

AFTER ACTION REPORT

Ellicott City, Maryland Flood of 2016



Dedicated to the people of Ellicott City who value their history, heritage and culture.

Preservation Maryland is dedicated to preserving Maryland's historic buildings, neighborhoods, landscapes, and archaeological sites through outreach, funding and advocacy.

PRESERVATION MARYLAND

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PRESERVATION MARYLAND INVOLVEMENT

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PREFACE

"WE RISE BY LIFTING OTHERS." So noted the famed orator Robert Ingersoll many years ago. It's a message that has resonated at Preservation Maryland throughout the long and arduous Ellicott City recovery and rebuilding effort.

This organization's technical assistance and on-the-ground recovery work in Ellicott City has allowed us to utilize our strengths — our understanding of historic buildings—to help those impacted rise and recover. We, as an organization, have risen as a result and are stronger because of this experience.

It has also been one of the greatest financial and logistical challenges this organization has ever accepted. Fortunately, we've enjoyed tremendous support. We are indebted to the entire Maryland and national preservation community which came together under one banner and one mission: to help Ellicott City.

The tired theme that preservationists are hopelessly mired in the past and are unable or unwilling to accept the dynamic new challenges of the 21st century has often been repeated. As preservationists, we know this to be utter fallacy, but our experience in Ellicott City was an opportunity for us to show our friends and detractors alike that the work of our movement is squarely focused on the future and the health of communities. Preservation may be our tool, but community vibrancy is always our goal.



The report prepared herein is our effort to capture and record this experience as a way of documenting our involvement as well as highlighting the factors that led to what we accomplished and what we were unable to accomplish. The intended purpose of this publication is to provide organizations in Maryland and around the nation an opportunity to learn from our experience—both our successes and failures—and to encourage our peers and colleagues to get involved in the difficult but equally rewarding work of disaster response and recovery.

The future of our nation's historic places depends on the eternal vigilance of individuals and organizations willing to stand up and fight whether those resources are threatened by floodwaters or the bulldozer's feckless blade.

With pride in our past and faith in our future,

Viarlen (

Nicholas Redding Executive Director May 2017

Preservation Maryland staff on a site visit and tour of historic Ellicott City nearly one year after the flood, May 2017.



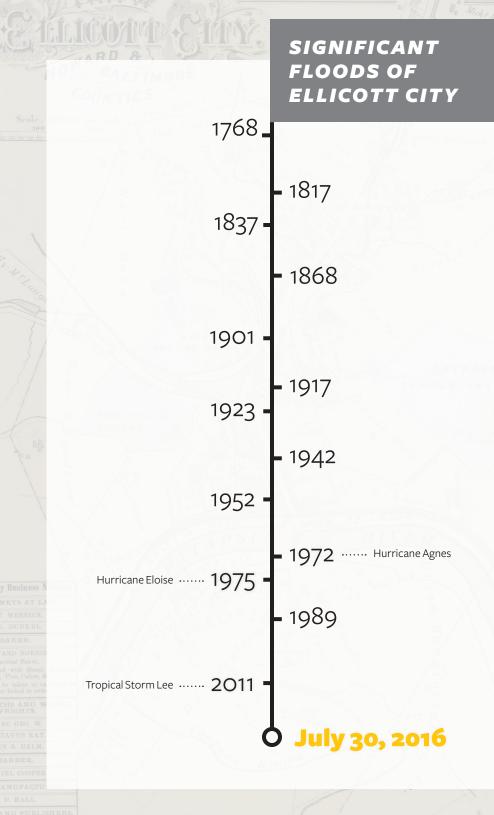
HISTORY OF ELLICOTT CITY, MARYLAND

EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT of the area today known as Ellicott City began as early as 1766 when James Hood built a grist mill along the banks of the Patapsco River. One of the earliest recorded floods in 1768 destroyed the original mill, which his son Benjamin Hood subsequently rebuilt and then sold in 1774 to Joseph Ellicott.

