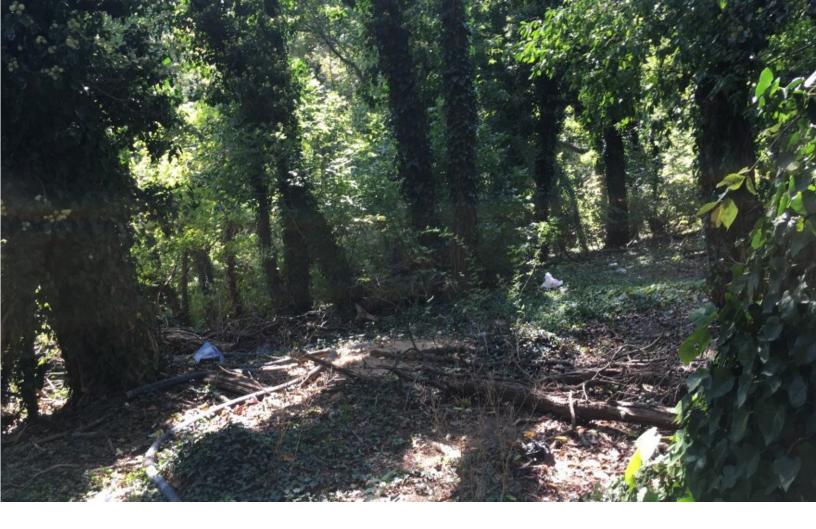
# MAPPING THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

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from Hampton Plantation to Historic East Towson

> st, stands in front of his St. Ja block Jefferson street.



# "What's wrong with the way it is?"

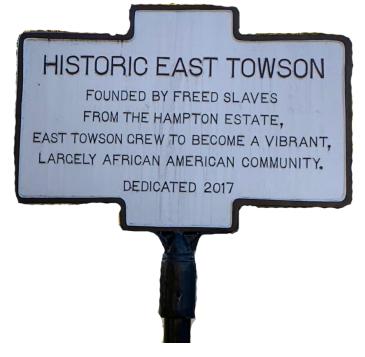
-Nancy Goldring, President, NeTIA



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## Abstract: Making Our Case



East Towson, a African American community with deep roots in the history of American slavery and the era of Jim Crow, faces a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge: a proposed housing development that would destroy the last major green space in a neighborhood that for decades has been relentlessly chipped away by private and public development. The opportunity: a proposed open space and trail that would physically connect Hampton National Historic Site, once Maryland's largest slave-labor plantation, to East Towson, where descendants of those who survived bondage at Hampton still live today.

There is no question that Baltimore County needs more affordable housing. But there are two fundamental arguments against building Red Maple Place on the proposed East Towson site, and they have been well-aired in court hearings, public meetings and various media outlets. First, the construction would increase water runoff, flooding and streambed erosion and violate multiple environmental laws and guidelines. A detailed analysis of the environmental impact follows later in this white paper.

The second objection to planting a large brick building on the green, wooded acreage at Joppa

Road and Fairmount Avenue is that it would add yet another chapter to the dismal, century-old pattern of imposing on East Towson development that residents neither seek nor support. Since 1928, when some 300 Black families lived in the neighborhood, development pressure from the booming Towson downtown has steadily encroached on the property of those who were there first, many of them homeowners. High-rise apartments line Joppa Road to the north; bustling retail complexes, a district court and public library are along York Road to the west; and more modest offices creep steadily onto residential streets. A 1968 Baltimore Gas and Electric substation is a sprawling two acre eyesore, built on a baseball field where Negro League games were once played, an ugly reminder of an era when an African American neighborhood had too little economic and political power to fight back. Today, about 70 families remain on the six blocks of the historic core. But it is the much older history of East Towson that makes it so worth preserving and protecting.

This white paper will present a brief history of Historic East Towson (HET), explain the devastating environmental impact that the Red Maple Place development would have on the community, and presents a bold vision for an historic walking trail that will provide a true historical account of the connection between the former plantation and Towson's unique African American community.



