

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND  
Legislative Session 2023, Legislative Day No. 19

Resolution No. 33-23

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Councilmembers Ertel, Patoka, Marks, Kach, Crandell & Jones

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By the County Council, October 16, 2023

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A RESOLUTION of the Baltimore County Council encouraging the Maryland Department of the Environment to study the potential adverse environmental impact of further development along the headwaters of the Herring Run watershed in Historic East Towson to prevent the continued environmental injustice impacting this historically African American community.

WHEREAS, Historic East Towson dates back to 1829, when Maryland's 15th governor, Charles Ridgely of the Hampton estate, died and the terms of his will freed some of the hundreds of individuals he enslaved, many of whom settled in the community where, in 1853, the first African-American bought a plot of land in East Towson; and

WHEREAS, although the Hampton estate was designated as a national historic site in 1948, no such designation has been granted to Historic East Towson, where generations of the first freed slaves from Hampton have resided, and several studies have confirmed its historical significance; and

WHEREAS, the 1992 Towson Community Plan identifies the area as an historic African American Community, which is the only remaining portion of a larger community that from 1830 to 1960 extended as far as York Road and Bosley Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the 2000 Master Plan designated this community as an enhancement area to stabilize the neighborhood and provide adequate buffers and protection from commercial encroachment from the Towson commercial core; and

WHEREAS, The Design Plan for the area calls for designs that strengthen the identity of the community, and identifies the area north of Pennsylvania Avenue as a transition area between high-density development on Joppa Road and the single-family homes of the community; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, the community was the subject of an African American Survey District – as the oldest ethnic enclave in Baltimore County; and

WHEREAS, a 2016 ethnographic study funded by the National Park Service found that many current residents of East Towson are direct descendants of the first freed slaves who inhabited the community; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, a historical marker was dedicated in Historic East Towson and included in the Historical Marker Database, an online, national catalog of historical sites; and

WHEREAS, Historic East Towson has been the target of commercial encroachment and environmental injustice, beginning in 1968 when the Baltimore Gas & Electric company was granted property in East Towson, including a baseball field used by the Negro League and seven historic homes, to build a power substation; followed by the demolition of additional homes to build the District Courthouse, Trinity House, and office buildings; and the building of the Towson Bypass, further encroaching on the community and consuming green space, reducing the neighborhood to just 6 blocks; and

WHEREAS, the remaining, forested portion of greenspace in Historic East Towson, bounded by East Joppa Road to the north, East Pennsylvania Avenue to the south, Fairmount

Avenue to the west, and McManus Way to the east, and generally located at or near 407 East Joppa Road – which is also the location of the proposed “Red Maple Place” development consisting of a four-story apartment building with an associated parking garage – contains the headwaters of a branch of the Herring Run stream and an associated wetland; and because of its steep slopes, soils, and specimen trees, development on the site would violate Maryland’s Forest Conservation Act, and would require \$1.2 million from the County and an environmental variance; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Avenue has flooded for many years, and Harris Hills condominiums has documented ground erosion along the property line bordering the green space that will be exacerbated by further development; and communities downstream already experience flooding, requiring the County to purchase and demolish 5 homes, with additional homes slated for demolition; and

WHEREAS, the County Council believes that the Historic East Towson community should be designated as historic and protected from further development; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND, that the Maryland Department of the Environment is encouraged to study the potential adverse environmental impact of further development along the headwaters of the Herring Run watershed in Historic East Towson to prevent the continued environmental injustice impacting this historically African American community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Maryland Department of Environment is specifically encouraged to: (1) evaluate current flooding risks to existing homes downstream of the Herring Run headwaters; (2) review the flood management plan for the Historic East Towson community, or, if none exists, draft such a flood management plan; and (3) perform a

comprehensive watershed study for the Historic East Towson community and Herring Run headwaters; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this Resolution shall be sent to the Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment, the Director of the Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability, and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Baltimore County Senate and House Delegations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect from the date of its passage by the County Council.



# LEGISLATION DETAIL

LEGISLATION \_\_\_\_\_

DISPOSITION \_\_\_\_\_

ENACTED \_\_\_\_\_

EFFECTIVE \_\_\_\_\_

AMENDMENTS \_\_\_\_\_

## ROLL CALL - LEGISLATION

MOTION		SECOND
AYE	NAY	
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## ROLL CALL - AMENDMENTS

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