

# CALVERT COUNTY NEEDS A *PERMANENT* HARRIET ELIZABETH BROWN COMMUNITY CENTER & PARK

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## *The Vision*

A *permanent* Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center and Park (HEB CC&P) will bring new life to Prince Frederick with activities that serve citizens countywide. It will be a vibrant community asset deserving of the name of Calvert County icon, Harriet Elizabeth Brown.

Focused citizen input – and addressing new needs raised by the pandemic – will inform the Center’s design and activities. The Center will be a safe and healthy place for creative activities for all ages – from hiking and picnics to recreation, sports, classes, meetings, community gatherings, and maybe even a farmers’ market.

The Center will be a model for outdoor and recreational activities – the very things that make people love Calvert County and also what is most needed for our County to thrive even during a public health crisis. *For example: cleaner ventilation/HVAC systems, options for social distancing, safer rest rooms, open pavilions for large and small gatherings, and more.* The building would be designed to be flexible, both in how spaces can be used today and allowing for future expansion tomorrow.

This new *permanent* Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center and Park will replace the makeshift – and inadequate – *interim* Center, opened in 2016 in the old SMECO building on Dares Beach Road. It will be built on 27 acres on Fairground Road, conveniently across from Calvert High School and next to the Park and Ride lot.



Dedication of the *interim* Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center, March 1, 2016



In 1937, Harriet Elizabeth Brown and Thurgood Marshall, her 29-year-old NAACP attorney, successfully challenged Calvert County schools for paying African-American teachers about half of what they paid white teachers. Calvert County did the right thing and settled the case, paving the way for salary equalization across Maryland and the nation.

## *Structure, Governance & Funding*

Like its sister centers across Calvert County (*from Chesapeake Beach’s Northeast Community Center to the Southern Community Center in Lusby*), the new *permanent* Center in Prince Frederick will be a *community center*, not a *profit center*. It will serve County citizens, be run by the County Parks and Recreation Department, be advised by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and be primarily funded by our tax dollars, supplemented as possible by outside sources.

## *Need for the Center – Economic & Historical Impact –*

County leaders have long known that Prince Frederick needs the recreational, community, learning, and outdoor activities that come with having a vibrant community center. Our County seat is now characterized by disjointed geography, limited recreational opportunities, few places or institutions that support a strong and cohesive community, and a high percentage of low-income families.<sup>1</sup>

*It can be so much more.* A new *permanent* Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center and Park will provide Prince Frederick with a much-needed “heart” that attracts people for recreational, cultural and social reasons – not just medical care and groceries.

A robust community center and park will provide kids, both rich and poor, with a safe place to play, laugh and learn – promoting healthy minds and bodies as well as brighter futures. Community spaces build “neighborliness” – a sense of connectedness and trust that also helps small businesses flourish. People using the center and park will be more involved and connected to each other – and also more likely to trust that their tax dollars are well-spent. And outdoor activities boost physical and mental health – in the best of times as well as the worst of times.<sup>2</sup>

The County Comprehensive Plan calls for flourishing town centers, wide access to quality recreational opportunities, and concentrating commerce in Town Centers, including Prince Frederick. The Calvert Collaborative for Children and Youth has advocated for a community center in our county seat for 20 years. And a major recommendation of the 2015 blue-ribbon Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force was to name the new Prince Frederick community center after this Calvert County icon, including a museum to educate the public about the struggle for equal pay for African-American teachers.

The Center will boost the economy and fabric of Prince Frederick and the County. In the short run, it will provide construction jobs and support local contractors. In the long run, it will strengthen our community, prime kids and families for success, and enhance the quality of life and property values.

### *Funding & Feasibility*

Savings from approving a more compact County Administration Building and increased teleworking have freed up funds to develop a HEB CC&P Master Plan (\$500,000) in Fiscal 2022, which begins this coming July. The Board of County Commissioners has also directed there be \$7.5 million in Fiscal 2024 for implementation of this Master Plan and construction.

### *Progress and Next Steps*

#### *- How You Can Support This New & Permanent Center -*

This past August, our Calvert County Board of County Commissioners August took a giant step to make the *permanent* Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center and Park a reality. They unanimously voted to start work now, develop a Master Plan next year, and fund construction in 2023. Before this welcome reversal, the County had put off progress until 2026 or later.

Your voice matters! Here is how to make yourself heard.

**Complete the survey** to let the County know what’s important to you in this new, *permanent* Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center & Park:

<https://www.calvertcountymd.gov/2828/HEB-Community-Center-Survey>. If 18 or older, click on the *Adult* link. There is also a special *Youth* link. Reply by April 31.

While you’re there, sign up for the *HEB Facebook Group* and the *HEB Update Mailing List*.

**Email [HEBTaskForce@aol.com](mailto:HEBTaskForce@aol.com) to show your support** – as an individual or organization.

Just say: **“Please add \_\_\_\_\_ as a HEB CC&P supporter!”** and we’ll add you to the list on the next page.

Finally, “like” us on Facebook: *Citizens for a Prince Frederick Community Center and Park* and *Youth for a Prince Frederick Community Center and Park*.

The need is great and the time is right. Please join with your neighbors to support a new and *permanent* Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center and Park that will make us all proud.

#### References

<sup>1</sup> From the 2018 Maryland ALICE Report (**A**ssets **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed): 72% of Prince Frederick families have incomes either below the official Federal Poverty Level or above this level but still insufficient to cover the basic cost of living. Even before the pandemic, three quarters of Prince Frederick families struggled to meet basic needs: they were one paycheck from disaster. This is the highest rate in Calvert County – more than double Calvert’s overall rate of 32% and almost twice Maryland’s rate of 38%.

<sup>2</sup> See “Safely Reopening America Requires Reinvesting in Public Spaces,” *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, by Dana Bourland, Sam Gill, Judlilee Reed, and Chantel Rush, July 22, 2020. <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/Safely-Reopening-America/249215>

SUPPORTERS OF THE  
NEW & *PERMANENT*  
HARRIET ELIZABETH BROWN COMMUNITY CENTER & PARK  
INCLUDE...

All Saints Episcopal Church  
American Chestnut Land Trust (ACLT)  
Calvert Collaborative for Children & Youth (CCCY)  
Calvert County Commission for Women (CCCW)  
Calvert County Historical Society  
Calvert County NAACP  
Family of Harriet Elizabeth Brown – *Sherman Brown & Madison Brown*  
Girl Scouts  
Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force  
League of Women Voters of Calvert County (LWV CC)  
Parks & Recreation Advisory Board  
Prince Frederick Coalition  
Remnant Center of Excellence  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
United Way of Calvert County

*And citizens & taxpayers, including...*

*Margaret Dunkle,\* Wilson Freeland, Malcolm Funn,\*  
Pat Nutter,\* Debbie Shupe, & Guffrie Smith\**

*Marie Louise Andrews, Diane Bell, Carol M. Booker, Dia Brown, Daniel D. Curry Ed.D.,\* Steve Dare, Gloria Della, Mike & Kathy Ellwood, Senator Bernie Fowler, Joyce Freeland,\* C. Vernon Gray, Shanae L. Gray, Carol & Robert Harvat, Susan Haynes, Nadine Hunt, Senator Michael Jackson,\* Michele Lyons, Ariane Swann Odom, Tony O'Donnell, George W. Owings III, Wilson Parran, Sandra Raviv, Dusty & Vicki Rhoades, Marianne Roberts, Terry Shannon, Lisa Stallings, Gabe Stewart, Brenda Streat, Sheri Tardio, James A. Winship, & Joan Dowell Winship*

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\*Member of Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force