

# LAUREL LIVING

The Official Newsletter for the City of Laurel



## A Message from Mayor Keith R. Sydnor

Dear Laurel Residents,

It is both an honor and a privilege to serve as the 31st mayor of the City of Laurel and to make history as the first African American mayor since our city incorporation in 1870. I want to express my deepest gratitude to the citizens of Laurel for placing your confidence in my knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead our illustrious city. Additionally, I must honor our ancestors; their sacrifices, struggles, and perseverance paved the way for me and countless others to stand in leadership today.

Black history is American history, and to truly appreciate it, we must understand our past in its entirety, both the good and the bad, in chronological order. True healing and progress come only when we address the root causes of historical injustices and uplift the voices that have long been unheard. Black history is more than a story of struggle; it is a story of resilience, innovation, and excellence. It is the untold story of the accomplishments and achievements of Black people who have shaped not only this nation but the world.

As we reflect and celebrate this month, let us commit to building an inclusive community where everyone, regardless of background, has the opportunity to live, grow, and thrive.

### How We Can Celebrate Together

- Support Black-Owned Businesses—Invest in the businesses that contribute to the economic growth of our community.
- Attend Black History Month Events—Engage in local events, discussions, and educational programs.
- Encourage Youth Education—Share resources about Black history with our children to foster understanding and appreciation.
- Commit to Inclusivity—Let's work together to ensure every resident feels valued and heard in our city.

Thank you for being part of the Laurel community, where our diversity is our strength.

### Inside this Edition



Mayor Sydnor and City Council engage residents at Laurel's Town Hall.



Council approves restructuring plan creating Human Services and Emergency Management departments.



City of Laurel kicks off Sustainability Program for greener future.



## Proudly Serving You!



**Kyla Clark**  
Council President, Ward 2



**Councilmember Christine Johnson**  
At-Large



**Councilmember Adrian Simmons**  
Ward 1



**Councilmember James Kole**  
Ward 1



**Councilmember Jeffrey Mills**  
Ward 2



Office of City Administrator  
**Christian L. Pulley, CPM**  
City Administrator  
Ext. 2242



Office of the City Council  
**Sara Green, City Clerk**  
Ext. 2120



Budget and Personnel Services  
**Michele Saylor, Director**  
Ext. 2248



Communications  
**Natalie Williams, Director**  
Ext. 2208



Community Resources  
and Emergency Management  
**Christina Cornwell, Director**  
Ext. 2232



Economic and Community  
Development  
**Monta Burrough, Director**  
Ext. 2301



Fire Marshal and  
Permit Services  
**Danny Selby, Director**  
Ext. 2195



Information Technology  
**James Cornwell-Shiel, Director**  
Ext. 2240



Parks and Recreation  
**Bill Bailey, Director**  
Ext. 2233



Police Department  
**Russell Hamill, Chief**  
(301) 498-0092



Public Works  
**Tim Miller, Director**  
Ext. 3206





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## Community Voices

### Residents Share Concerns and Ideas at Laurel's Annual Town Hall Listening Session Mayor Sydnor Reflects on Year 1 Achievements and Looks Ahead to Year 2

The City of Laurel, Mayor Keith R. Sydnor, and the City Council welcomed residents to the Joseph R. Robison Municipal Center on Thursday, February 6, 2025, for their annual Town Hall Listening Session.

The event provided an open forum for community members to voice their concerns, ask questions, and engage directly with city leaders. Mayor Sydnor opened the session by reflecting on the City's accomplishments over the past year and outlining his priorities for 2025. He highlighted initiatives such as the First-Time Homebuyer Assistance Grant Program and the Thrive Small Business Grant Program, aimed at supporting new homeowners and local entrepreneurs.

Following the mayor's remarks, city department directors provided updates on their achievements and shared their goals for the coming year. Topics ranged from public safety improvements and infrastructure projects to community services and economic development. The City Council then summarized their ongoing efforts and legislative priorities before opening the floor for public discussion.

During the listening session, residents brought forward a range of topics, including concerns about traffic safety, public safety, and the need for expanded city services. Many attendees expressed appreciation for the city's initiatives while also offering feedback on areas for improvement. City officials reaffirmed their commitment to addressing community concerns. For those who were unable to attend, a recording of the Town Hall Listening Session will be available on Laurel TV's YouTube channel.

