



# CITY OF LAUREL OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Keith R. Sydnor  
Mayor

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May 1, 2025

Laurel City Council President Kyla Clark  
Laurel City Councilmembers  
8103 Sandy Spring Road  
Laurel, Maryland 20707

Dear President Clark and Laurel City Councilmembers,

It is with great pleasure that I present my budget message alongside the FY2026 City of Laurel General Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The FY2026 budget is focused on maintaining essential services for both our residents and businesses. It relies on the revenue generated by Laurel's taxpayers to cover critical expenses, such as employee compensation, insurance, and debt service, as well as fulfilling our contractual obligations. Additionally, it addresses potential uncertainties related to reductions in federal, state, and county revenues.

As we strive to provide the highest level of service to our community, we are mindful of the challenges that persist as a result of the pandemic's long-term effects and the ongoing volatility in the national economy. Despite some alleviation of pandemic-related hurdles, we continue to face new challenges. Nevertheless, the Administration and City staff remain committed to adapting to these shifts and maintaining our responsiveness to evolving needs.

A positive development from the FY2025 budget was the progress we made in recruiting, hiring, and retaining a talented City workforce. We are committed to sustaining this momentum into FY2026, ensuring that we have the dedicated team necessary to carry out our City's priorities and continue advancing our mission.

The City's proposed FY2026 budget continues its commitment to our dedicated staff with a proposed 2.5% COLA and the 2.5% merit increases. The FY2026 proposed budget also includes funding in accordance with the fourth Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City and FOP Lodge No. 11 and the first Collective Bargaining Agreement with UFCW 1994 for some members of the Department of Public Works. These efforts will continue to allow the City to remain competitive in its recruitment and encourage the retention of a well-trained workforce.

I am delighted to inform you that for FY2026, the City of Laurel Proposed Budget is once again presented without a tax rate increase, maintaining the City's real property tax rate at \$.71 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation, and the Personal Property tax rate will remain at \$1.69 per

\$100 of assessed value. The tax rate for the Special Taxing District is \$0.03 per \$100 for the full cash value assessment. The proposed budget continues to provide all City services at FY2025 service levels.

It has been an honor to serve the Laurel community over the past 18 months. Watching our City thrive and witnessing the continued development of strong community connections has been incredibly rewarding for our Administration. This year has been marked by several significant achievements, and I am proud to share some key milestones:

- **Town Hall Listening Session:** This past February, we hosted our second Town Hall Listening Session, fostering open, transparent dialogue with our residents and providing critical updates on developments in Laurel.
- **Laurel Police Department's Year in Review:** The Laurel Police Department held their annual Town Hall Meeting: A Year in Review. This session allowed for an in-depth discussion of crime statistics and new policing strategies, offering residents the opportunity to voice their concerns and share suggestions for enhancing public safety.
- **National League of Cities Centennial Roadshow:** Laurel was proud to host the National League of Cities Centennial Roadshow at the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center Gymnasium. This event highlighted our commitment to improving the lives of those experiencing homelessness and explored how the facility can further contribute to the wellness of our community.
- **Collective Bargaining Contract:** We were excited to finalize the Collective Bargaining contract with the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994 and Public Works. This agreement ensures fair wages, improved benefits, and fosters a collaborative labor environment.
- **Emergency Response Training:** In partnership with BG&E, the City organized a pioneering training session with municipalities in Northern Prince George's County, focused on enhancing emergency response strategies.
- **Safe Summer Nights Program:** To combat juvenile misconduct, we introduced the Safe Summer Nights Program. This initiative provided recreational activities, mentorship, and a supportive environment for our city's youth.
- **Grand Opening of the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center:** On September 10, 2024, we celebrated the Grand Opening of the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center. This comprehensive resource facility will offer essential services such as free meals, grooming services (including showers and laundry), and job support.
- **1st Annual Veterans' Day Breakfast:** We held our inaugural Veterans' Day Breakfast to honor and thank our local veterans for their service. This event underscored the City's ongoing commitment to supporting the veteran community and recognizing their sacrifices.
- **Community Food Cupboard Initiative:** In November, we launched the first-ever Community Food Cupboard Initiative in collaboration with Johns Hopkins Health Plan and a Prince George's County nonprofit. This initiative addresses food insecurity in our community and provides vital resources to those in need.

