

# LAUREL LIVING

The Official Newsletter for the City of Laurel



## A Message from Mayor Keith R. Sydnor

As Veterans Day approaches, I extend heartfelt gratitude to all who have served in the United States Armed Forces. Your service and sacrifice have played a pivotal role in ensuring our nation's safety, freedom, and values. Your willingness to put the country above self is admirable, and we owe you our deepest respect.

This year's theme, A Legacy of Loyalty and Service, captures the essence of being a veteran—a lifelong commitment that endures beyond military service. Prince George's County, Maryland, is home to 52,203 veterans, the largest veteran population in the state, representing 7.41% of the county's adult population. The City of Laurel is privileged to have approximately 1,339 veteran residents, a testament to the strong tradition of service and duty that defines our community.

As a retired United States Navy Chief Petty Officer, I served for 24 years, with deployments for Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom. My Navy service instilled values of loyalty, integrity, and service—principles that guide me today as Mayor of Laurel.

This Veterans Day, let's all pause to recognize the sacrifices of our veterans, who continue contributing in remarkable ways. Beyond words of thanks, let's understand the depth of their sacrifices and ongoing challenges. Volunteering, attending ceremonies, or engaging in conversation with veterans are ways to show our appreciation.

Most importantly, let their sacrifices inspire us to work toward a stronger, more unified community for all.



### In His Own Words. A Must See! [Video Watch](#)

Mayor Sydnor shares reflections on his service to our nation. Watch it on our YouTube page [@LaurelTVOfficial](#) by selecting the November 2024 Newsletter Playlist.



City Council backs  
Eric's Law to support  
individuals with  
invisible disabilities



Laurel offers \$5,000 grants  
to help first-time buyers  
achieve homeownership



Laurel celebrates women  
entrepreneurs with  
inspiring workshops,  
networking, and support  
for small businesses.



## Proudly Serving You!



**James Kole**  
Council President, Ward 1



**Councilmember Christine Johnson**  
At-Large



**Councilmember Adrian Simmons**  
Ward 1



**Councilmember Kyla Clark**  
Ward 2



**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



**Office of the Mayor**  
**Ana Navarro, Executive Asst.**  
Ext. 2124



**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

## Advocating for Awareness

# City Council Shows Overwhelming Support for Eric's Law, Advocates for Nonapparent Disability Protections Ahead of 2025 Legislative Session

As the 2025 Maryland General Assembly session approaches, the City Council is lending strong support to Eric's Law, a proposed bill that aims to protect individuals with nonapparent disabilities by allowing them to indicate their condition on state-issued identification, such as driver's licenses. Though the bill was introduced during the 2024 legislative session, it did not make it out of committee. Now, the council is urging state legislators to revisit and pass this essential measure, which they believe would bridge critical communication gaps between individuals with invisible disabilities and law enforcement officials.

Eric's Law, named after Eric Carpenter-Grantham, is the brainchild of Carpenter-Grantham himself, who recognized the difficulties faced by individuals with nonapparent disabilities, such as autism, mental health concerns, and hearing impairments, in high-stakes interactions with law enforcement. The bill proposes a special "ND" (Nonapparent Disability) designation on IDs, allowing quick and clear identification of those with conditions that might affect communication, cognition, and emotional regulation. Councilmembers hope this measure will reduce misunderstandings and help prevent dangerous situations for individuals whose disabilities are not immediately visible.

"Eric's Law is an essential step toward ensuring our residents with nonapparent disabilities are respected and understood in every interaction, especially with law enforcement," Mayor Sydnor stated. "Our community stands behind this bill, and I am fully committed to raising awareness and pushing for its passage in Annapolis. Together, we can make Maryland a safer and more inclusive place for all."

To further assist with identification, Eric's Law would include specific logos on driver's licenses, college IDs, library cards, and other IDs as a visual cue for disabilities like autism, mental health concerns, and hearing impairments. These logos would serve as a tool to facilitate safer interactions and help law enforcement and community members recognize and understand the unique needs of individuals with nonapparent disabilities.