# Mapping the Road to Freedom: From Hampton Plantation to Historic East Towson

#### How We Got Here:

The free Black community in the area dates to 1829, when Charles Carnan Ridgely, the latest master of the huge Hampton estate and Maryland's 15th governor, died and the terms of his will freed some of the hundreds he had enslaved. Ridgely had expanded the estate to a peak of 25,000 acres in the last decade of his life. A 2020 National Park Service study describes Hampton's diverse operations, all of them made possible by the uncompensated, backbreaking labor of an enslaved workforce that numbered 377 in 1829:



Hampton plantation represented a large, Southern-style, cash crop plantation in a state that otherwise was moving away from large planting enterprises. The orchards, ironworks, coal mining, marble and limestone quarries, mills, and mercantile interests that the estate encompassed were all fueled and supported by enslaved workers, and after emancipation, paid laborers. Their labor on the vast farm and other holdings produced corn, hay and dairy products. There was once a race track on the property-this is one of the families that brought horseracing to Maryland. Jockeys and grooms helped care for the Ridgelys' Thoroughbreds. Coachmen and footmen facilitated family travel. There were beef cattle and hogs, race horses and merino sheep, and poultry of all kinds. Enslaved women were cooks, laundresses and midwives, dairy maids and needle workers and attended to the personal demands of the family. The Ridgely children were tended to and accompanied by enslaved children at Hampton whose obedience and completion of assigned tasks ensured a small gift at Christmas time. This large Black community was connected to Hampton by birth and marriage, kinship and labor.

Baltimore newspapers regularly featured ads placed by the Ridgelys offering rewards for the capture and return of enslaved workers who, abused by their employers or fed up with fueling the family's wealth with their unpaid labor, ran away. This 1797 notice seeks a man named Ben, who held his head "lofty, as if gazing in the sky when walking." Perhaps he had his eyes on Pennsylvania, just a day or two away on foot, where slavery had already been abolished.

In 1853, Daniel Harris would become the first African American to buy a plot of land in East Towson, paying \$187.50. With the end of slavery in Maryland in November 1864, all of Hampton's workers were free, though many continued to labor on the estate. In the decades that followed, East Towson became a tight knit, segregated community with its own churches, school, stores and barbershop.



Recent scholarship by Louis Diggs, by a University of Maryland research team led by Dr. Cheryl Janifer LaRoche and by National Park Service specialists at the Hampton National Historic Site – now shrunk to just



62 acres – have traced the descendants of many of those enslaved at Hampton to East Towson.

Indeed, one of the contributors of this white paper, Nancy Goldring, a lifelong resident of East Towson, has traced her ancestry to multiple generations held in bondage at

Hampton beginning more than 200 years ago.

These ties, as deep as the land and extending over nearly two centuries, are today little known even to Marylanders who know of Hampton and East Towson. To make the history known in

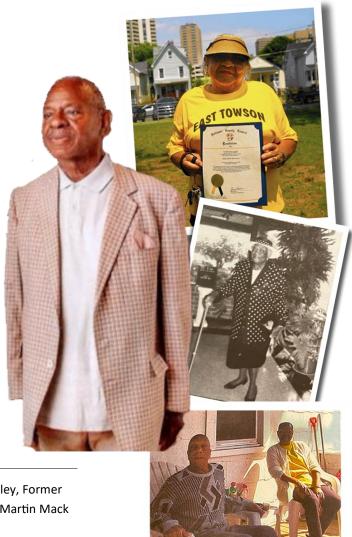
4 Reward THIRTY DOLLARS Reward. David Shriver.

a creative, lasting way, we are proposing the creation of a green walking path to link Hampton with East Towson. It would begin at the Ridgelys' Georgian mansion; could proceed on green space across the grounds of Notre Dame Prep School; cross the barrier of Baltimore's I-695 Beltway, perhaps following the shoulder of Providence Road; skirt the green



(Source: "Tracing Lives in Slavery: Reclaiming Families in Freedom, An Ethnographic Solution to a Historical Problem," lead author Dr. Cheryl LaRoche, 2020 <u>https://www.nps.gov/hamp/learn/tracing-lives-of-the-enslaved-study.htm</u>)

campus of Goucher College; and end in the very field and grove currently targeted by developers for Red Maple Place. This trail, wildlife corridor and land bridge would draw new attention to both Hampton and East Towson and spread the word about their undeniable link in history. It would likely be embraced by academic communities throughout the region, students and faculty at Goucher, Towson University, Notre Dame Prep and others as a teaching tool subjects spanning from history, the for and vicissitudes environment of urban planning. It might become a memorable field trip for schoolchildren from across Maryland, giving new life to their understanding of the central role of slavery in American history and of African Americans' resilience in its aftermath.