Joseph Ellicott and his brothers John and Andrew, Quakers from Philadelphia, selected the area for the establishment of several mills, renaming the area "Ellicott's Mills." The Ellicott brothers' foresight and planning ultimately laid the foundation for what would soon become one of the largest milling and manufacturing towns in Maryland and beyond.

In 1830, the town became the first terminus of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad outside of Baltimore City. The junction of vital transportation and manufacturing resources made the town a critical crossroads during the Civil War, and the town enjoyed a post-Civil War economic resurgence. However, the large milling industry and importance of the railroad gradually subsided through the 20th century, giving way to today's service-industry and small boutique commercial makeup of the town. Tourism and day trips quickly replaced the gritty industrialism of the prior one hundred and fifty years. The town was designated a national historic district in 1976 with more than 200 extant buildings remaining from before 1900.

Due to its location in a valley and its proximity to the confluence of two major creeks and the Patapsco River, Ellicott City has experienced numerous floods throughout its history.



ELLICOTT CITY TIMES, John R. Brown, Jr., Editor and Pron'

2016 FLOOD

ON THE EVENING of Saturday, July 30, 2016, the historic center of Ellicott City, Maryland was devastated by yet another flood, one of the strongest in its 250 year history. In less than 90 minutes, the torrential rainstorm dropped over six inches of rain. Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman called the flooding a "terrible, terrible, horrific incident." Maryland Governor Larry Hogan quickly signed a declaration of state of emergency for all of Howard County which was later joined by a similar declaration from the federal government.

IN LESS THAN 90 MINUTES, THE STORM DROPPED OVER 6 INCHES OF RAIN

Unlike most prior floods, the 2016 flood descended from the top of the town toward the Patapsco River at the base of Main Street. Some claimed that years of developing previously forested "recharge" areas above the town added to the ferocity of the flood by sending water cascading down impervious surfaces into the downtown historic district. A storm water retention pond above the town built for a new development also gave way as a result of the downpour and sent its contents rushing down the Main Street at a fierce speed.

The ensuing flash flood caused extensive damage to nearly every structure on the town's historic Main Street. Floodwaters washed dozens of parked cars down to the Patapsco River, and two individuals lost their lives. Debris and automobiles became projectiles, hurling into buildings and destroying the historic fabric of the community as they careened into any solid object in their path.

The disaster created an immediate and potentially disastrous conflict between recovery and preservation.

As a result, Preservation Maryland quickly stepped in to become an advocate for the town's history and heritage—which the organization understood to be a key component to the long-term economic prosperity of the community.





Top: immediate flood damage to the storefront of Joan Eve Classics & Collectibles at 8111-8113 Main Street in Ellicott City. Photo by lan Jett. Middle: Howard County police close the historic district following the 2016 flood. Photo from *The Washington Post*. Bottom: the raging flood waters covered and swept cars down Main Street towards the Patapsco River. Photo by Scott Weaver.



PRESERVATION MARYLAND INVOLVEMENT

ON THE MORNING of Sunday July 31, 2016, Preservation Maryland activated an online Emergency Flood Fund and also launched a volunteer sign-up form for those specifically interested in assisting with the restoration of historic properties in the historic district. In addition, the organization rushed to the scene of the disaster, and on the morning of Friday, August 5, 2016, Preservation Maryland brought structural engineers from Keast & Hood to assess several properties initially considered by county authorities to be too severely damaged to be saved and candidates for emergency demolition. The quick action and second opinion from a respected preservation engineer was the difference that saved the early 19th century buildings from demolition.

In the weeks that followed, Preservation Maryland continued to provide on-the-ground support to property owners and residents impacted by the flood and connected many to necessary resources, including reputable stabilization firms capable of properly shoring damaged structures.





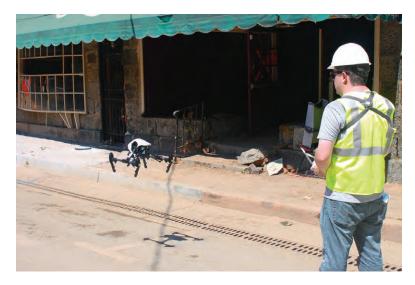
Left: Preservation Maryland was one of the first non-profits allowed on the scene; here Executive Director Nicholas Redding assists in completing emergency condition reports. **Right**: Maryland Historical Trust staff members discuss the immediate damage and impact of the flood in the Ellicott City historic district.