The Council is hopeful that, through early advocacy, Maryland state delegates, including Senators William C. Smith, Jr., Esquire, Michael A. Jackson, and Delegate Lesley J. Lopez—sponsors of the original bills (SB1096 and HB1456)—will bring Eric's Law back to the floor in 2025 with renewed support. Councilmembers expressed their commitment to assisting in advancing this vital legislation and are optimistic that the Maryland General Assembly will recognize the bill's value to both the community and law enforcement.

## Eric's Id Law - ID Examples



Hearing Impaired



Autistic



Mental Health

## NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETINGS

Mayor and City Council Work Session, **November 4 @ 5pm (In-Person)**

Eighteenth Mayor and City Council Meeting, **November 4 @ 6pm (In-Person)**

Nineteenth Mayor and City Council Meeting, **November 25th @ 6pm (In-Person)**

Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center  
8103 Sandy Spring Road, Laurel, Maryland 20707

# **Mayor Sydnor Launches First-Time Homebuyer Assistance Program**

## **Empowering Laurel Residents to Achieve the Dream of Homeownership**

The City of Laurel is excited to announce the launch of its new *First-Time Homebuyer Assistance Program*, spearheaded by Mayor Keith R. Sydnor. This initiative is designed to provide financial support to individuals and families looking to purchase their first home within the city limits. With homeownership being a vital step toward building wealth and stability, the program aims to make this milestone more accessible for those who may need extra help.

The City has allocated \$60,000 from its FY2025 budget to fund the program, offering \$5,000 grants to 12 eligible first-time homebuyers. These grants can be used toward down payments or closing costs on a single-family home, townhouse, or condominium within the city. The program reflects Laurel's ongoing commitment to empowering residents and promoting long-term investment in the community.

Mayor Sydnor highlighted the program's importance, stating, "Owning a home is not just a milestone, it's an investment in the future—both for individuals and for our community. The City of Laurel is committed to providing the resources necessary to help families achieve this dream and to strengthen our city's neighborhoods. This program is a testament to our belief in Laurel's bright future and our residents' ability to thrive."

### **Program Highlights**

- » The program is open to qualified first-time homebuyers who settle on a home between October 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025.
- » The purchased home must be located within the City of Laurel limits and must be the applicant's primary residence for at least three years.
- » Household income at the time of settlement must not exceed \$100,000.

Interested applicants will need to provide key documents, including proof of income and a settlement statement, before receiving the grant. Full details on eligibility and application requirements are available on the City's website at [www.cityoflaurel.org](http://www.cityoflaurel.org).



### **Brewing Connections**

## **Laurel Celebrates Maryland Economic Development Week**



The City of Laurel Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD) proudly hosted *Connect over Coffee* on Wednesday October 23rd, a networking event celebrating Maryland Economic Development Week, which ran from October 21-25.

Maryland Economic Development Week is crucial as it highlights the importance of fostering economic growth and innovation in our communities. This networking event provided a valuable opportunity for small businesses in the Laurel Business Community to network, share valuable insights, and foster connections. Laurel ECD is honored to support our vibrant community and enhance community collaboration.



## Building Connections and Knowledge

### The City of Laurel Hosts Inspiring Workshop for Women Entrepreneurs

The City of Laurel hosted an inspiring Women in Business event at the Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center, drawing together local entrepreneurs, professionals, and community leaders to celebrate the power of women in the workforce. The event provided a platform for connection, collaboration, and inspiration among attendees.

“The Total Package: A Small Business Workshop for Women” kicked off with a welcome address from Mayor Keith R. Sydnor, who emphasized the importance of supporting women entrepreneurs in the community, stating it was a good way to “raise awareness for the challenges women face in small businesses.”

Following the opening remarks, attendees enjoyed a dynamic panel discussion featuring accomplished local businesswomen. Panelists included Lola Pyne, founder of Pyne Creative, Adrianne Munroe, a personal stylist, and Alegra Hall, a seasoned TV producer. They shared their journeys, challenges, and triumphs in building their businesses, offering valuable insights on resilience and adaptability.

A highlight of the event was the breakout sessions, where participants engaged in workshops focused on key topics like digital marketing and personal branding. Led by expert facilitators, these interactive sessions provided practical tools and resources for attendees to implement in their own ventures. Many left with new contacts and invigorated plans for their businesses, reflecting the event’s goal of fostering a supportive community for women.