Ancestors Mrs Amy Davis and Adelaide C. V. Bentley, Former President of NeTIA, along with Elders John Gross, Martin Mack and Ms Dot all from Historic East Towson!



#### Significance of Headwaters

Headwaters are the uppermost sources of water in a river network. They could be a drizzle of snowmelt that runs down a mountainside crease, a small spring-fed pond, a wetland - a depression in the ground that fills with water after every rain and overflows into the creek below which eventually feeds into and creates our big rivers. These water sources, which scientists refer to as headwater streams, are often unnamed and rarely appear on maps. Yet, they make up 63 percent of the stream/river miles in the US. The health of small streams is critical to the health of the entire river network and downstream communities. Headwaters trap floodwaters, recharge groundwater supplies,



remove pollution, provide fish and wildlife habitat, and sustain the health of downstream rivers, lakes and bays. Because small streams and streams that flow for only part of the year are the source of the nation's fresh waters, changes that harm these headwaters affect larger streams, lakes and rivers downstream. The mature red maple trees that are destined for clear cutting for the Red Maple Place housing project make up a headwater wetland that performs these protective functions for Herring Run and Back River that flow downstream. Red maple trees thrive in wet soils and are valued for soaking up excessive nitrogen and other pollutants. They serve as a natural sponge that collects stormwater runoff from the highlypaved neighborhood surrounding it. This natural sponge reduces the volume of stormwater that would otherwise gush into Herring Run, cause additional street flooding, and lead to more dangerous and destructive streambank erosion downstream. Cutting down these trees will effectively add further harm to Herring Run stream and Back River.

# Environmental Concerns Historic East Towson vs Red Maple Place

Moreover, the importance of headwaters is recognized by the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (DEPS). Per Baltimore County code, forest buffers "enhance and protect the natural ecology of stream systems; water quality; wildlife habitat; the aesthetic and scenic qualities of natural features; environmentally sensitive areas, such as aquifer recharge areas; and flora and fauna preservation sites." They protect the banks of streams from erosion and filter pollutants from stormwater. Their shade helps maintain water temperatures for vulnerable aquatic life.



"One of the headwaters of the Herring Run, labeled West Branch Herring Run, begins as a small wetland in the center of the small patch of forested wetland in East Towson – the location of the proposed Red Maple Place development." This is an environmentally sensitive site that has remained undeveloped by virtue of these features. It could not be developed in the proposed configuration without the environmental variance granted to the developer.



• In Maryland, the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) establishes rules to minimize the loss of existing forests.

• Red Maple Place requires a variance to remove 2 specimen trees (measuring 30 inches or more in diameter at 46.5 inches above the ground). These trees hold a special protected status under the FCA by virtue of their age and size. The FCA also directs priority status to trees on steep slopes, in wetlands and along Streams. The development will remove trees from all three of those areas.

• Because of the steep slopes and sensitive soils on the site, a 100 foot forest buffer is required from the wetland boundary by Baltimore County, but the developer obtained a variance that allows them to reduce the buffer to 25 feet. They also obtained a reduction of the required building setback from the forest buffer. This setback protects the roots of the trees during and after construction. Reducing that setback puts the trees at serious risk, effectively reducing the size of the forest buffer.

# Environmental Impacts of Red Maple Place

The proposed development plans to remove approximately 1.3 acres of trees from a steeply sloping site containing the headwaters of a branch of the Herring Run Stream and an associated wetland.

Developers do not have a right to build-out properties to their maximum zoning if environmental laws place limits on the property.

Unfortunately, the number of variances granted in Baltimore County shows a developer need only say the law imposes an unwarranted hardship or practical difficulty to their plans in order to obtain relief from the requirements.

