



# *News Release*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
February 14, 2020

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## **Executive Gardner Unveils Initiatives to Protect Forest Cover, Environmental and Historic Resources**

FREDERICK, MD – County Executive Jan Gardner today unveiled two initiatives to protect Frederick County’s forests, environmental resources, and historic and cultural assets. The first legislative initiative strengthens the County’s Forest Resource Ordinance with the goal to protect existing forest and ensure no net loss of forest as the result of new development. The second legislative proposal amends the county zoning ordinance to require consideration and protection of forest, environmentally sensitive areas, and historic assets prior to a property being rezoned. Citizens value Frederick County’s rich history and its environment, and protecting these features puts the community’s values first.

“The good news is that we can take action now to prevent the loss of forest cover and protect our historic and cultural amenities now into the future,” said Executive Gardner. “My proposal will protect what our community values, our forest cover, our environmental resources and our rich history, before any new development is approved, so we can ensure a bright future for Frederick County.”

The first bill Executive Gardner will ask the County Council to consider changes the Forest Resource Ordinance to require that an acre of forest be planted for every acre of forest cleared for new development. Trees can be planted within a new development, or there are options for planting off-site. Frederick County previously required a 1:1 ratio for forest replacement. During the four years the requirement was in place, the county gained an additional 10 acres of forest cover. Then in 2011, the requirement was lowered to the minimum allowed by state law. The weaker law led to large areas of forest being cut down for development with little to no replacement. Between 2012 and 2019, Frederick County saw a net loss of about 480 acres of forest, which averages nearly 70 acres of forest lost every year. This bill restores past practice that delivered results and no net loss of forest.

The ordinance focuses on new developments, not individual homeowners. Agricultural operations are exempt from the Forest Resource Ordinance. Also exempt is the transfer of land to children, known as child lots, if less than 20,000 square feet of forest are cleared. The Forest Resource Ordinance applies to lots that have been recorded since 1992. Any lot that was recorded before 1992 would be exempt if forest clearing is limited to 20,000 square feet.

The second proposal is an update to the county’s zoning laws. The goal is to protect sensitive environmental areas and historic assets before a property is rezoned for development. These resources would have to be identified, along with ways to avoid or minimize any impact on these resources, before rezoning the properties. The bill also adds criteria to better define what constitutes an adequate transportation network.

Executive Gardner’s proposals are designed to protect Frederick County’s forests and farmland for future generations to enjoy. “I want to preserve what we cherish about Frederick County,” she added.

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