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COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Harford County Government

AND

Harford Land Trust



PRESS RELEASE – For immediate distribution

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Harford County purchases 129 acres formerly slated for residential development to become new Joppatowne park

On January 31, 2024, Harford County Government, in collaboration with Harford Land Trust, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and Aberdeen Proving Ground, purchased 129-acres of open space in Joppatowne on the eastern side of Trimble Road. Foster Branch Park will be the County's newest public park and is permanently preserved with a conservation easement through Maryland's Program Open Space.

"We are excited that this beautiful land, which was once planned for residential development, will become a new park for everyone to enjoy," County Executive Bob Cassilly said. "I would like to thank our partners for helping to make this acquisition possible and I look forward to celebrating the park's grand opening with the Joppa/Joppatowne community."

The property is bisected by Foster Branch and is mostly wooded. The western section was once a produce farm and is adjacent to the future Ridgely's Reserve residential community. The larger eastern section abuts the historic African American community of Dembytown and connects to Robert Copenhaver Park allowing extension of the existing greenway trail north.

Harford Land Trust first approached the owners, the Salvo and Vickers families, with interest in acquiring the property in 2020. The families had been longtime co-owners of the property, purchasing it in pieces between 2002 and 2018. They had previously subdivided the land into 232 lots, known as "Foster's Run," and were pursuing additional subdivision for a total of 265 lots.

“We are extremely grateful to the Salvo and Vickers families for embracing our vision of a public park,” said Kristin Kirkwood, Harford Land Trust Executive Director. “Without willing sellers and committed funding partners, deals like this are impossible.”

Harford County purchased the property for \$8.6 million, primarily using funding from Maryland’s Program Open Space. Harford Land Trust also contributed funding through its land preservation partnership with Aberdeen Proving Ground.

The Joppa-Joppatowne Recreation Council area had long been targeted for the acquisition of additional parkland with space for a future activity center and recreation fields. The area also ranks highly on Maryland’s Park Equity Mapper, which analyzes park needs based on demographics, income, and walkability.

The flatter western portion of the property is suitable for recreation-related development, such as parking, bathrooms, and recreation courts and fields. Outside of this active recreation development area, the State’s easement requires that the remainder of the property only be used for passive forms of recreation, such as walking trails.

The property sits atop the boundary, or Fall Line, of the Coastal Plain and Piedmont Plateau. According to the land trust, the unique combination of geological and hydrologic factors on the property produces a pine barren-like habitat that is very limited in Maryland.

A short video of the property is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuP5LCFS5Yc>

More information about the transaction is available at

<https://www.harfordlandtrust.org/preserved-land/foster-branch/>