- Green Towson Alliance (GTA) conducted a survey of Baltimore County's website in July of 2019. Countywide, of the 424 environmental variance applications listed, 354 were approved, 63 were pending, 6 were withdrawn and only 1 was denied. This amounts to an automatic awarding of variances to the benefit of developers and to the detriment of the environment.
- Baltimore County DEPS admits their staff

are not qualified to evaluate alternative architectural designs that are required as part of the review process. Their default practice is to defer to the developer's claim that the environmental regulations create an insurmountable "practical difficulty" and "hardship" and to grant the requested waiver without any substantive analysis of design options or costs. (Increased costs of alternative designs that comply with environmental laws are not, in and of themselves, a reason for waiving those laws.) Variances were granted despite the design alternatives and criticism of the Red Maple Place developer's alternative analysis that were offered by experts in the community.





#### Waiving environmental laws undermines other County obligations and costs taxpayers' money.

Adding impervious surfaces at the headwaters of the stream will exacerbate flooding in the Herring Run watershed. Communities downstream are already experiencing flooding from the cumulative effects of development and more frequent and intense storms.

- The County demolished 5 homes along Stevenson Lane to alleviate the impact of flooding and more homeowners are asking for and getting relief.
- Currently County funds are being spent to alleviate flooding in Stoneleigh and Anneslie.
- Maryland requires the County to improve water quality and DEPS must submit a plan to minimize their pollutant load and obtain a costly permit for pollutants that are generated. Destruction of forests, especially priority features like those found on this site that absorb and filter stormwater, and the subsequent erosion from flooding undermines this effort. It's a bit like robbing Peter to pay Paul when development is accommodated at the expense of the environment and the displacement of County residents.

# This development further concentrates environmental injustices in the community.

The county's obligation to provide affordable housing must be met alongside, not instead of their obligation to protect our streams. Historical incursions include:

- Thru-routing of the Towson By-pass and the thru-routing of the Ma & Pa Railroad line that was eventually replaced with high tension electrical transmission lines.
- Community open space was appropriated for a BGE electrical substation that demolished eight homes as well.

• Currently, stormwater from properties east and west of this site sheet flow directly onto the property causing a tremendous load on the small stream. The stream is severely eroded, and the entire lower portion site is ponded with standing water in wet weather.

• Neighbors in Historic East Towson already experience flooding on Pennsylvania Avenue and in their basements during storms.

• Erosion has undermined mechanical equipment pads at Harris Hill Condominiums along the property line with this site resulting in costly repairs. Red Maple Place will require a new retaining wall close to the same property line. Stormwater runoff will be funneled into a narrow drainage ditch exacerbating existing erosion problems and threatening property.

Baltimore County buys 24 acres slated for Timonium development to preserve green space - Baltimore Sun

Baltimore County wants to expand affordable housing. Advocates say they still face significant obstacles. - Baltimore Sun

Developer of controversial affordable housing project in East Towson threatens legal action over county bill they claim would kill project - Baltimore Sun







### **Educational Value**

In this time of racial reckoning, it is important to educate the citizens of Baltimore County and beyond about our unique and complicated history, one that strongly encourages us to confront often surprising and painful realities that if addressed in the spirit of truth can bring about healing and reconciliation. Nature, with its undeniably regenerative and transformative powers, can peel back the tattered and bloodstained gauze covering our collective wounds to reveal and heal past traumas. In partnership with nature, this Freedom Trail gives the opportunity to create a new future of unimaginable benefit available and accessible to all.

Hampton Plantation was the 2nd largest plantation in the North of the US with hundreds of people who were enslaved on 25,000 acres. Many people still think that Maryland was not a slave owning state and that sort of thing only happened down south. Many of the descendants of the people that were freed by the Ridgley family are still living in Historic East Towson and surrounding area today. This important history can be lost forever. There are African Americans all over Maryland who are descendants from this time in our nation's history and more folks need to know and understand for the healing work of to begin and continue.

Here are some of the projects already underway and focused on bringing this history to light:

- Star Spangled Banner Trail
- East Coast Greenway Project
- Six Bridges Trails
- Goucher College's Hallowed Ground Project
- Towson University's Invisible Architecture

As we move forward, our history, heritage and legacy moves forward with us. Our goal is to sustain this community leaving its cultural integrity intact. We look forward to partnering with government agencies, academic and special interests groups towards a more vibrant inclusive community. Historic East Towson's Freedom Trail can be a golden thread in the fabric that makes our communities 'one big knit'.

