



## OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

James Stowe  
Director

December 15, 2025

The Honorable Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield,  
The Honorable Delegate Greg Wims,  
The Honorable Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr,  
The Honorable Senator Ben Kramer,  
Members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly,  
The Honorable Montgomery County Executive, Marc Elrich,  
The Honorable Montgomery County Council President Natali Fani-González and Council Members.

### **Re: Interim Report Submitted by the Emory Grove Task Force**

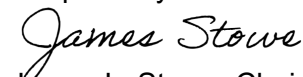
On behalf of the Emory Grove Task Force, I respectfully submit the attached Interim Report in accordance with the *Montgomery County – Task Force on the Displacement of Residents of Emory Grove legislation*<sup>1</sup>, HB964, passed into law (signed by Governor Moore on May 13, 2025 – Chapter 588). This report reflects the Task Force's work to date in examining how the urban renewal program carried out between 1960 and 1985 led to the displacement of residents of the historically Black community of Emory Grove.

The interim report documents the historical, legal, legislative, and administrative basis for the Emory Grove urban renewal program; summarizes how the program was executed; and identifies the equity impacts experienced by displaced residents and their families. Consistent with the statute, this report does not present final determinations or remedies but instead provides an evidence-based foundation to guide the Task Force's continued work.

Over the coming year, the Task Force will deepen its analysis, engage directly with former residents and descendants, and evaluate potential remedies and eligibility frameworks. The final report, due December 15, 2026, will present comprehensive findings and recommendations.

Thank you for your attention to this important work and for your continued commitment to equity, accountability, and historical understanding.

Respectfully submitted,

  
James L. Stowe, Chair  
Emory Grove Task Force

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 588 of the Acts of 2025. <https://legiscan.com/MD/text/HB964/2025>

## Public Summary: Interim Findings on Emory Grove

### Why this report matters

Emory Grove was a historically Black community founded in the 1860s by formerly enslaved African Americans. For generations, residents-built homes, churches, schools, and community institutions that supported family life, culture, and economic stability.

### What happened

Between 1960 and 1985, Montgomery County used the federal urban renewal program in Emory Grove. The program was justified by claims of “blight,” which were closely tied to decades of public infrastructure neglect, including the lack of sewer and water service. As a result, homes and land were acquired and demolished, and families were forced to leave.

### Key interim findings

- At least 112 households were displaced, the vast majority of whom were African American.
- Many displaced homeowners were unable to purchase replacement homes and became renters.
- Families lost land, home equity, and the ability to pass wealth to future generations.
- The community was permanently dispersed, and few former residents were able to return.
- While actions were taken under legal and legislative authority, the harms fell disproportionately on Black residents.

### What comes next

This is an interim report. The Task Force will continue its work through 2026 to:

- Engage former residents and descendants.
- Examine compensation and housing models used elsewhere.
- Develop clear eligibility criteria for remedies.
- Recommend actions to address past inequities.

The final report will be submitted by December 15, 2026.

## **Interim Report on the Impact of Urban Renewal on Residents of Emory Grove from 1960 to 1985**

Submitted pursuant to Maryland House Legislation, HB964<sup>2</sup> (2025) Emory Grove Task Force Interim Report – December 15, 2025

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### **Executive Summary**

This interim report is submitted in accordance with the *Montgomery County – Task Force on the Displacement of Residents of Emory Grove legislation*, HB964, which established the Task

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter 588 of the Acts of 2025. <https://legiscan.com/MD/text/HB964/2025>

Force on the Displacement of Residents of Emory Grove. The Task Force is charged with reviewing and analyzing how the urban renewal program carried out between 1960 and 1985 caused the displacement of residents of the historically Black community of Emory Grove, and with making recommendations on potential remedies for past inequities.

Based on review of legislative records, county and federal planning documents, archival research, and community-based historical materials, the Task Force finds that:

- Emory Grove was a self-sustaining African American community founded in the mid-19th century by formerly enslaved people.
- Longstanding public infrastructure neglect—particularly the absence of sewer and water service—contributed to conditions later labeled as “blight.”
- Montgomery County’s use of the federal urban renewal program resulted in the acquisition and demolition of homes and land, displacing at least 112 households, the vast majority of whom were African American.
- Replacement housing pathways and opportunities to rebuild wealth were limited, delayed, or unrealized, resulting in permanent community dispersal and intergenerational loss.

This interim report summarizes the historical record, documents the basis and execution of the urban renewal program in Emory Grove, and identifies key equity impacts, consistent with the statutory requirements of the *Montgomery County – Task Force on the Displacement of Residents of Emory Grove legislation*, HB964. Detailed remedies and eligibility frameworks will be developed in the Task Force’s final report.

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## I. Purpose and Legislative Mandate

*The Montgomery County – Task Force on the Displacement of Residents of Emory Grove legislation*, HB964 (2025) directs the Task Force to study the displacement of residents of Emory Grove under the urban renewal program from 1960 through 1985. Specifically, the Task Force must: - Determine the basis for the development of the Emory Grove urban renewal program, - Analyze how the program was administered and executed, including property acquisition and demolition; - Examine the equity impacts of the program; - Review plans for replacement housing and homeownership opportunities; and - Recommend remedies for past inequities if deemed appropriate.