A public report will be released within 30-60 days, addressing community concerns, and residents are encouraged to stay involved by attending future meetings and forums.



MAYOR KEITH R. SYDNOR

2024

Accomplishments  
& Community Events  
[Download Here](#)



## Laurel's Bold Step Forward: Mayor Sydnor's Restructuring Plan Approved by Laurel City Council

The Laurel City Council approved a major restructuring plan to dissolve the Department of Community Resources and Emergency Management (CREM) at the Twenty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Mayor and City Council of Laurel. This proposal, introduced by Mayor Keith R. Sydnor, aims to improve operational efficiency and service delivery by splitting CREM into two new departments: The Department of Human Services and the Department of Emergency Management.

The new Human Services Department will focus on social services, while the Emergency Management Department will handle disaster preparedness and public safety. Both departments will operate within the current budget, with no additional funding or salary increases.

"This restructuring is a critical step toward enhancing our city's ability to respond to the diverse needs of our community," said Mayor Keith R. Sydnor. "By splitting these departments, we are ensuring that both human services and emergency management can specialize and provide more effective support to our residents, all while maintaining our fiscal responsibility. This decision positions us to better meet both current and future challenges."

The restructuring is designed to streamline operations, allowing each department to focus on its core mission. The Department of Human Services will provide long-term community support, while Emergency Management will focus on crisis response and disaster planning.

On March 18, 2025, the two departments will begin their independent activities.

### DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- Emergency Management
- Preparedness
- Response
- Mitigation
- Other Emergency Operations for the City of Laurel

### DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

- Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center
- Laurel Helping Hands
- Other Social Service Programs for the City of Laurel



#### Charter Resolution No. 180

A CHARTER RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF LAUREL, MARYLAND AMENDING ARTICLE 400 "ADMINISTRATION" OF THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF LAUREL TO REFLECT THE DISSOLUTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (CREM) AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TWO NEW DEPARTMENTS: THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND AMENDING SECTION 469 TO REFLECT "DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT" AND ADD SECTION 470 "DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES." [Click Here To Read Full Charter Resolution No. 180](#)



#### January 6, 2025

Mayor and City Council Work Session

#### January 13, 2025 - 1st Public Hearing

Twenty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Mayor and City Council of Laurel

#### January 27, 2025 - 2nd Public Hearing

Twenty-Fifth Regular Meeting of the Mayor and City Council of Laurel



## Building a Greener Future:

### *Laurel's Sustainability Program Launches with a Commitment to a Greener Community*

The City of Laurel proudly marked a major milestone in its commitment to environmental stewardship with the official launch of its Sustainability Program. The celebration, held at the Joseph R. Robison Municipal Center, brought together local leaders, residents, and sustainability advocates to introduce the city's new initiatives aimed at fostering a greener, more resilient community.

Sustainability Manager Michele Blair welcomed attendees, emphasizing the importance of community-driven efforts to combat climate change and promote sustainable practices. "It was important to me to create a space where residents could get together in person and share their vision of a sustainable community. The result is highlighted in an updated definition of sustainability and divided into community actions, city actions, and community-city actions," Blair stated during her opening remarks.

The event featured interactive exhibits highlighting four key pillars: people, prosperity, planet, and peace/partnership. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about the city's upcoming green initiatives, such as expanded curbside compost pickup, tree-planting efforts, and incentives for residents to adopt sustainable practices.

One exhibitor, Nicole Rodi, a project manager at the consulting firm Michael Baker International, worked closely with Blair to develop strategies that aligned with the focus groups' priorities. She was impressed by the initiatives the City of Laurel had already implemented to promote sustainability. "The plan would not be possible without the great work coming from the city and the community, and it's really going to be the community that's going to help invigorate the plan and move it forward, and I'm excited to see what happens," she said.

It's not just residents who can support green initiatives; several council members, including Council President Kyla Clark, were at the launch party. "We know how much work and thought you have put into this and just wanted to stop by and say thank you and that we appreciate all the time that you have given to making the City of Laurel better," she said.

