

Request for Proposals

Various Properties owned by the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation for Sale, Laurel, Delaware

Introduction: Purpose and Opportunity

The Laurel Redevelopment Corporation is spearheading the effort to rehabilitate/develop/redevelop numerous waterfront properties located along the Broad Creek in the heart of downtown Laurel, Delaware. Realizing the significance and development potential of this waterfront real estate the LRC acquired these parcels in order to maximize the economic benefit and quality of life goals it shares with the Laurel community. The LRC, therefore seeks to transfer ownership of these sites, offering favorable terms and compelling incentives, to a qualified redeveloper with a plan that is consistent with LRC and Town of Laurel goals/requirements as stated herein.

Scope of Services

LRC is seeking proposals from qualified redevelopers to renovate and/or develop various parcels and buildings on sites that it owns and manages while preserving building and adaptively re-using existing structures whenever feasible to do so. The LRC is seeking a developer with a strong interest in, and understanding of, place-based development. Additionally, the LRC believes that such a developer can bring a new and commercially viable mixed-use project to Laurel's waterfront.

The LRC is prepared to offer favorable terms to acquire these properties as an incentive and inducement to attract new waterfront and nearby waterfront investment. The specific terms for transferring ownership will be determined based on the quality of the respondent's proposal.

(Please see the map, herein, depicting the LRC sites that are the subject of this RFP)

It is anticipated that the Town of Laurel is highly motivated to work with any successful respondent to the request in terms of maximizing Town and related incentives and in terms of expeditiously overseeing and facilitating the successful respondent's requests throughout the permitting and development process.

About the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation

The Laurel Redevelopment Corporation provides leadership, expertise, and funding to foster and sustain economic development for the Laurel community and its citizens.

From a group of local citizens attempting to halt the deterioration of Laurel's commercial district in 1992, the LRC has evolved into an effective grass-roots

organization striving to work cooperatively with government leaders, local groups, and private investors to make Laurel a better place in which to invest, live, work and visit.

Along with the town, the LRC was a key player in the successful designation of 72 acres of Laurel's core downtown area, including the waterfront, as a State of Delaware, Downtown Development District. The organization leads a revitalization effort in Laurel's Old Town Neighborhood with a successful Strong Neighborhoods Fund application in the amount \$500,000.

The LRC is not a government body, but rather is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) organization, that pays all property and related local government fees. It currently has no debt.

The LRC continues to pursue the strategic acquisition, cleanup and rehabilitation of sites and buildings to improve Laurel's climate for economic investment.

Since its inception, the LRC has purchased, cleared, and rebuilt on more than 30 parcels—creating new businesses, parks, upscale villas, a restaurant, and a variety of office and commercial space.

More recently, the LRC has taken on an expanded role of helping the town promote its new Downtown Development District and taking the lead in revitalizing the Old Town neighborhood just south of the waterfront. The LRC also is supporting The Ramble redevelopment initiative with strategic acquisitions.

For more information see, [Laurel Redevelopment Corporation – Believing in the promise of Laurel](#)

Laurel: Context and Background

Laurel located in western Sussex County Delaware was founded in 1683 and incorporated as a town on April 13, 1883 with almost 4,000 residents located along Broad Creek, a tributary of the Nanticoke River. The Town regards this waterway as its greatest natural asset.

Laurel is included in the Salisbury-MD-DE Metropolitan Area of 375,000 people surrounding an urban center and adjacent areas that are socioeconomically tied to the center by commuting. The area spends over \$155 million annually on recreational pursuits and the town is a two-hour drive from Washington, DC and Philadelphia and less than four hours from New York City. Laurel's location near the center of this cash cow renders it perfectly positioned to take advantage of weary urbanites longing for a rural retreat.

Laurel Redevelopment Corporation (LRC) and local stakeholders, including town leaders, began working with Delaware Sea Grant's (DESG) Sustainable Coastal Communities Initiative in 2012 to "help bring people and jobs back to downtown Laurel."