One month after the flood, on August 30, 2016, Preservation Maryland held a joint press conference with Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman to announce the opening of the Preservation Maryland Preservation Resource Center. The Center would be located on Main Street and would provide direct technical preservation assistance to historic property owners. The Center was initially located in the Howard County Visitor Center, a prominent and publically accessible building, and later moved to the Economic Development Authority's MillWorks business incubator. Preservation Maryland hired two temporary staff members to oversee the operations of the Center who were given the task of assisting property owners with navigating the complexities of rehabilitating historic structures. Additionally, Center staff provided one-on-one consultation on how to utilize existing financial incentives to support the rehabilitation of damaged historic buildings.





Above: at the joint press conference, County Executive Allan Kittleman (right) and Nicholas Redding announced the opening of the Preservation Maryland Preservation Resource Center. Left: a team from The Structural Group installed emergency stabilization measures at the Joan Eve storefront after the adjoining sister wall was destroyed in the flood. Photo by Patapsco Heritage Greenway.



Maryland-based drone specialists Elevated Element completed an aerial survey of Main Street in Ellicott City. The drone accessed many areas unsafe for people.

In addition to these core activities, Preservation Maryland assisted with emergency survey and research documentation. This included scanning the entire district with lasers to create accurate 3D models and flying the entire district with unmanned aerial vehicles — also known as drones to capture the extent of the damage and provide an accurate record of the flood for future planning efforts as well as for historians. The organization also participated in a wide variety of planning efforts including attending local preservation commission hearings, participating in longterm county master planning prompted by the flood, as well as providing input to an Urban Land Institute Report.

The capstone to Preservation Maryland's involvement came in the spring of 2017 when Historic Ellicott City, Inc. and private donors made possible a \$50,000 grant program to support projects within the historic district. The program funded capital and non-capital grant requests from non-profit organizations, religious institutions, and agencies of Howard County government.

POSITIVE RESULTS

THE RESOURCE CENTER in Ellicott City was Preservation Maryland's direct attempt to protect and preserve the historic character of the district. Without dedicated "boots-on-the-ground," Preservation Maryland felt it would be unable to shape the course of the rebuilding of the community and would also be unable to support local residents with an often burdensome and confusing process. The Ellicott City Resource Center acted as a legitimate field office of the organization with one mission: to support rebuilding Ellicott City and to save the town's heritage.

DIRECT IMPACTS OF THE RESOURCE CENTER:

- Provided direct technical assistance to the owners of over 78,000 square feet of historic buildings throughout the district
- Rescued several prominent historic buildings from unnecessary emergency demolition
- Surveyed the entire district with laser scanners and drones with an exceptional level of detail to an accuracy of 2 millimeters
- Distributed \$50,000 in direct grants to deserving projects
- Supported dozens of property owners through tax credit consultation and local historic district review process

PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORT:

- The support from the local County preservation planning staff that advocated for Preservation Maryland's presence on Main Street immediately following the flood.
- Additional support and partnerships with numerous local partners, including: the Howard County Historic Preservation Commission, Howard County Economic Development Authority, Patapsco Heritage Greenway, Historic Ellicott City, Inc., Ellicott City Partnership, Howard County Historical Society, Maryland Historical Trust, and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.
- Financial support from individual and foundation donors and the State of Maryland via the Department of Housing and Community Development grant programs.