This interim report fulfills the statutory requirement to submit findings and preliminary observations by December 15, 2025.

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## II. Historical Background of Emory Grove

Emory Grove was established in the 1860s by formerly enslaved African Americans. Residents built homes, a church, a school, and community institutions that supported religious life,

education, recreation, and mutual aid. For generations, Emory Grove functioned as a stable, close-knit Black community characterized by land ownership, cultural continuity, and intergenerational ties.

Despite its longevity, Emory Grove was subject to racialized land-use patterns and unequal public investment. Nearby White communities received municipal services decades earlier, while Emory Grove residents faced persistent exclusion from infrastructure improvements, including sewer and water systems.

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### **III. Basis for the Urban Renewal Program in Emory Grove**

#### **A. Federal and State Framework**

Montgomery County's urban renewal authority derived from the federal Housing Act of 1949 and corresponding provisions of Maryland law. These frameworks encouraged local governments to identify and redevelop areas deemed "slum" or "blighted," with substantial federal financial support.

#### **B. Local Conditions and County Decisions**

By the early 1960s, Montgomery County initiated a countywide Community Renewal Program to identify areas eligible for federal assistance. Emory Grove was designated as an urban renewal area in the mid-1960s. County records indicate that the lack of piped water and sewer service, housing conditions, and development pressures were central justifications for this designation.

The Task Force finds that these conditions were not solely the result of resident neglect, but rather reflected decades of underinvestment and exclusion from public infrastructure planning.

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### **IV. Administration and Execution of the Urban Renewal Program**

#### **A. Planning and Approval**

Between 1961 and 1969, the Montgomery County Council adopted multiple resolutions authorizing planning advances, surveys, appraisals, and applications for federal funding. Emory Grove was formally designated as an urban renewal area, and the County Council approved the Urban Renewal Plan after public hearings.

## B. Property Acquisition and Demolition

From approximately 1970 through the late 1970s, Montgomery County acquired land in Emory Grove through negotiated purchases and, in some cases, condemnation. Records indicate that:

- More than 160 acres were included in the renewal area;
- Over 80 structures were demolished;
- At least 112 households and 20 individuals were displaced;
- Approximately 102 of the displaced households were African American.

Although appraisals and purchase prices were documented, the Task Force notes concerns regarding whether compensation reflected fair market value, replacement cost, or lost generational wealth.

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## V. Displacement and Equity Impacts

### A. Housing and Relocation

Displaced residents were relocated to a mix of public housing, rental housing within Montgomery County, housing outside the county, or out of state. While relocation assistance was provided in accordance with federal requirements, evidence suggests that:

- Homeownership opportunities for displaced residents were limited;
- Many former homeowners became renters;
- Few families were able to return to Emory Grove.

### B. Community and Wealth Loss

The urban renewal program dismantled not only physical housing but also social, cultural, and economic networks.

Losses included:

- Family landholdings and home equity.
- Community gathering spaces and institutions.
- Intergenerational wealth-building opportunities; and,
- A cohesive sense of place and identity.

The Task Force finds that these impacts disproportionately burdened Black residents and reflect broader patterns of racial inequity in urban renewal programs nationwide.

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## VI. Preliminary Observations on Replacement Housing and Redevelopment

Plans for replacement housing included new residential development and mixed income housing. However, redevelopment timelines, affordability constraints, and eligibility

requirements limited access for displaced residents. Archival materials indicate that only a small number of former residents expressed interest or were able to return, often decades later.

Current redevelopment proposals acknowledge Emory Grove's historical significance and include mixed-income housing and cultural recognition, but they do not fully address past displacement or loss.

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## VII. Preliminary Considerations for Remedies

While final recommendations will be developed in the Task Force's final report, preliminary areas for consideration include:

- Formal acknowledgment and apology for the harms caused by urban renewal.
- Financial or non-financial compensation mechanisms for former landowners and descendants.
- Targeted homeownership or housing access programs.
- Historic preservation, memorialization, and public education initiatives.
- Educational programming for community members to learn about the history of Emory Grove, the work of this task force, and the ways they can contribute to supporting those impacted by the displacement and dispossession of the Emory Grove community; and,
- Ongoing community engagement with descendants and former residents.

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## VIII. Next Steps

Prior to issuing its final report, the Task Force will:

- Complete review of outstanding archival and legal and legislative records, including appraisal methodologies and condemnation proceedings.
- Conduct structured engagement with former residents and descendants.
- Analyze comparative reparative frameworks used by other jurisdictions.
- Develop eligibility criteria and cost scenarios for potential remedies.
- Assess legal, legislative, fiscal, and administrative feasibility of proposed actions.

The final report, due December 15, 2026, will present comprehensive findings, eligibility determinations, and specific recommendations.

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## Conclusion

The displacement of Emory Grove residents through urban renewal was not an isolated planning decision, but the outcome of systemic inequities in infrastructure investment, land use, and housing policy. While undertaken pursuant to legal and legislative authority and federal incentives, the program produced lasting racial and economic harm that was disproportionately borne by African American residents.

This interim report documents the historical, legal, legislative, and administrative foundations of that displacement and affirms the need for continued study and meaningful remedies. The Task Force submits this report to inform policymakers, guide the next phase of analysis, and support the development of equitable and durable recommendations in the final report.

Respectfully submitted,

Emory Grove Task Force