

Following is a description of a community development project, which will serve as an “anchor” in downtown Laurel that will attract visitors and support business growth...

#### Tidewater Park

“The Ramble,” a comprehensive waterfront redevelopment plan for Laurel, is an award-winning project that has attracted state and regional attention for its innovative approach to reconnect a community with its water resources and also focus its downtown revitalization around a renewed identity. In November 2012, Laurel began working with Delaware Sea Grant’s (DESG) Sustainable Coastal Communities Initiative to develop a land use/growth scenario process and recommend nutrient reduction strategies to protect water quality in the Broad Creek, a tidal tributary to the Chesapeake Bay. During that process, community leaders asked DESG to also “... help bring people and jobs back to downtown Laurel.”

In response to expressed need, a unique partnership orchestrated by DESG between the Laurel Redevelopment Corporation (LRC) and an assistant professor of landscape architecture at the University of Delaware and her graduate and undergraduate students resulted in a conceptual site plan and artist renderings offered in a sustainable waterfront redevelopment proposal called “The Ramble”. This proposal featured green infrastructure that supported many of the design elements the stakeholder group had suggested for the available properties, 95% of which are owned by the LRC or the town. The plan was enthusiastically endorsed in September 2014 by the LRC, the town council and the Laurel Chamber of Commerce as well as numerous local business and civic organizations. Subsequently, the newly established project partners initiated the technical phases of plan implementation, which included a geotechnical study and Phase I environmental assessment, a stormwater management feasibility study, and a surface water planning study to prepare construction drawings for the Tidewater Park component of the conceptual plan.

The proposed park includes a unique nature-based play area with play equipment based on the folklore of the indigenous Nanticoke Tribe, known as the “People of the Tidewater.” Stormwater and flood mitigation treatments were constructed at Tidewater Park in 2018 and a pedestrian footpath was installed around these practices. Most recently, Kompan, Inc.- one of the world’s leaders in designing innovative and engaging playground equipment- collaborated with the Town of Laurel to produce a truly exciting, one-of-a-kind design with great historical and ecological significance. A fundraising effort is underway to generate the funding necessary to construct this new feature that will serve as a community anchor in downtown Laurel.

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