Jennifer Johnson, owner of 8111-8113 Main Street that were saved with emergency stabilization efforts, stands with Nicholas Redding and Mary Catherine Cochran, Executive Director of the Patapsco Heritage Greenway, the State Heritage Area that includes Ellicott City.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF CENTER ON MAIN STREET:

- Designated, free space on Main Street with proximity to "ground zero" of the flood enabled Preservation Maryland to interact and communicate on a frequent and daily basis with other essential members of the recovery task force.
- It gave the organization access to downtown Ellicott City before the street reopened with the opportunity to see the real damage not filtered through other eyes or agency reports.
- The central location allowed Center staff to participate in many urgent and often impromptu meetings where controversial topics were discussed.
- It provided the organization the opportunity to spend the entire day in a building accessible to the public and to speak directly with residents and property owners.
- There was the ability to see public works improvements and work being done each day and to address concerning projects immediately.
- Ultimately, the location also allowed Preservation Maryland staff to gain the trust of residents, business owners, and County staff which can be a long and difficult process in a small, tight-knit community.

RESOURCES FOR IMPACTED PROPERTY OWNERS AND RESIDENTS:

- Direct, one-on-one communications were the hallmark of Center operations in a town where many residents complained of impersonal and confusing workshops held by other relief organizations.
- Preservation Maryland provided an abbreviated contractor list to accelerate the rebuilding process for property owners.
- Preservation Maryland staff were able to understand, explain, and compliment local historic preservation and tax credit review processes.
- Infographics were created to help break down the complexities of tax credit applications and other financial incentives for historic properties to reduce barriers to entry.
- Clear, consistent, and simple flyers, handouts, and forms helped inform property owners.

ELEBLE E CREETER THE 1010101010 II ... COURT AVE MAIN STREET Ellicott City has a long history of flooding, here standing flood water along Main Street in 1972. Photo courtesy of Howard County COLUMBI Historical Society. JOHN VOTTA SHOE REMAIRS Team from The Structural Group.

Main Street Ellicott City is a National Register Historic District.

HURCH ROAD

Over 78,000 square feet of impact

MAIN

BRANCH

HISTORIC ELLICOTT CITY



STREET

Direct technical assistance provided by Preservation Maryland С ЦI

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STAFF EXPERTISE:

Preservation Maryland hired temporary staff for the Center, including a qualified Preservation Field Director, knowledgeable in the fields of preservation, tax credits, and architecture. This position helped impacted property owners with:

- Assessment of damage to historic district,
- Helping business owners and residents to see potential in rebuilding efforts,
- Documentation of rebuilding efforts, and
- Collaborating with partner organizations and agencies to complement a complex review and support network created following the flood.

In addition, the work of the Field Director was supported by a part-time Preservation Associate. This position, which was filled by a recent graduate of an architecture program, supported the Center with:

- Ongoing, professional administrative support,
- Professional handouts, flyers, infographics and documentation to support technical assistance efforts, and
- Assisted in site visits, documentation and maintaining regular Center hours.



The Preservation Maryland Preservation Resource Center was staffed by Michelle Eshelman (left) and Renée Novak (right) beginning in August 2016 to provide boots-onthe-ground technical assistance to historic property owners. Although Preservation Maryland enjoyed broad local, state, and regional support for its efforts and was largely successful, there were many lessons learned from well-intentioned efforts that did not succeed.

VOLUNTEERISM

As one of the first organizations that stepped forward to get involved, Preservation Maryland was inundated with expressions of support and interest in opportunities to volunteer to assist residents of the historic district. While the organization did quickly launch a volunteer form, realistically there were infrequent opportunities to volunteer. Much of the cleanup work required trained professionals able to operate in environments tainted by toxic mold, untreated sewage, and other contaminants. Implementing an aggressive volunteer program would have also likely required a dedicated staff member to oversee its organization and involvement. As a result, few of the initial volunteers were given opportunities to get involved and instead most were unused or later became financial supporters when it was clear hands-on support was not the primary need.

BUILDING A STRONGER ELLICOTT CITY

In the early weeks, and perhaps months, after the flood, Preservation Maryland worked very hard to meet the needs of property owners, business owners, and residents impacted by the flood as they confronted the difficult decision to rebuild or leave.