# **Key Economic Benefits of Trails**

The Pennsylvania Land Trust recently published a guide to trail impact studies from around the country. In its summary, it lists the following benefits, as identified by the various impact studies.

# Trails...

#### Increase nearby property value.

Make communities more attractive places to live.

#### Boost spending at local businesses.

#### Make communities attractive to businesses

looking to expand or relocate both because of the amenities they offer to employees and the opportunities they offer to cater to trail visitors.

#### Reduce medical costs

by encouraging exercise and other healthy outdoor activities.

#### Revitalize depressed areas,

creating a demand for space in what were once vacant buildings.

#### **Provide transportation options**

and cut fuel expenses, offering reliable means of transportation for short distance trips.

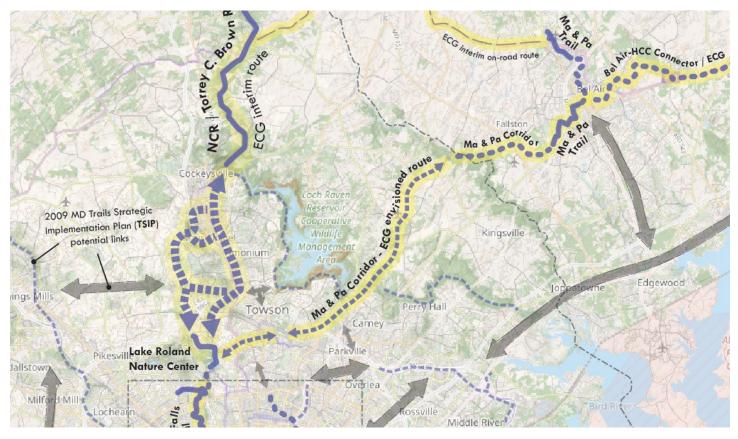
Provide low or no-cost recreation to families.

#### Increase tax revenues

in the communities in which they are located.

These benefits represent a huge economic return on the money invested into trail projects. The costs of land acquisition for trails, trail construction and maintenance are far outweighed by the economic benefits generated by trails.

# **Baltimore Greenways**



# The Economic Value of Trails

Around town and statewide, studies show that trails have a profound economic impact on local communities.

The above infographic (previous page), list the many economic benefits of trails. The map above indicates the absence of a trail connecting Towson to neighboring trail systems. The adjacent chart shows the economic and social benefits of neighboring trail system, the Baltimore Greenway. The following two pages give us a view of revenues generated in 2020 by outdoor recreation statewide.

What we hope you'll see is that the Freedom Trail, while inspired by Historic East Towson's unique and enduring history and challenges, benefits everyone. Figure 1: Summary of impact study results\*



\*The analysis baseline is the existing Greenway. The impact estimates in Figure 1 are incremental to the impacts for the existing Greenway. Where the analysis methodology dictates, the results are presented in a range. Figure 1 provides the upper bound of each range. Subsequent sections of the Report describe the full range.



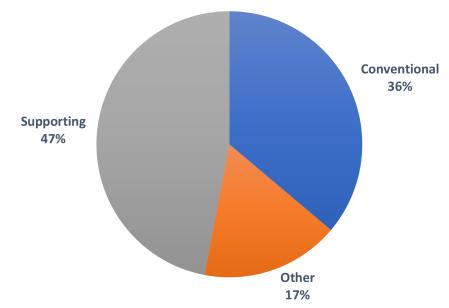
#### 2020—Maryland

#### **Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA)**

Value ad	Value added (GDP)		Employment		Compensation	
ORSA total	Share of state	ORSA total	Share of state	ORSA total	Share of state	
\$5.5 billion	1.3%	69,377 jobs	2.6%	\$3.4 billion	1.4%	