In 2014 a project known as the Ramble was unveiled. The project's purpose was to work with community to suggest ideas for the revitalization of the downtown and to provide

specific landscape design recommendations for the waterfront. Three specific objectives for the project were:

- To improve the sense of connectedness through a user-friendly greenway extending between existing parks.
- To design a highly visible residential project, consistent with the architectural style of the town and ecological restoration values.
- To propose a mixed-use design alternative for Thompson Block, to be included in the long-term vision of the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation.

The project embraces Broad Creek as a primary community asset and includes design for a nature-based park for children, cottage-style homes, a kayak launch, village green area, emphasis on nature tourism, and new businesses that support the vision for the project and town.

In 2016 the Town was designated as a Downtown Development District (DDD). This designation provides a rebate to investors up to 20 percent of their real property investment cost for qualifying projects and has been catalytic for spurring the Villas on Broad Creek.

The Ramble: Laurel's Commitment to "Partnering" Growth

The Ramble is a vision for redevelopment of the Broad Creek waterfront. Originally, it began as an effort to protect water quality in the creek, which flows to the Nanticoke River and eventually to the Chesapeake Bay.

Town leaders and citizens developed a vision for the waterfront that includes a village green, shops, waterfront cottages, a kayak launch, a nature-based playground, and a wetlands education area. An outfitter to serve paddlers and other outdoor enthusiasts would complement the plan.

Because it is a sustainable development plan, the Ramble has attracted funding to conduct an environmental assessment and develop plans for green infrastructure that will use natural features and limit polluted runoff into the creek.

Volunteers from the Nanticoke Rotary built the kayak launch, and the nature park has been planned down to individual pieces of equipment; advocates are seeking funding to build it.

Transportation Alternatives Program - Addressing the lack of multi-modal infrastructure along the Broad Creek, the Town of Laurel recently requested assistance and funding from the State of Delaware, Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), submitting concept plans, including a multi-use path, curb ramp improvements, ADA upgrades, lighting, landscaping, and site amenities proposal along Broad Creek as a means of enriching the community and attracting new investment.

This became the catalyst for the TAP or **Transportation Alternatives Program**, a multi-phase riverwalk and pathway development project that will connect 4 blocks of waterfront property.

This project is an LRC, Delaware Department of Transportation, and Town of Laurel collaboration is currently in the planning phase with an anticipated construction start date for 2024, and completed by Spring of 2025.

See further, [Virtual Workshop for Laurel Ramble Riverwalk Phase 2 Concept Design - Delaware Department of Transportation \(deldot.gov\)](#)

Tidewater Park - Another key component of The Ramble redevelopment effort is Tidewater Park. The park is envisioned as a nature-based playground with a theme that recognizes the area’s Nanticoke Native American heritage.

Environmental grants have resulted in an extensive environmental assessment and the construction of a unique artificial wetland built on the site to provide habitat, filter stormwater runoff, and protect against flooding and erosion. A walkway throughout the Tidewater site is built, and parking is available. Tree plantings there improve shade and also protect water quality.

The Laurel Market – Commercial Growth/Demographics

In terms of “drive-time”, Laurel is proximate an accessible to a significant number of people with spending potential.

Laurel Regional Population by Drive Time

Source	10 Minute	20 Minute	30 Minute
2000 Census	10,032	44,620	132,641
2010 Census	11,528	53,087	157,030
2020 Estimate	12,400	58,173	171,793
2025 Projection	12,963	61,037	179,227

Laurel Regional Population Growth by Drive Time

Percentage Change	10 Minute	20 Minute	30 Minute
2000 - 2010	20.48	23.32	25.41
2010 - 2020	5.78	10.09	10.76
2020 - 2025	3.50	5.03	5.17

Laurel Regional Income by Drive Time

Percentage Change	10 Minute	20 Minute	30 Minute
2020 Estimated Average Income	68,364.00	76,676.00	78,010.00
2020 Estimated Median Income	52,074.46	59,702.63	60,490.06