As a result of those initial efforts, property owners received valuable technical assistance and were educated on what financial incentives were available to them and how to navigate the preservation design review process. Sadly, many of the property owners were inundated with other applications and separate processes and were understandably overwhelmed. Many other property owners disregarded available incentives or took the path of least resistance when rebuilding their historic property and as a result, did not seriously consider quality or long-term consequences. Although one of the primary goals for the community's rebuilding effort was to make the town stronger and more resilient, many rebuilding projects did not adequately or seriously consider resiliency, and they are likely no stronger or resilient to future flood events than they were prior to the 2016 flood.

LAYERS OF COUNTY AND STATE GOVERNMENT

Following the disaster, despite the best intentions of county and state leaders, various agencies of government began to conflict with their respective goals, missions, and sometimes regulations. The inevitable confusion and lack of coordination eventually improved, but during the immediate disaster response, the confusion contributed to the loss of some valuable historic resources—including a great deal of architectural elements that were destroyed or removed during the cleanup without input from preservation officials within county government.

In the immediate aftermath of the flood, the decision to block access to Main Street may have accelerated a pervasive mold problem as property owners waited several hot, humid days to begin their cleanup and recovery. This closure period was also a period of confusion and difficulty for preservationists who wanted equal access with public works officials who were making early decisions on rebuilding and recovery that would have benefitted from preservation input and advice. During this same period, there was no point-person or responsible party for preservation issues as there were for life safety or public works—an omission that should be corrected in future flood events.

OVERWHELMING SITUATION FOR OLDER BUSINESS OWNERS

Like many historic communities and Main Streets, many property owners within the historic district were elderly and could not take full advantage of online resources made available by Preservation Maryland and other organizations. These same residents also required extensive guidance to understand the financial incentives—and many of these residents were unwilling to take on any loans whatsoever despite the extremely favorable terms. The lack of interest in funding meant many of the rebuilding projects were done at the lowest cost possible leading to a less than resilient result.









Clockwise, from top: view east along Main Street in August 2016 when the street was still closed to the public for safety; Main Street reopened to the public in November 2016—shoppers and diners returned to support local businesses; using a laser scanner, Direct Dimensions, a Maryland-based, international company, developed a 3D model of Ellicott City accurate to 2 millimeters; when it was safe and possible, Preservation Maryland and the Patapsco Heritage Greenway led brief public tours of the recovery efforts.



Clockwise, from top: Preservation Maryland staff were on-the-scene in Ellicott City from August 2016 through May 2017; Matthew Daw, PE, of Keast & Hood directed the emergency stabilization of 8111-8113 Main Street that prevented its loss (photo by Patapsco Heritage Greenway); while interior rehabilitations were taking place, murals were painted on several Main Street storefronts to enliven the security plywood.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PRESERVATION DISASTER RESPONSES

PRESERVATION MARYLAND'S year-long experience in Ellicott City has opened up a new avenue of involvement for the organization in the state's historic communities: disaster response.

While the organization has previously been an advocate, funder, and provider of technical assistance, never before had Preservation Maryland committed itself fully to responding to a disaster in a historic community. Nevertheless, the experience has been powerful and positive, and the organization intends on being prepared for wherever and whenever the next disaster strikes in Maryland.

The following recommendations have been prepared based on Preservation Maryland's Ellicott City experience and were done for the interest of non-profits and governments across the nation that may be interested in preparing for or responding to a disaster in their historic community:

NON-PROFIT CHECKLIST FOR DISASTER RESPONSE:



Prepare to respond immediately and launch an online fundraising effort to sustain your long-term program(s) while the recent disaster is the primary focus of the broader philanthropic community. **You may only have 12-24 hours to begin this effort**—news and fundraising move extremely fast and waiting a week or more to begin a response will be too long.

Reach out *immediately* to impacted local planning office(s), or preferably contact disaster-prone areas in advance, to offer support. Be prepared to outline specifically what support you can offer.