These are just a few of the many initiatives and community events that have taken place over the past year. FY2025 has truly been a remarkable year for our city, and I look forward to continuing this progress. Below is a summary of some of the key achievements of our departments:

**City Council Office:**

- **Ordinance No. 2030:** Drafted and passed the City's first Public School Employee Tax Credit, offering a property tax credit for real property owned and occupied by Prince George's County Public School employees serving the greater Laurel area.
- **Ordinance No. 2032:** Drafted and passed an amendment to the City Code relating to the use of City Seals and logos.
- **Resolution No. 4-2024:** Drafted and passed a resolution approving a complete rewrite of the City Council Standing Rules.

**Council Clerk's Office:**

- Managed the City's Paper Records Digitization project, collaborating with the Department of Fire Marshal and Permit Services and the Laurel Police Department to digitize their records.
- Planned, implemented, and oversaw the Council Vacancy nomination process, successfully onboarding the selected Councilmember.
- Partnered with the Board of Election Supervisors to draft amendments to the City Charter and Code regarding elections.

**City Administrator's Office:**

- Completed the City's first strategic plan, which established a clear roadmap for defining our mission, vision, and goals based on community and employee input.
- Successfully revamped the Volunteer Laurel! Program, significantly increasing volunteer participation across the City's boards, commissions, committees, and events, with a notable rise in school-aged youth engagement for community service hours.

**Budget and Personnel Services:**

- Implemented an orientation program for new employees to ensure a smooth and effective transition.
- Introduced new risk management procedures for parade and public assembly permits, as well as for city contractors.
- Launched a worker's compensation back-to-work program to find light-duty assignments for employees in any city department.
- Rolled out the PNC Employee Financial Wellness Program to support employees' financial well-being.

**Department of Communications:**

- Launched the inaugural edition of *Laurel Living*, the city's official newsletter, reinforcing our commitment to transparency and open communication with residents.

- Completed significant audio and visual upgrades in the Council Chambers to enhance both in-person and hybrid meeting experiences.
- Partnered with Chesapeake Math and IT (CMIT) Academy North High School for their inaugural participation in the C-SPAN StudentCam Competition, teaching students interviewing, editing, and video production techniques.

#### **Department of Emergency Management:**

- Successfully renewed the City's Community Rating System (CRS) in October 2024, ensuring residents retain a 15% discount on flood insurance premiums.
- Supported the community by serving hot chocolate at Trick or Treat Main Street and the Holiday Tree Illumination events.

#### **Department of Fire Marshal and Permit Services:**

- Adopted Chapter 18, "Buildings and Building Codes," to update the City Code.
- Fully digitized the Soil and Erosion Program for improved efficiency.
- Introduced multi-generational Fire and Life Safety presentations to reach broader audiences.

#### **Department of Human Services:**

- The new Human Services Department continues to support homeless and vulnerable populations at the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center.
- Fostered partnerships with local government agencies and organizations to expand services at the Laurel Multiservice Center.
- Hosted a successful Mental Health Awareness Event on May 18, 2024, aimed at education and reducing stigma.
- Opened the Craig A. Moe Laurel Multiservice Center on September 10, 2024, providing essential services to our community.

#### **Department of Information Technology:**

- Launched the city's Youth Apprenticeship Program to introduce high school students to IT career opportunities.
- Deployed new computers, security, and network systems across three facilities, including the new Laurel Multiservice Center.
- Initiated a website revision project to improve resident communications and make information more accessible.

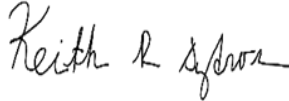
As we move into the FY2026 budget, our focus will be on advancing sustainable development, enhancing community engagement, ensuring a safe and healthy environment for all, and cultivating a premier workplace for our City employees. We will continue minimizing paper usage by providing council members with digital access to the proposed budget for the tenth consecutive year.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the Budget Committee. Ms. Michele Saylor, Director of Budget and Personnel Services; Mrs. Lisa Woods, Deputy Director of Budget and Personnel Services; Ms. Melissa Klinger, Human Resources Officer of Budget and Personnel Services; as well as the leadership of Ms. Joanne Barr, Retired Deputy City Administrator, and Ms. Christian L. Pulley, CPM, City Administrator. Together, they have worked diligently to propose a complete and balanced budget. I look forward to your review and adoption of the FY2026 Budget and CIP document.

A heartfelt thank you to the council president and the members of the Laurel City Council for your ongoing support and commitment to our residents and businesses throughout the past year. I also extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated City employees, under the leadership of City Administrator Christian L. Pulley, CPM, and retired Deputy City Administrator Joanne Barr. Your tireless efforts continue to make Laurel a better place for all.

Let's work together to make the most of all the resources in the City's toolbox to foster our community's growth and success!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith R. Sydnor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keith" being the most prominent.

Keith R. Sydnor  
Mayor, City of Laurel