Ward 1 Councilmember James Kole was one of the first people in the City of Laurel to start composting. He was unsure of it at first, but now he hopes residents will follow suit. "It's the fear of the unknown. So, all these people are going to see this, and they're not going to want to do it because it's change, and once they see how easy it is, I'm hoping that they really embrace it like I have," he said.

The City of Laurel encourages citizens to stay active by volunteering at City events, attending public hearings, and tracking the program's progress on the city's website and new social media platform, Sustainable Laurel.







## Community Unites

### Laurel Honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's Legacy with Annual Day of Service for Benefitting Area Cancer Patients

On January 20, 2025, the City of Laurel came together for its annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, embracing the spirit of the iconic leader with a day of community service, giving, and support. The event was held at the Laurel Municipal Center, where residents and volunteers joined hands to make a difference in the lives of cancer patients in our area.

This year's event, hosted by Mayor Keith R. Sydnor and the Laurel City Council, brought a renewed sense of purpose and unity to our community, with a special partnership with the University of Maryland Laurel Medical Center's Oncology Department. Together, they created an opportunity for both donations and hands-on involvement as volunteers worked to assemble 200 care packages for cancer patients undergoing treatment.

The day began with an inspiring program. Featuring motivational speakers and musical performances by the Laurel High School Choir, attendees were reminded of Dr. King's legacy of service and compassion. After the program, the real work began: assembling care packages filled with thoughtful items designed to support cancer patients during their treatment journey.

While the City of Laurel was fortunate to receive generous support, such as a donation of water for the care packages from Sam's Club. The community stepped up with contributions of warm blankets and socks, moisturizers, lip balm, headwear, salon gift cards, snacks, and items of entertainment such as books, coloring books, journals, headphones, and movies. Most importantly, the packages included heartfelt messages of inspiration—cards, letters, photos, and quotes that remind patients they are supported and loved.

Councilmember Christine Johnson, who initiated this program several years ago, reflected on the growth of the event, saying, "When I started the program several years ago, I didn't imagine how far we'd come." Her words encapsulate the incredible evolution of this event, which has grown from a small community effort into a full-scale day of service that brings together people from all walks of life for a shared cause.

Through the generosity and dedication of local residents, the care packages will provide comfort, encouragement, and support to cancer patients in our communities, making this year's event a success and a shining example of the continued legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.





## *It's a Family Affair:*

# Laurel Commemorates Black History Month with Powerful Performances, Inspiring Speakers and Community Give Back.

On Saturday, February 8, 2025, community members gathered for a powerful Black History Month celebration, coordinated by Council President Kyla Clark (Ward 2). The event, rich with culture, reflection, and inspiration, highlighted the importance of unity, history, and giving back.

"The City of Laurel's 2025 Black History Month program is more than a celebration—it's a commitment to honoring the resilience, labor, and contributions of African Americans. This year's theme, 'African Americans and Labor: The Art of Liberation,' highlights the ongoing fight for economic empowerment and justice," said Council President Kyla Clark. "I wanted this year's event to provide a safe and supportive space for Black-owned businesses, uplift our local youth organizations, and bring the community resources to the residents of Laurel, ensuring they see their history reflected, their voices heard, and their futures supported."

Emceed by Sata Diop, DEIB Senior Consultant & Founder of Inclusion X, the event featured a moving performance of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" by the Laurel High School Choir, led by Choir Director Kevin Lewis. Mayor Keith R. Sydnor delivered opening remarks, emphasizing the significance of Black history and its ongoing impact on the community. The program continued with a heartfelt poem, "Dreaming" by Kay Kiara, also known as "The Storyteller," and an inspiring address titled "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child" by Joanne Awuor Oport of Africans for Mental Health.

The highlight of the evening was the featured speaker Joanne Awuor Oport, who delivered a compelling message about resilience, leadership, and the power of community. Another stirring performance by the Laurel High School Chorus further enriched the program.

The theme of giving back was reinforced through a segment led by Sata Diop, featuring organizations such as First Generation College Bound, Bernadette's House, and Winning in Sports & Education (WISE), each dedicated to uplifting and empowering young people through education and mentorship.





