



**FREDERICK  
COUNTY  
ASSOCIATION OF  
REALTORS®**

# Legislative Update

*The United Voice for Real Estate in Frederick County*

## **Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Management Plan**

On July 13, 2022, a majority of the Planning Commission voted to recommend the July 2022 Sugarloaf Plan to the County Council for approval. The County Council will conduct workshops and a public hearing in the coming months. FCAR and partners have consistently opposed parts of the plan. One area of opposition relates to the proposed rezoning of over 1,000 acres of existing parcels from A-Agricultural to RC-Resource Conservation. While these zoning classifications are similar, they have differing setbacks, minimum lot widths, permitted uses and design requirements, all of which could impact the development potential of those lots going forward. FCAR is unclear as to how a rezoning from Agriculture to Resource Conservation gives additional protection to environmentally sensitive areas, which is one of the justifications for the proposed change. There are very few differences in the Resource Conservation district and the Agricultural district as it relates to natural resource protection. Because of this, there is less justification to undertake a rezoning that could harm the uses and values of affected properties while also falling short of the County's stated environmental protection goals.

It is especially important to consider these provisions in the context of the overall housing market in which we find ourselves today. There is a severe housing shortage not just in Frederick, but also in the state of Maryland and across the country. While we are not suggesting that the Sugarloaf Area should be developed with high density residential uses, there are still low-density housing options which are compatible with the area and would help to ease our constrained housing supply. This Plan should take care not to preclude or otherwise constrain their development.

## **City of Frederick Rental Registration Ordinance**

On Thursday, August 4th at 7:00 p.m. the City of Frederick Mayor and Board of Aldermen are scheduled to approve an ordinance for residential rental licensure. This ordinance will require a landlord to purchase a license in order to rent a housing unit in the City. This is an annual license and subjects the rental unit to random inspections by the Department of Public Works and fines a landlord who does not have a current license or does not timely abate a violation. This ordinance has been in the works for almost four years now and FCAR has been actively involved in the process. We shared a number of concerns at past public meetings including:

- Recommending exemptions from licensure for renting a unit to an immediate family member

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- Consideration of a tiered system of licensing so those who have shown full compliance and lack of violations can have reduced renewal fees or longer inspection intervals
- A mechanism for a streamlined application and renewal process

Although City staff have recommended that the ordinance be approved, there are still a number of questions left unanswered. FCAR and partners will be in attendance at the hearing and will express some of the following concerns:

- When can we expect the Department of Public Works to publish the inspection standards?
- How long must a residential housing unit be rented in order to require a license?
- How long will a landlord have to correct a violation?
- How often will each individual unit be inspected? Every 4 years? Every 3 years? Indeterminate?

As always, FCAR will stay abreast of developments and new requirements of the ordinance as they surface.

The public meeting will be held at City Hall. If you would like to watch the hearing and cannot attend in person, it will be available for viewing on cable Channel 99 and [online](#).