



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Steve Silverman

For Immediate Release

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SILVERMAN TO EHRlich – “THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND – LET’S PRESERVE IT”

Montgomery County Council Vice President Steve Silverman today called on Governor Robert Ehrlich to reverse course on his intention to temporarily halt all land preservation programs in the State while his administration “rewrites” the rules for these programs.

Montgomery County is home to one of the nation’s largest and most successful land preservation programs.

“In addition to the benefits for our environment, Maryland’s nationally recognized preservation programs have added tremendously to the quality of life Marylanders enjoy,” wrote Silverman, who chairs the Council’s Planning, Housing & Economic Development Committee. “In Montgomery County, we have been able to protect one-third of the County as open space- preserving our farm and agricultural industry while permanently protecting over 28,000 acres of parkland... Without the State’s support, this would not have been possible.

“Three years ago, Montgomery County initiated an ambitious Legacy Open Space program to conserve and steward land of exceptional value. These lands include sensitive natural resources, water supply areas, heritage resources, greenways and trail connections, farmland and rural open space, and urban open space. Since the Legacy Open Space program’s inception, Montgomery County has committed \$33 million in local public resources and protected a total of 2,400 acres of land throughout the County.

“Even in tough economic times we cannot let short-term savings overshadow the long-term consequences of our actions. If we abandon and gut these preservation programs now, it is our children and grandchildren who will pay the price. Our experience in Montgomery County has shown us that protecting our open space does not hurt our economic development or our bottom line.”

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Full text of letter follows:

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The Honorable Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.
Governor of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor:

It was with great regret and concern that I learned of your decision to temporarily halt all land preservation programs in the State while your administration "rewrites" the rules for these programs. As Chairman of the Montgomery County Council committee with oversight of parks and land preservation issues, I offer my hope that you will take into consideration the tremendous benefits and successes these programs have given to our County and our State.

Every Marylander shares your concern with protecting the Chesapeake Bay, but we must understand that preserving the Bay means more than just protecting waterfront land. Almost the entire State of Maryland is within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and what happens on that land, even if not directly touching the Bay, directly affects the Bay.

In addition to the benefits for our environment, Maryland's nationally recognized preservation programs have added tremendously to the quality of life Marylanders enjoy. In Montgomery County, we have been able to protect one-third of the County as open space, preserving our farm and agricultural industry while permanently protecting over 28,000 acres of parkland.

Three years ago, Montgomery County initiated an ambitious Legacy Open Space program to conserve and steward land of exceptional value. These lands include sensitive natural resources, water supply areas, heritage resources, greenways and trail connections, farmland and rural open space, and urban open space. Since the Legacy Open Space program's inception, Montgomery County has committed \$33 million in local public resources and protected a total of 2,400 acres of land throughout the County. The most recent acquisition, Serpentine Barrens, is the largest remaining block of forest in the County that sits on an outcrop of serpentinite bedrock, containing at least 22 species of rare, threatened, endangered and watchlist plants.

These actions have earned us recognition from organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Natural Resources Defense Council as the nation's leading jurisdiction for land preservation. Without the State's support, this would not have been possible.

Even in tough economic times, we cannot let short-term savings overshadow the long-term consequences of our actions. If we abandon and gut these preservation programs now, it is our children and grandchildren who will pay the price. Our experience in Montgomery County has shown us that protecting our open space does not hurt our economic development or our bottom line.

I urge you to reconsider your decision. Now is the time to at least maintain, if not strengthen, Maryland's commitment to land preservation.

Sincerely,

Steven Silverman
Chairman, Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee
Montgomery County Council