration may ever be returned to stockholders (donors) for the lifetime of the organization.
- ALL net operating surpluses are accumulated to be used for future property acquisitions, property development, and/or as matching funds in new grant applications.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROJECTS

- Organized as a non-profit organization, raised nearly \$300,00 in donations privately in order to purchase and demolish dilapidated business buildings on Market St in

1992, and cooperatively with the Town of Laurel, supported building Market Square Park and its Bandstand on the site

- Purchased, renovated, and managed several additional Market St. vintage commercial buildings for more than 15 years. In addition, completed Project Facelift I a cooperative financial partnership with ALL private Market St. property owners to renovate the exteriors of Market St. storefronts.
- Purchased extensive blighted shoreline properties between the Milldam and the Railroad Bridge (95% of both shorelines are now owned and controlled by either the LRC or the Town of Laurel,) Assets currently approach \$4million, with more than 90% fixed assets in the form of land, vintage buildings, leasehold improvements, site improvements & shoreline stabilization, new construction, parks & recreation areas, and undeveloped parcels.
- Cleaned up abandoned light industrial sites and commercial and residential blight on properties along Broad Creek and Market St.
- Coordinated and sponsored civic and volunteer light cleanup efforts along the neglected banks of Broad Creek
- Provided LRC-funding (through Operation Facelift II) to private residential owners in the 1801 Old town Neighborhood (adjacent to the south bank of Broad Creek) to restore the exteriors of their vintage and often historic homes, in order to support beautification in a neighborhood adjacent to LRC creek-side cleanup and redevelopment efforts.
- In cooperation with the Town of Laurel, ensured that all LRC-initiated creek-side development provided permanent public greenways-access along the south shoreline of Broad Creek, to include ecological stabilization and beautification projects, usually coordinated with DNREC and local political representatives.
- For 24 years, an LRC Entrepreneurial Incubation Program has supported anywhere from 12 to 20 new, growing businesses with creative simple leasing arrangements and other financial and business assistance during initial phases of each small enterprise's development. (Each of these commercial and professional operations contributes to the complementary business/commercial zone that is Laureltown.) Importantly, all net rental income from these leased properties is reinvested in new LRC projects.
- Constructed and managed new LRC commercial buildings: the Pierce Ellis Medical Building (3 medical suites), the Abbott's Restaurant building (restaurant, bar, and banquet facility), and the 4-building Laureltown complex (flexible general-use business space for up to 12 separate enterprises)
- Purchased and cleaned-up an abandoned cannery site, then recruited a private developer to construct The Villas on Broad Creek, a gated community of luxury 2-story

villas facing the Mill Dam & Janosik Park. (When completely built out, it should add more than \$5million to the Town's property rolls.)

- Donated the fully-developed Janosik Park to the Town, permanently preserving the beautiful public-access area at the headwaters of Broad Creek and the Milldam.
- Obtained financing for a pedestrian bridge over the Rossakatum Creek near the Laureltown complex. (This area will eventually provide a 'home' for the planting of the hard-to-maintain Laurel bushes which provided Laurel with its name some 200 years ago.)
- Donated a fully-landscaped Laurel Public Library parking area (honoring the service of the late Rep. Biff Lee)
- Constructed Venables Park (honoring the service of former Sen. Robert Venables), a 'pocket park' on Broad Creek facing the deck of Abbott's Restaurant, and often used for wedding party photos as well as fishing & recreation.
- Preserved the historic 'block building' original Town water pumping station on Broad Creek
- Restored a quaint pink cottage (located next to Abbott's on Broad Creek) as the LRC's Original Office and Headquarters.
- **Supported, lead, and helped fund the establishment of "The Ramble" along the shorelines of Broad Creek, with elements/attractions to include a Rotary kayak launch, a nature-based playground, demonstrations of storm water control, a grouping of Victorian cottages, as well as complementary restaurants and commercial enterprises.**

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The economic benefits which flow from LRC investments are not only measured in bricks and mortar.

