

# LAUREL COMMUNITY LEGACY PLAN



## REFERENCE

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City Administrator

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Laurel is a city with a population of 20,000 in northern Prince George's County. Laurel began as a mill town in the early 19th century, with industries powered by the waters of the Patuxent River. That early legacy remains in the form of several stone buildings or their traces along the City's historic Main Street. Later development made the city an important transportation hub, with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad building its Laurel passenger station in 1835. Twentieth century development and the advent of the automobile placed Laurel astride America's "main street", known to us as U.S. Route 1. The latter thoroughfare is the site of three Laurel shopping centers, one developed in the 1950's and two more in the late 1970's and mid-1980's. Together these three centers account for over 1.5 million square feet of retail space.

The City of Laurel is concerned about increasing vacancies and declining business in both its Main Street and Route 1 commercial districts. The Community Legacy Plan is intended to provide strategies for the revitalization and repositioning of these retail areas in response to the changes that have occurred in the marketplace.

UIA assembled a team including an economic development consultant and retail market analyst, and a community meeting facilitator. In addition, physical design issues were an important component of the Community Legacy Planning process. The team included Nicholas Mangraviti, the principal of Design Structures., an architectural design and community-planning firm.

The team members analyzed the economic and demographic data that will help to define the current market and future economic potential of Laurel's commercial districts and its Main Street corridor. Beyond that, the project involved a series of community meetings and focus group sessions to obtain the views of Laurel officials and residents, the merchants and other interested community groups.

The final report, presented the Mayor and City Council in December, 2002, included specific recommendations for development and redevelopment of the commercial areas along with strategies, involving both public and private organizations, to carry out the revitalization program.