Economic and Community Development Director Monta Burrough said the City of Laurel’s Women in Business event “was an enriching experience that fostered collaboration and offered valuable resources on digital marketing, personal branding and much more for women entrepreneurs.” As attendees left the event, they carried with them new connections, knowledge, and a renewed sense of purpose.

The City of Laurel looks forward to hosting more events that uplift and empower women, continuing to build a strong network of support and inspiration for future leaders. Stay tuned for upcoming initiatives aimed at enhancing business opportunities and fostering collaboration among women in our community.

For more information about upcoming events, visit the City of Laurel’s official website or follow us on social media.



#### [Video Watch](#)

To catch all the highlights from the “Women in Business” event, head over to our YouTube channel, [@LaurelTVOfficial](#), and click on the November 2024 Newsletter Playlist.

## Celebrating Heritage and Unity Hispanic Heritage Month at Laurel's Municipal Center



On October 19, 2024, Mayor Keith R. Sydnor and the City of Laurel hosted a bilingual celebration at the Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center to honor Hispanic Heritage Month. The event featured captivating traditional dance performances by Tecuanes Tenaninsi and Danza Salvador Divino, showcasing the richness of Hispanic culture. During the celebration, the City of Laurel proudly awarded Mayoral Community Citizen Awards to Samantha Howard and Cristina Urdinola for their impactful contributions to the Hispanic community.

Samantha Howard, with over 15 years as Coordinator of Recruitment and Community Relations at Prince George's Community College, has advocated for underrepresented students, particularly Hispanic/Latino residents, and has built essential community partnerships. Her initiatives include eliminating out-of-state tuition for undocumented residents and DACA recipients and promoting inclusive language in college applications.

Cristina Urdinola has dedicated the past eight years to Side by Side of Laurel, where she provides resources, learning support, translation services, and childcare for elementary students and their families. For the last three years, she has also offered translation support to Laurel Advocacy and Referral Services.

We honor Samantha Howard for her leadership, advocacy, and lasting contributions to a stronger, more inclusive community. We also celebrate Cristina Urdinola, whose selflessness and dedication to improving the lives of others embody the spirit of community service. Together, their passion and commitment have significantly impacted the City of Laurel and its residents.

A highlight of the evening was a keynote address by Rep. Joseline Peña-Melnyk, who emphasized unity, cultural pride, and the essential role of the Hispanic community in American society. This vibrant event celebrated the diversity and achievements of Hispanic Americans and underscored the importance of inclusivity in Laurel.

Overall, the event fostered a spirit of community and inclusivity, encouraging all to embrace and celebrate Hispanic heritage. It served not only as a celebration but also as a reminder of the importance of recognizing and honoring the contributions of Hispanic individuals and communities throughout history.



### Video Watch

See the highlights from our Hispanic Heritage Month celebration! Visit our YouTube channel, [@LaurelTVOfficial](#), and click on the November 2024 Newsletter Playlist to watch.



*We Appreciate You!*

**Thank you to our local businesses for your in-kind contributions.**

Amigos Mexican Grill • La Fogata • Chido's • Megamart Supermarket

## Bridging Faith and Public Service

### Mayor Sydnor and City Leaders Host Clergy at Craig A. Moe Multiservice Center



The City of Laurel recently hosted its quarterly Clergy Advisory Committee meeting at the newly dedicated Craig A. Moe Multiservice Center, where Mayor Keith R. Sydnor and city department heads gathered with local clergy members. These quarterly meetings are an essential platform for city leaders and clergy to exchange information on community issues, share the latest updates, and strengthen partnerships in service to Laurel's residents. Clergy members play a vital role in the city's communication network, bringing insight into the needs and concerns of residents and sharing valuable resources with their congregations.

Held within the new Multiservice Center, the meeting included a special tour, allowing clergy attendees to explore the facility's offerings firsthand. This unique space is dedicated to supporting the community's vulnerable populations, aligning with Former Mayor Craig A. Moe's vision of promoting stability and self-sufficiency.