Value Added by Select ORSA Activity (thousands of dollars)								
Activity	2018	2019	2020	State rank				
Boating/Fishing	411,166	433,659	546,803	22				
RVing	158,208	160,795	162,929	30				
Hunting/Shooting/Trapping	132,515	142,097	127,735	24				
Motorcycling/ATVing	75,751	75,831	81,321	32				
Equestrian	83,523	78,152	64,403	32				
Climbing/Hiking/Tent Camping	44,590	49,501	50,173	25				
Snow Activities	40,248	42,662	33,056	28				
Bicycling	23,099	24,387	26,327	24				
Recreational Flying	7,908	9,042	10,321	32				

#### Value-added Composition of Outdoor Recreation Activities



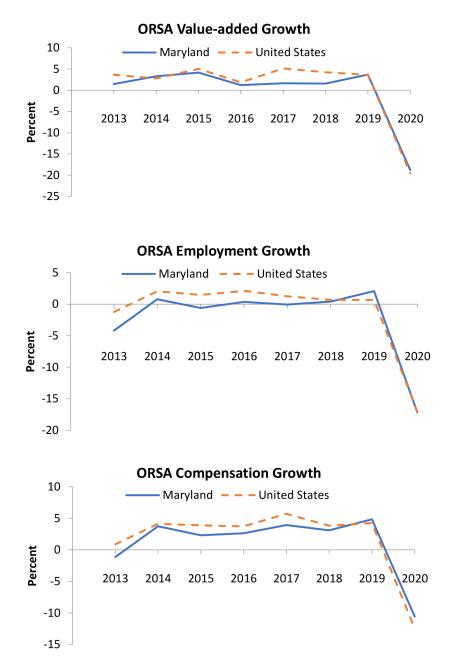
**Conventional ORSA** activities include traditional outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, boating, and hunting. **Other ORSA** activities include those that take place outside, such as gardening and outdoor concerts. **Supporting ORSA** activities are those that contribute to the core activities and include such things as construction, travel and tourism, local trips, and government expenditures.



In 2020, Maryland ranked 23rd among all states in ORSA value-added and 33rd among all states in ORSA value added growth. Since 2019, ORSA value added has decreased 18.8 percent in Maryland, compared with a decrease of 19.5 percent for the United States.

In 2020, Maryland ranked 24th among all states in ORSA employment and 32nd among all states in ORSA employment growth. Since 2019, ORSA employment has decreased 17.2 percent in Maryland, compared with a decrease of 17.1 percent for the United States.

In 2020, Maryland ranked 22nd among all states in ORSA compensation and 27th among all states in ORSA compensation growth. Since 2019, ORSA compensation has decreased 10.6 percent in Maryland, compared with a decrease of 12.5 percent for the United States.



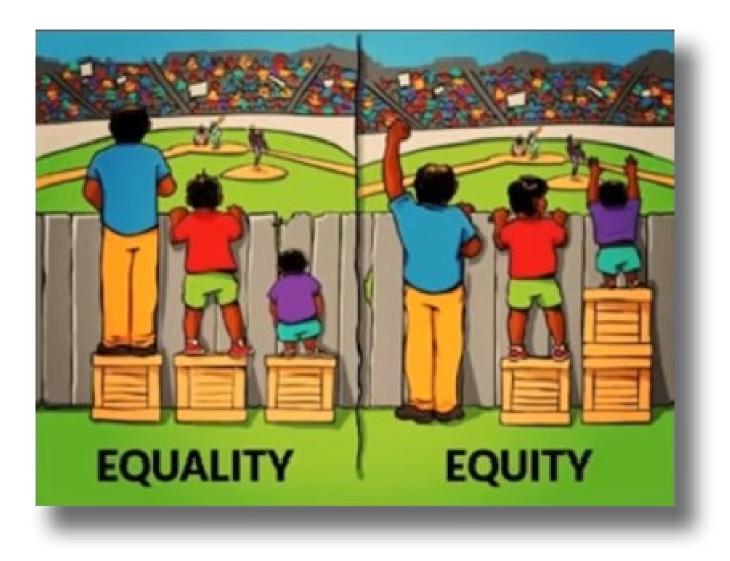
Average compensation per wage-and-salary job in Maryland ORSA industries was \$48,500 in 2020, compared with \$87,066 for all salaried jobs in the state.