Zoning

The subject properties of this RFP are zoned, Marine Resources Use District (M-R). The intent of the Marine Resources use district is to recognize the unique role which Broad Creek and its waterfront areas have played in the formation, growth, and life of the Town of Laurel. The objectives of this District are:

1. To provide for a compatible mixture of waterfront-related uses, including recreational, park, open space and boating uses;
2. To encourage appropriate land development, including the utilization of land and buildings and the adaptive reuse of existing structures, which is in harmony with the conservation of the district's general recreational and open space character and the historic environmental areas adjacent to Broad Creek;
3. To recognize the sensitivity of the unique waterfront environment in this area and reinforce appropriate safeguards to protect the area from periodic flooding, soil erosion, sedimentation and slope failure due to unregulated construction, removal of vegetation, dredging, filling, damming or channelization.
4. To further protect scenic views of the Broad Creek;
5. To encourage public access to the Broad Creek.

For details about permitted uses within this zoning classification see, [ArcView Print Job \(townoflaurel.net\)](#)

RFP Responses

Responses to this RFP should:

- Reflect an understanding of the Town's, Reimagining Laurel, www.reimaginel Laurel.net/the-ramble, and the Laurel Comprehensive Plan 2018, see, https://www.townoflaurel.net/pdfs/2018_ComprehensivePlan.pdf (with particular attention to Chapter 3 Downtown Development District and Community Design).
- Reflect the quality and thoughtfulness of the Town of Denton's, "Pattern Book" It's, <https://dentonmaryland.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Pattern-Book-June-2007.pdf>

The LRC is seeking creative and flexible proposals that will build upon the asset value of the Broad Creek, while at the same time enhance the Downtown Development District and Laurel's historic downtown. A successful proposal will include plans for the redevelopment and/or restoration of the various properties that are presently owned by the LRC.

Proposals may also include suggestions in addition to the parcels depicted in the RFP materials which may require assemblage of land or acquisition of property which may not be owned or controlled by the LRC. All proposals must take into account the adjacent residential and commercial properties.

Successful respondents will demonstrate their capacity to comply with all Town of Laurel site plan regulations and building code requirements. The Town will entertain proposals for a full range of uses consistent with the Marine Resources zoning classification.

All existing utility and related easements shall remain in place.

Incentives

A package of state and local incentives makes it more attractive and less risky to invest in Laurel's Downtown Development District, which includes the beautiful Broad Creek waterfront. The incentives include:

- A rebate to offset up to 20% of the capital construction costs. Rebate funds to investors are administered by the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA). See, [OSPC - Downtown Development Districts \(DDD\) - Office of State Planning Coordination \(OSPC\) - State of Delaware](#)

Investors who make qualified improvements to residential, commercial, or industrial properties in designated districts may also qualify for additional state and local development incentives, which may include:

- A five-year abatement of town property taxes on any improvements made within the Downtown Development District;
- A waiver of sewer and water impact fees, totaling \$7,000 per equivalent dwelling unit,
- Priority access to the state Historic Tax Credit (the area is within Laurel's Historic District). Related incentives including state and federal funding may be available for this project as well depending on timing and availability of funding. It is the responsibility of the RFP respondent to research and pursue the potential incentives and sources available (see, [Delaware Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program - Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs - State of Delaware](#))
- Access to community lending resources,
- Planned amenities, such as a nature-based playground and walking trails, along the Broad Creek waterfront,

- Access to home rehabilitation and home ownership resources, regardless of income

Opportunity Zone

Opportunity Zones are an economic development tool that allows people to invest in various designated areas throughout the United States. Their purpose is to spur economic growth and job creation in low-income communities while providing tax benefits to investors.

Opportunity Zones were created under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 ([Public Law No. 115-97](#)). Thousands of low-income communities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories are designated as Qualified Opportunity Zones.

Taxpayers can invest in these zones through Qualified Opportunity Funds, and the parcels identified in this RFP are within Laurel's designated Opportunity Zone.