## Crispy, Clean, and Convenient

### Laurel's Own Brian Lee Brings Flavorful, All-Natural Fry Mix to the Table

Brian Lee, a Laurel native and culinary innovator, is making waves in the food industry with his product, Scratch Fry Mix. Brian developed a blend that combines all-natural ingredients like organic cornmeal, garlic powder, and a medley of spices to provide home cooks with an easy and versatile solution for frying, enhancing flavors without relying on artificial additives for a perfect balance of flavor and crispiness.



Scratch Frying Mix was developed after Brian noticed a gap in the market for premium frying solutions that prioritized clean ingredients. The product is free from artificial preservatives and additives, appealing to health-conscious consumers who still want to indulge in their favorite fried foods.

Since its launch in 2020, Scratch Fry Mix has garnered positive reviews and a growing following among food enthusiasts and chefs alike. The blend not only enhances traditional frying but also adapts seamlessly to baking and air frying, making it a valuable addition to any kitchen.

In response to customer demand, he's developed additional products, like seasoning blends designed to complement various cuisines and baking mixes for healthier breakfast and desserts. Scratch also has a variety of flours and spices that are used in their mixes available for purchase on their website. As Scratch continues to grow, it is poised to become a kitchen staple, inviting home cooks to embark on new culinary adventures with every product. You can currently find their Scratch Fry Mix at Walmart.

For more information about Scratch Fry Mix and its line of products, visit [www.scratchgrocery.com](http://www.scratchgrocery.com).



## Getting to Know Your City

### Laurel Citizens University Enhances Understanding of City Operations

When residents are asking questions and looking to their local government on ways to connect with them, what can that entity do? For the City of Laurel, the answer was to create Laurel Citizens University, a unique program designed to enhance community engagement and foster a deeper understanding of local government operations. This innovative program invites residents to learn about the City's services, initiatives, and opportunities for involvement.

Laurel Citizens University aims to bridge the gap between citizens and their local government by providing participants with firsthand insights into various departments and their functions. The program consists of a series of interactive sessions that will cover topics such as city planning, public safety, parks and recreation, and economic development.

Each session will feature speakers from City of Laurel employees from various departments, engaging presentations, and opportunities for Q&A, ensuring that residents leave with a comprehensive understanding of how their city operates. This approach gives them the full picture of how decisions are made and how we use each residents' input to create a government geared towards their needs and confirms how important this communication is for the Laurel community and its government.

Careen Koubek, the Special Assistant to the City Administrator and organizer of Laurel Citizens University, expressed her enthusiasm for the program, stating, "Laurel Citizens University is a fantastic opportunity for our residents to get involved and learn how they can contribute to our community. We want to empower citizens to be active participants in shaping the future of the City of Laurel."

Classes, which started on October 3rd, are held weekly over an eight-week period, with sessions scheduled in the evenings. Residents can speak directly with City Officials and gain valuable knowledge about City governance and civic responsibility.

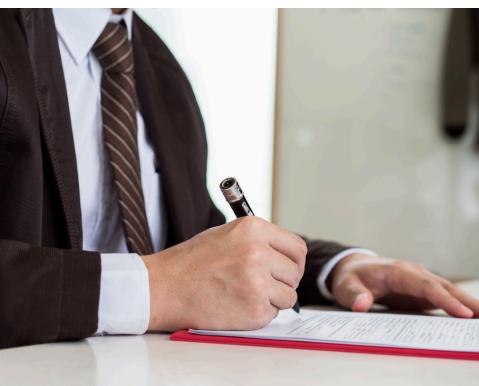
In addition to the educational aspect, the program encourages networking among residents, fostering connections that strengthen the community bond. Participants will also be encouraged to share their ideas and suggestions, helping to shape the future initiatives of the city. This program is ideal for anyone interested in becoming more involved in local affairs, whether you're a long-time resident or new to the area.

To learn more about the program, that opens every fall, and other opportunities you can take advantage of, visit the City of Laurel's web site at [www.cityoflaurel.org](http://www.cityoflaurel.org).

## Opportunity to Serve the City of Laurel: Now Accepting Resumes

The City of Laurel is currently accepting resumes for two important vacancies: Ward 2 Planning Commission and Ward 1 Board of Election Judge. These roles offer an opportunity to serve your community and contribute to the growth and governance of Laurel.

