



News Release

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County Executive Jan Gardner Announces Initiative to Increase Agriculture Preservation

FREDERICK, MD – Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner today announced an initiative to accelerate agriculture preservation efforts. She proposed legislation that would increase the county's investment to save valuable farmland in an effort to achieve the long-standing goal of preserving 100,000 acres of agricultural land. Preserving large blocks of land is key to ensuring the long-term economic viability of agriculture.

“The time is now to preserve Frederick County's rich agricultural land before our cherished fields are lost to development,” said Executive Gardner. “Securing preservation easements for agriculture will ensure we leave a legacy of agriculture for future generations.”

Frederick County is home to 1,300 farms and more than 180,000 acres of farmland. Applications to participate in the county's [agricultural preservation programs](#) far exceed available dollars. For example, the county recently received 46 applications for the [Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation](#) program and can fund only five or six. The legislation has broad support from the agriculture community, including from the Agriculture Preservation Board, the Agriculture Business Council, and the Farm Bureau.

To enable this increased investment, the proposed legislation adds \$1 to the county's recordation tax. The recordation tax is a one-time charge paid on certain real estate transactions. Most Maryland counties charge both a recordation tax and a transfer tax on these transactions. Frederick County does not collect a transfer tax. The proposed \$1 brings revenues from real estate transactions in line with similar counties that have both a recordation fee and transfer tax, including Charles, Harford and Howard. With an average mortgage in Frederick County of \$270,000, this modest increase would add approximately \$270 to the cost for a buyer and a seller.

The proposal would generate an estimated \$6.8 million. The first \$500,000 would be set aside annually for three related purposes: economic development grants to support agriculture diversification; grants for rural historic preservation; and first-time homebuyer assistance. The remaining funds would support the County's agriculture preservation programs.

County Council Vice President Michael Blue and Council Member Jerry Donald have agreed to introduce the bill on behalf of Executive Gardner. The draft legislation can be viewed online at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/executive.

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