- For 24 years, the LRC has providing business opportunities and facilities to 12-20 young and growing firms and professionals, and these enterprises support more than 100 private-sector jobs.
- LRC projects (and related investments by the Town of Laurel, the State of Delaware, LRC/investor cooperative development projects, and LRC-supported private local start-up incubation firms) have provided direct economic investment and stimulus approaching more than \$15million throughout the past 24 years, with these funds multiplied as they are spent and re-spent throughout the local economy.

- Perhaps just as importantly, these young firms are providing new goods and services to our community, encouraging a more-complete and supportive commercial mix, and making for a better quality of life in Laurel.
- Finally, the LRC has been supporting all levels of government, public services, and schools with its taxes and fees paid for the past 24 years
- **With the eventual completion of The Ramble Project, the public access to, and ecological stability of, Broad Creek will be preserved and enjoyed in perpetuity by the citizens and visitors in Laurel.**
- **With the expansion of the LRC mission to include residential housing and neighborhood revitalization, the successes in the areas of parks and commercial development in Laurel's core will radiate into the vintage neighborhoods in historic Laurel.**

CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES 2016-2017

- The LRC is assuming a leading role aside the Town of Laurel in planning, funding, and constructing The Ramble, a long-term master plan for completing the redevelopment of the Downtown/Broad Creek district, bringing ecological restoration and protection, beauty, recreation, economic development, jobs and civic pride to this important core of our community, Laurel.
- Currently, master eco-surveys and engineering studies are in progress, to guide and inform all future development---both private and public--- in the areas contributing to the Rossakatum/Broad Creek flood plain and watershed. The Ramble is intended as a demonstration project for the support of Nanticoke River Basin and Chesapeake Bay ecological initiatives, and has featured a close working partnership with the University of Delaware, its Sea Grant branch in Lewes, DNREC, and many other State departments and officials.
- Partnerships with community groups, Laurel's government, and private owners/developers are being formed to develop The Ramble, a continuous series of properties ---public parks; recreation areas; dining, shopping, and entertainment venues; and both new and vintage private residential neighborhoods--- will stretch along the banks of Broad Creek from the Milldam to the Railroad Bridge. As a result, a continuous permanent public-access architecturally-planned greenway...true 'Beauty on Broad Creek'... will connect Records Pond to Roger C. Fisher Park as the central focus of our community and many of its activities.
- A new residential area with a 'Victorian Cottages' ambiance is planned along the Creek, as well as a central community-gathering area ('The Village Green') with small

shops, a new Laurel- Rotary Club kayak launch area, and a new nature-based children's play/education area.

- Several small buildings adjacent to Broad Creek will be preserved and renovated to become integral parts of The Ramble, and neighboring private owners—commercial commercial and residential—will be invited to participate in future development in the next several years.
- **The newest element of this major initiative will be a partnership with the two most important non-profit housing organizations in Delaware - Sussex County Habitat for Humanity and Milford Housing Corporation - to implement the coordinated construction and rehab of 9-12 homes in the historic Old Town section of Laurel. It is anticipated the planned Victorian cottages in The Ramble project will piggyback on this undertaking, with the LRC playing a major part in their development and construction.**
- A small West Laurel 'pocket park/parking area on Townsend St.' is being developed in 2015-16 to provide an area for 'welcome to Laurel' and 'Roger C. Fisher Park' directional signage for approaching vehicular traffic.
- An LRC cleaned-up property is being transferred to the existing State handicapped-access fishing area, preserving valuable, scenic mature cypress trees in the area of the Mill Dam, which will unfortunately be 'denuded' of all vegetation when reconstructed in the next few years.
- The LRC's Entrepreneurial Incubation Program will continue.
- The LRC will continue to support the Town of Laurel by (1) expanding the Ramble partnership, (2) paying all appropriate fees and property taxes, and (3) supporting beautification programs sponsored by the Mayor and Council.