**Interested? Email: [Laurelmayor@laurel.md.us](mailto:Laurelmayor@laurel.md.us)**



## Spooktacular Fun

# Laurel's Trick or Treat on Main Street Brings Community Together

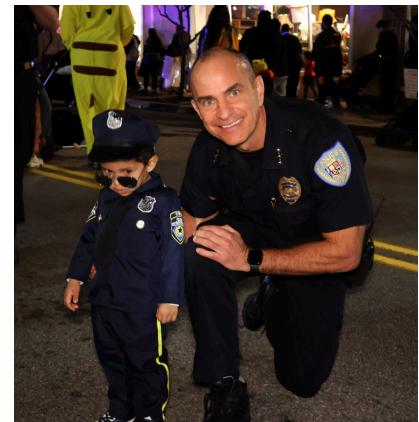
Laurel's Main Street transformed into a festive center of fun and spooky activities for the Laurel Board of Trade's annual Trick or Treat on Main Street. Families decked out in their most creative costumes, filled the street with anticipation for candy and community spirit.

Local businesses lined the street with decorated storefronts and set up tables spread with sweet treats. From ghoulishly decorated restaurants to spooky boutiques, each stop along Main Street offered something special for the trick-or-treaters.

Kids of all ages eagerly collected candy from each storefront while showing off their costumes, ranging from superheroes to classic witches, and some original creations.

The Laurel Police Department were also on hand, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone. The event fostered a strong sense of community, bringing residents together in celebration of the Halloween season.

Trick or Treat on Main Street was not just an evening of candy collecting, it was a celebration of local spirit, creativity, and togetherness. As the night drew to a close, families left with bags full of treats and smiles on their faces, already looking forward to next year's festivities.



## Video Watch

Relive the fun of Trick or Treat on Main Street! Head to our YouTube channel, [LaurelTVOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/@LaurelTVOfficial), and click on the November 2024 Newsletter Playlist for highlights



If you have out-of-town guests looking for accommodation, suggest the Laurel Manor House Bed & Breakfast! Located at 420 Montgomery Street in Laurel, this beautifully restored Victorian mansion offers a perfect blend of historic charm and modern luxury, making it an ideal retreat. Each room features unique furnishings, plush bedding, and en-suite bathrooms, providing a comfortable stay. Guests can enjoy a delicious homemade breakfast, featuring local ingredients. With its lush gardens and proximity to attractions like the Patuxent Research Refuge and historic downtown Laurel, guests will enjoy both relaxation and exploration during their visit.

Room availability is still open for the holiday season! Book a room at: <https://www.laurelmanorhouse.com/>

[Click here to go inside!](#)

## Supporting Local Businesses



THE LAUREL BOARD OF TRADE  
SMALL BUSINESS. BIG IDEAS.

383 Main Street  
Laurel, MD 20707



LIGHT UP THE NIGHT! LET'S SHINE AS A COMMUNITY

SCAN ME



THE LAUREL BOARD OF TRADE  
WILL SPONSOR OUR

# 2ND ANNUAL HOLIDAY STOREFRONT DECORATING CONTEST

Registration opens November 25 Decorations up by **December 7**  
**Open to Main and side street businesses**

## PRIZES

Top 3 Winners: 1st Prize: \$200, 2nd Prize: \$150, 3rd prize: \$100 2  
Honorable Mention Winners: \$50 Plus The People's Choice  
Award Prize: Holiday Gift Basket

*The City of Laurel Celebrates*

— SMALL —  
**BUSINESS**  
**SATURDAY**



Saturday, November 30, 2024  
9:00AM - 12:00PM

The Laurel Quill Lot  
378 Main Street, Laurel, MD 20707

**SHOP LOCAL.  
SHOP LAUREL.**

- 1 Grab a Warm Beverage & Snacks
- 2 Pick-up a Small Business Passport Book
- 3 Shop at Laurel Small, Local Businesses!
- 4 Enter Contest to win prizes!



@laurelecd

[www.cityoflaurel.org/ecd](http://www.cityoflaurel.org/ecd)