See, [List of Laurel, Delaware Opportunity Zones & OZ Funds - OpportunityDb](#), and [Delaware-Opportunity-Zones.pdf](#)

Proposal Submissions

All proposals must include the following and omission of any of the following shall be grounds for disqualification:

- 1) A proposed plan that complies with the goals as outlined in the Ramble Redevelopment and the Town Town's Comprehensive Plans
- 2) A proposed plan for the use of the property (both building and land) and for any adjacent properties that the proposer considers relevant and integral to the response.
- 3) A proposed plan for the use of the property that demonstrates sensitivity to the landscaping, setting and adjacent grounds relative to the redevelopment proposal.
- 4) American Disability Act (ADA) compliance.
- 5) A plan that provides for adequate parking relative to the proposed redevelopment.
- 6) A financial and business plan for the proposed activity.
- 7) A proposed Budget and Timeline for redevelopment of the property.
- 8) A description of how the Respondent anticipates furthering the goals of the Town's downtown redevelopment and revitalization initiatives, including any joint venture, strategic partners or other collaborative efforts.
- 9) A statement of understanding and concurrency with the above conditions
- 10) Information on the Respondent's background (and Partners or General Contractor's, if different than the Respondent), prior experience with rehabilitation/restoration of historic properties.
- 11) A statement as to the proposed actions and practices to be undertaken to preserve the historic fabric of the building, including a statement to the degree

that the Respondent would be willing to consider re-use of original features/materials in order to preserve the building's integrity.
12) Any other conditions, contingencies, or clarifications of the Respondent.

Selection Process

The LRC anticipates naming a Project Review Committee. The Project Review Committee shall review all proposals, conduct interviews with applicants as appropriate, and create a short list of applicants qualified to submit a request for proposal.

The Project Review Committee will make a recommendation to the LRC Board of Directors who will make the final decision regarding this opportunity.

Evaluation Requirements

- Experience and Reputation
- Expertise related to the Scope of Services within this RFP
- Capacity to meet requirements (size, financial condition, etc.)
- Demonstrated ability
- Familiarity with public work and its requirements
- Distribution of work to individuals and firms or economic considerations

Proposals

All proposals must be submitted in writing and respond to the items outlined in this RFP. The LRC reserves the right to reject any non-responsive or nonconforming proposals. Each proposal must be submitted with five (5) paper copies and one (1) electronic copy on CD or DVD media disk, or USB memory drive.

All properly sealed and marked proposals are to be sent to the LRC and received no later than **1:00 PM (Local Time) on August 15, 2022**. The Proposals may be delivered by Express Delivery (e.g., FedEx, UPS, etc.), US Mail, or by hand to:

Laurel Redevelopment Corporation
ATTN: Brian Shannon
109 E Front St.
Laurel, DE 19956

LRC's Right to Cancel Solicitation

The LRC reserves the right to cancel this solicitation at any time during the procurement process, for any reason or for no reason. The LRC makes no commitments expressed or implied, that this process will result in a business transaction with any vendor.

This RFP does not constitute an offer by the LRC. Vendor's participation in this process may result in the LRC selecting your organization to engage in further discussions and

negotiations toward execution of a contract. The commencement of such negotiations does not, however, signify a commitment by the LRC to execute a contract nor to continue negotiations. The LRC may terminate negotiations at any time and for any reason, or for no reason.

Oral Presentations

After initial review and a determination that vendor(s) are qualified to perform the required services, selected vendors may be invited to make oral presentations to the Evaluation Team. All vendor(s) selected will be given an opportunity to present to the Evaluation Team.

Questions

The LRC will allow written requests for clarification of the RFP. All questions shall be received no later than July 5, 2022. Send questions to:

Laurel Redevelopment Corporation
ATTN: Brian Shannon
109 E Front St.
Laurel, DE 19956

All questions will be consolidated into a single set of responses and posted on the LRC's website at www.laurelredevelopment.com by the date of July 18, 2019. Vendor names will be removed from questions in the responses released.