## **Connecting and Growing: Laurel Board of Trade Kicks Off 2025 with Business Roundtable and Networking Event**

The Laurel Board of Trade (LBOT) started 2025 off with a Business Roundtable and Networking event held at the Joseph R. Robison Municipal Center. Business owners were able to gather and learn about what LBOT had to offer while participating in discussions and getting to know other businesses in the area. Directors from the City of Laurel also participated, so attendees got to learn how the different departments around the city could benefit their businesses.

This Business Roundtable and Networking event is one of the many networking events that the Laurel Board of Trade hosts throughout the year to help bring area businesses together. Founded in the 1960s, LBOT has been dedicated to fostering economic growth and community engagement. With over 100 members, ranging from retail merchants and restaurants to professional service providers, the Laurel Board of Trade collaborates with local and state agencies to ensure Laurel remains a vibrant commercial hub. They are also known for hosting popular events like the Main Street Festival and Trick or Treat on Main. In recent years, they also added a popular Holiday Storefront Decorating Contest to help bring holiday cheer to the City of Laurel.

Businesses looking to join the Laurel Board of Trade can easily become members by selecting from various membership options available on their website, [www.laurelboardoftrade.org](http://www.laurelboardoftrade.org), and can be submitted online or by mail. By joining, businesses gain access to networking opportunities, promotional events, and a collective voice in local economic initiatives. As Laurel continues to grow, the Board remains dedicated to fostering a strong and supportive environment for local entrepreneurs.



### **BOARD VACANCY**

The City of Laurel is currently accepting applications for a vacancy on the Historic District Commission. This important commission plays a key role in preserving and enhancing the city's rich history and architectural heritage, providing oversight on projects and changes within the Laurel Historic District. For more information, please call 301-725-5300, ext. 2301 or 2314, or email [ECD@laurel.md.us](mailto:ECD@laurel.md.us).



## ***Heart Health Month:*** **A Focus on Wellness for City of Laurel Employees**



To celebrate Heart Health Month, the City of Laurel hosted a "Lunch and Learn" session for employees, focusing on ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Attendees enjoyed a light lunch, received free shirts, and gained valuable tips for heart health. "A healthy heart contributes to overall well-being. We have over 200 employees, and we want them to be around for a long time, taking care of their hearts," said Pat Haag, the City's Risk Management Officer and Wellness Coordinator. The heart health series will continue every Friday in February, with one session offering a deeper dive into heart health and the final session focusing on avoiding health risks and the role heart health plays in prevention.

## ***A New Era of Community Support Begins:*** **City of Laurel Combats Food Insecurity with New Partnership**



In an inspiring move to tackle food insecurity within the community, the City of Laurel has partnered with Priority Partners to launch the Priority Partners Cupboards Project. This initiative aims to provide families with easy access to healthy food and essential resources, marking a significant step toward ensuring that every individual has access to nutritious meals in the new year.

The grand opening of the first-ever self-serve mini-pantries in Prince George's County took place at the Laurel Armory, located at 422 Montgomery St. The mini pantry offers free access to non-perishable, nutritious food, catering specifically to areas in the city that experience food scarcity.

Mayor Keith R. Sydnor says, "Food insecurity is a major issue in our country, and the new partnership with Priority Partners is just one way the city is working to ensure that our residents have access to the necessary resources to thrive in our community."



## ***Our Commitment to Environmental Responsibility:*** **City of Laurel Health Fair 2025**

The City of Laurel held their highly anticipated Health Fair on January 18, 2025, at the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center. The event brought together citizens, health experts, and local exhibitors for a day of health education and wellbeing.

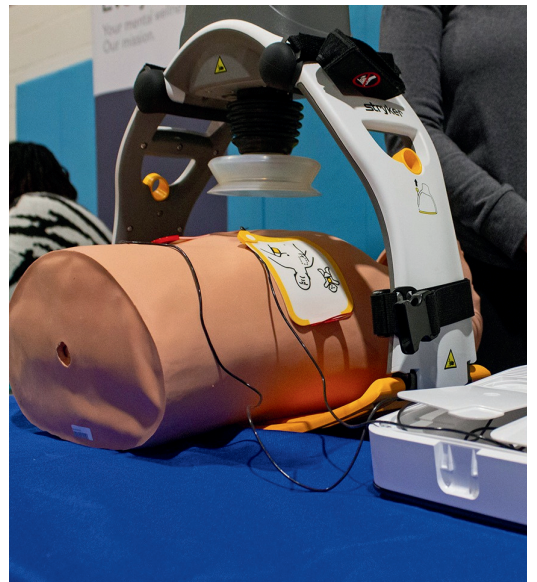
The Laurel City Council's President, Kyla Clark, was in attendance and welcomed everyone. She underlined the significance of remaining knowledgeable about one's personal health and how community activities like the Health Fair encourage residents in taking proactive efforts towards bettering their health.