Before a disaster hits, organizations committed to this form of preservation assistance should consider creating an **emergency response kit** with critical tools and supplies. The response kit should include:

Personal Safety Equipment

- > hardhats
- > safety vests
- > construction gloves
- > flashlights



Survey & Documentation Equipment

- > disaster survey/documentation form
- > clipboards
- > tape measures/laser measures
- > pens/pencils
- > digital camera and extra batteries



Branded items

Following a disaster, it's critical to know who is who—shirts with your organization's logo and name may seem insignificant but are important in defining your presence on site. Additionally, organization business cards, with or without names, can play an important role in connecting individuals to necessary resources.



Printed Materials

Prepare materials in advance of a disaster and have them ready to go—this should include information on your state and/or local financial incentives for preservation and how they work. Prominent contact information should be on every item, and a digital version should be on your website or ready to be posted at a moment's notice.



Technology

Many organizations have only enough computers to support current staff – an old or donated laptop that can perform basic functions can be set aside to support an expanded role in the field. A lightweight printer is also critical to print documents for residents without access to a printer or who have lost their technology due to the emergency. Access to the internet will be sporadic or non-existent in the initial response period so be certain to have necessary documents saved locally.



Digital Resource List

Establish a list of your state and/or local resources for preservation (i.e. where to find tax credit information online, database of state's historic district maps and nomination forms, etc.). Know where to find the information you'll need before a disaster strikes. Consider preparing a contractor list for use in emergencies or know where to send a property owner to find a list maintained by another organization.



TYPES OF SUPPORT

Types of low-cost support that preservation organizations can provide following a disaster:

- 1. Assisting with or organizing an immediate survey and documentation of impacted historic resources,
- 2. Organizing volunteer teams to collect architectural salvage and debris,
- 3. Finding space to store architectural salvage created by disaster,
- 4. Coordinating or locating preservation engineers that are able to provide second opinions on local government demolition orders,
- Hosting field office hours near the disaster area to provide information on preservation financial incentives to property owners,
- 6. Coordinating cleanup teams, or fundraising for professionals, to support elderly or disabled property owners,
- 7. Managing drop-off points for donated cleanup supplies, and
- 8. Identifying a professional drone firm to document the extent of the damage to help track recovery and progress and to act as a permanent historical record.

Long-term support that preservation organizations can provide:

- Fundraising for a grant program to support recovery or specific projects,
- 2. Providing free or low cost tax credit application assistance,
- Attending local historic preservation commission meetings in the impacted community to support local government and property owners through process,
- 4. Establishing a physical field office to oversee disaster recovery and rebuilding, and
- 5. Supporting long-term/master planning following disaster.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In addition to recommendations for nonprofits, Preservation Maryland also recommends local government agencies tasked with safeguarding cultural resources consider the following steps to improve their responses after a disaster:

Incorporate cultural resources into local disaster plans before a disaster strikes.

Work to establish an Emergency Preservation Officer position that is activated after a disaster with the ability to temporarily halt recovery work to quickly assess a historic resource.

> This position should be on equal footing with other disaster response agencies within state and/or local government.

Consider preparing a historic community disaster response timeline and plan of action for your jurisdiction:

> The process and plan will be unique to your district but should attempt to answer the questions: What is step one, and how do we proceed from there?

Jurisdictions are encouraged to adopt the exercise of practicing potential disaster scenarios to assist in directing future responses. This practice of wargaming has been a hallmark of disaster preparedness in the medical and military fields for many years. These contingency planning efforts can reveal unknown pitfalls or resource issues that can be addressed in advance of the next disaster.

Begin to assemble best practices for disaster recovery for historic communities within your jurisdiction:

- > How will flooded properties be treated? How long will access be restricted? How will mold be mitigated?
- > Who will be authorized to order a demolition? Does a property within a historic district result in an additional review before demolition? Who can appeal that decision, and how do they do it?
- > Are there aspects of your existing review process or financial incentives, like local tax credits, which would be cumbersome following a disaster and could be amended in advance to have a disaster provision to expedite the process?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Alliance For Response

A professional network for individuals and organizations interested in cultural resource emergency response: heritageemergency.org

