



News Release

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Gardner Advances Plans for Agriculture Innovation Center

Project Designed to Help Farmers Add Value to Products

FREDERICK, Md. – To support Frederick County’s longstanding agriculture industry, County Executive Jan Gardner today announced the first step toward bringing an agriculture innovation center to Frederick County. A team of experts with national experience and local knowledge have been contracted to determine the demand for a center, which could allow farmers to create value-added products without investing in costly equipment. Based on their findings, the experts will recommend possible locations and a detailed business plan.

“We must ensure that agriculture remains economically viable for years to come,” Executive Gardner said. “Preserving our best farmland is only part of the answer. An agriculture innovation center could be a real game-changer. Leaving a legacy of agriculture may be one of the most important things my administration does to protect and preserve what we love about Frederick County.”

There will be three phases to the feasibility study, beginning with a consumer survey and a series of industry focus groups within Frederick County’s agriculture community. The second phase will be to analyze the findings and create a broad business plan. In the final phase, the experts will submit a report recommending the type of center that would create the greatest economic impact for Frederick County, as well as a list of potential sites and a detailed business plan to support the center.

The feasibility study will be conducted in partnership with HR&A Advisors, ACDS LLC, and Epstein and Sons International. HR&A is a nationally known economic development and real estate consulting firm, with offices in Washington, D.C. Their senior advisor for this project has worked on strategic plans for many food processing facilities, markets and agricultural business parks, including Pike Place in Seattle, Washington, Agricenter International in Memphis, Tennessee, and the Hunts Point Cooperative Market in the Bronx, New York. Friendship, Maryland-based ACDS conducts rural economic development efforts nationally and internationally. The company has extensive experience in the Mid-Atlantic region. Epstein, based in Chicago, will lead the site selection process. The company is an engineering, architecture and construction company that specializes in the food industry. Epstein works across the United States and abroad, including on Cloverdale Farms’ processing facility expansion in North Dakota.

Questions about the value-added food processing center project can be directed to Katie Stevens, Associate Director of Agriculture Business Development in the Frederick County Office of Economic Development, by calling 301-600-3037 or emailing KStevens1@FrederickCountyMD.gov.

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