**ORSA value added** consists of the gross output of an industry less its intermediate inputs; the contribution of an industry to gross domestic product.

**ORSA employment** consists of all wage-and-salary jobs in which workers are engaged in the production of ORSA goods and services.

**ORSA compensation** consists of the remuneration (including wages and salaries, as well as benefits such as employer contributions to pension and health funds) payable to employees in return for their ORSA work during a given year.

# In Summary



According to the World Health Organization, "The evidence shows that urban green space has health benefits, particularly for economically deprived communities, children, pregnant women and senior citizens. It is therefore essential that all populations have adequate access to green space, with particular priority placed on provision for disadvantaged communities. While details of urban green space design and management have to be sensitive to local geographical and cultural conditions, the need for green space and its value for health and well-being is universal."

(Page 40, WHO, Urban Green Spaces and Health, Review of Evidence. <u>https://www.euro.who.int/ data/assets/</u> pdf\_file/0005/321971/Urban-green-spaces-andhealth-review-evidence.pdf)

The year 2021 marks a watershed for open space across Baltimore County. A recent press released announced the purchase of 24.5 acres of land in Lutherville-Timonium leaving the green space "while recreation sinking open for developer's plans to build residential housing there." Another 300 acres of green space was protected in perpetuity throughout the Perry Hall/ White Marsh area. An affordable housing proposal in Pikesville was thwarted in 2020 when the Baltimore County Council rejected a zoning request in favor of much needed green space in Pikesville.

However, Historic East Towson, in partnership with Harris Hill Condominiums, was forced to raise tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees to protect what remains of their tiny enclave. While Hampton's history is being preserved, East Towson's is being paved over; its history slowly erased by one development or environmental incursion after another. And while some might consider attempts to save the green space at 407 East Joppa Road pushback against affordable housing, the county's own research confirms the glaring disparity between the amount of amenity green and open space in black and brown neighborhoods versus that of white communities.

The call for the preservation of green space in the African American community of East Towson is criticized as a cry of NIMBYism; "not in my backyard." The census tract in which Red Maple Place is proposed has a median household income of \$49,514, with 20.5% of the population living in poverty, according to five-year estimates from the American Community Survey between 2012 and 2016. The county acknowledges that the vast majority of affordable housing has been concentrated in census tracts in Owings Mills, Woodlawn, Perry Hall and East Towson. It seems that the concentration of poverty is merely a theoretical concern but the practical application is another matter entirely; evidently, the prevailing thought in county government is, "what's one more."

"Trees are life!" in Prospect Hill Cemetery, where thousands of dollars were spent on arborists to save one dying tree, while just a quarter of a mile away plans were in place to clearcut a full 1.3 acres of forested land in East Towson where the people are still alive. In the developer's eyes, all the trees would likely come down, if not for the wetland on the property. A rose by any other name is still a rose, and to us it smells of environmental racism.

As a diverse group of concerned citizens we implore the Baltimore County Government to stop the Red Maple Place development project, acquire the 407 East Joppa Road property with Project Open Space funding, and support the community in the development and implementation of our vision to create an educational walking path connecting Hampton National Historic Site to East Towson.

Mapping the Road to Freedom: From Hampton Plantation to Historic East Towson is that fantastic opportunity for truth, healing and reconciliation. The fulfillment of this vision is a powerfully new and innovative response to a traumatic, painful and complicated history. It is but one in a number of positive steps forward, a chance to face our collective past and transcend "the incidents and accidents of history" to finally begin again.

#### Citations:

Baltimore County buys 24 acres slated for Timonium development to preserve green space - Baltimore Sun

Baltimore County wants to expand affordable housing. Advocates say they still face significant obstacles. - Baltimore Sun

Developer of controversial affordable housing project in East Towson threatens legal action over county bill they claim would kill project - Baltimore Sun

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Source: "Tracing Lives in Slavery: Reclaiming Families in Freedom, An Ethnographic Solution to a Historical Problem," lead author Dr. Cheryl LaRoche, 2020 <u>https://</u> www.nps.gov/hamp/learn/tracing-lives-of-the-enslavedstudy.htm)

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Hampton **Mansion Site** 

Goucher

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**Historic East Towson** 

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