Heritage Emergency National Taskforce

A partnership of 42 national service organizations and federal agencies created to protect cultural heritage from the damaging effects of natural disasters and other emergencies: **culturalrescue.si.edu**

LYRASIS

Provides a variety of publications and linked resources for institutions to more fully develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of disaster planning and response: **lyrasis.org**

FEMA

The basics of preparing a disaster response plan for individuals, organizations and businesses: **ready.gov/make-a-plan**

Preservation Maryland

Background information on the Ellicott City response, and additional resources on disaster planning: presmd.org

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Preservation Maryland would not have been able to attempt or succeed in any endeavor without a host of friends, colleagues, partner organizations, and elected officials who make our work possible. Every effort has been made to include all who made our work possible, but we apologize in advance for any unintentional oversight:

ORGANIZATIONS & CORPORATIONS:

The Community Foundation of Howard County Direct Dimensions Elevated Element Ellicott City Partnership Historic Ellicott City, Inc. The Howard County Historical Society Keast & Hood Structural Engineers The Middendorf Foundation National Trust for Historic Preservation Patapsco Heritage Greenway, Inc. The Preservation Maryland Board of Directors Preservation Society of Charleston Preservation Trust of Vermont The Structural Group

ELECTED & GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS:

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman United States Senator Ben Cardin United States Senator Christopher Van Hollen United States Representative Elijah Cummings State Senator Gail H. Bates State Delegate Robert L. Flanagan Howard County Councilman Jon Weinstein Maryland Historical Trust Director Elizabeth Hughes Maryland Dept. of Housing and Community Development Secretary Ken Holt Maryland Dept. of Planning Secretary Wendi Peters Howard County Government: Beth Burgess, Samantha Holmes, Ken Short Maryland Historical Trust: Marcia Miller, Heather Barrett, Nancy Kurtz,

Jen Sparenberg

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:

Federal Emergency Management Administration Howard County Government Howard County Economic Development Authority Howard County Office of Tourism The Maryland Historical Trust The Maryland Department of Planning Maryland Emergency Management Administration The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development National Park Service Office of Tax Incentives

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IMAGE CREDITS

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PAGE 1: Albertype Co., Publisher. *Main Street, Ellicott City, Md. Norton's Pharmacy.* [Between 1890 and 1910?] Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2011660324/.

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PAGE 5: 1878 map of Howard County and Ellicott City, Courtesy of Johns Hopkins University.

PAGE 7: Courtesy of Ian Jett (top); The Washington Post (middle); and Scott Weaver (bottom).

PAGE 9: Courtesy of Patapsco Heritage Greenway (bottom).

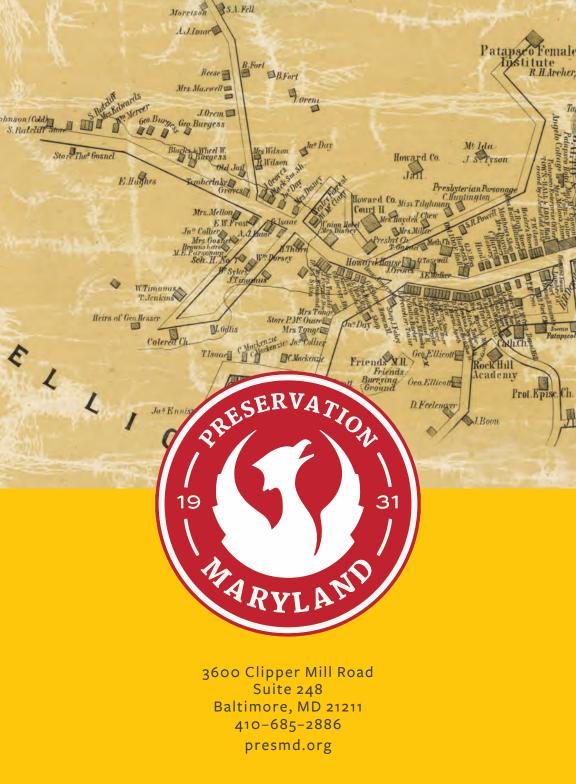
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