The fair offered a variety of services aimed at enhancing residents' health, including free blood pressure screenings, diabetes screenings, flu vaccines, and fitness demonstrations. For those looking to protect themselves during flu season, the flu vaccines were administered on-site, providing an opportunity for attendees to stay up to date with their health and avoid preventable illnesses. Additionally, clinical references were available to help residents understand the importance of regular health check-ups and staying current with necessary vaccinations and screenings.

The event also featured local health vendors from the greater Laurel area, offering information about available services, wellness products, and fitness options. Attendees had the chance to explore resources that support long-term health and connect with professionals who can guide them on their wellness journey.

The health fair was a successful and empowering event that provided attendees with the tools and knowledge to take charge of their health. The City of Laurel remains committed to supporting the health and vitality of its community and looks forward to hosting more events like this to continue fostering a healthier, stronger Laurel.

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make this health fair a success!





## Ally Ramsey Photography

Have you been looking to get new family portraits or have a graduating senior in need of a photoshoot, but don't know who to turn to? Ally Ramsey Photography offers a fine art approach to create beautiful portraits to preserve those special moments.

Ally's background as a museum curator means that you won't just get a photo, you'll get a museum-quality piece designed specifically for you! Through in-home design consultations, she collaborates closely with clients to ensure each piece reflects their unique style and space.

Her expertise extends to event photography, including weddings, branding sessions, and concerts, capturing life's most meaningful moments with an artistic touch. Discover more at [AllyRamsey.com](http://AllyRamsey.com).



## Supporting Local Businesses



THE LAUREL BOARD OF TRADE  
SMALL BUSINESS. BIG IDEAS.

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Laurel, MD 20707



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# EQUITY IN ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ROUNDTABLE

Discussing Equity During Black History Month & the Master Plan Process

## DATE & TIME

**February 26, 2025**  
**6:00PM – 7:30PM**

## LOCATION

**Joseph R. Robison**  
**Laurel Municipal Center**

8103 SANDY SPRING ROAD  
LAUREL, MD 20707

Black History Month presents an important opportunity to take up equity in planning and zoning, a practice in which communities reflect on past injustices and plan a path forward that fosters greater inclusiveness.

**A Master Plan process can be most appropriately launched with consideration of equity during the beginnings.**

## KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

### 1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF LAND USE & RACIAL DISPARITIES

- Account for past policy decisions like redlining, racial covenants, and urban renewal that have caused segregation, disinvestment, and displacement in Black communities.
- Emphasize how the previous zoning laws perpetuated disparities in housing, accumulation of wealth, and economic opportunities.

### 2. ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS THROUGH THE MASTER PLAN

- Commit to equity-focused zoning reforms that promote affordable (and mixed-income) housing, economic opportunity, and access to public services in historically marginalized areas.
- Ensure the Master Plan incorporates anti-displacement strategies, supports minority-owned businesses, and provides equal access to transit and green spaces.

### 3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & THE PLANNING PROCESS

- Hold inclusive town halls during Black History Month. This is a time when Black residents and historically underrepresented communities can make their needs known.
- Use inclusive planning tools to review policy consequences at various racial and socioeconomic levels, which are known as equity impact assessments.

### 4. FOSTERING ECONOMIC & HOUSING EQUITY

- Encourage policies that promote home ownership, workforce development, and small business growth in Black communities.
- Research tools to incentivize more affordable (and mixed-income) housing options, such as Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).

### 5. COMMITTING TO ONGOING EQUITY MEASURES

- Establish the Equity in Economic & Community Development Advisory Committee (EECDAC) to oversee the implementation of equity-focused policies.
- Use data-driven accountability measures to track progress on racial and economic equity outcomes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

**ECD@laurel.md.us**