

In 1975, construction of what was officially designated as Interstate 170 began between Mulberry and Franklin streets on the city's West side. However, the original plans for an Expressway through these neighborhoods began decades earlier at the heavy hand of the nefarious Robert Moses, the father of American urban renewal. Ultimately, construction of I170 was abruptly halted in 1979 after grassroots community leaders. Environmental activists organized and protested its completion, but the damage was already done. The Highway to Nowhere, a nearly mile and a half long wound, ripped through the heart of Old West Baltimore, historically one of the most vibrant black communities in the United States. We are standing on one of the overpasses for. The failed I-70 Expanse I170 expansion, which we call the Highway to Nowhere because it is a roughly 1 1/2 mile stretch of Hwy. That is a eyesore and a scar through the center of Old West Baltimore. Roughly 900 to 1000 black families working to middle class, as well as the businesses, the churches and other institutions that make up a community, were disrupted by the highway to nowhere, both in Harlem Park and in Poppleton. Because Harlem Park you had the Harlem theater ser. Major Violet White lived there. You also had Doctor Camper? It's this one of the. Black life in Baltimore in Harlem Park, which was heavily disrupted by the development of the Highway to Nowhere. First, you have to consider that Harlem Park again is what we would call a working to middle class. I mean, the reality of it is a black community doing segregation. So you had all the kinds of blacks, right? All the black people, all the black institutions so to have. A portion of community literally disappear. Right for a municipal for federal structure that was not designed to service them. Right wasn't designed to service Poppleton or Harlem Park that remained. It really was designed to service white people entering and exiting Baltimore City like it was there to serve commerce. So it is essentially. The erasure of both black lives and black communities because. When you displace black families, particularly elders, you shorten their lifespans, so it is an actual erasure. I like going up on Bright St. was like a family. Everybody knew each other. The kids played together. Neighbors looked out for one another. So it was like a family orientation type. It was none of that shooting and stabbing, and I can't even remember that, but everything was right there that you needed to survive within that community. There's your small market, then it was your larger market. It was a movie theater. There was a small car dealership for the mature folks. The older folks, there's your lounge. The children didn't know much of what was going on as far as business. All we knew that we saw construction that was taken away some of our play area or we it

was separating and dividing us. So we really didn't know. We just knew that a highway was being built. Being older and living the life that I've lived and knowing the things that I know now, when I look back on it, I can see. Maybe some of the politics that was in this and this was like, OK, we wanna create. Some way to increase the speed of ridership from one part of town to another part of town. And in doing this, how can we do it to kind of like keep it away from. That's what I'm looking for to keep it away from let's just say negative precede areas. I'm Darren Crew, senior operations manager, Blue Water Baltimore. My connection to the Highway of Nowhere is planting the 477 trees to help revitalize the corridor with the Baltimore Tree Trust and the Maryland Port Administration. Blue Water Baltimore realized the highway to Nora was an environmental problem for the neighborhood. It's really bad air quality coming from all these cars running and then at the same time we first thought with all this pavement. You can do something to control the runoff. We looked at whether we could do a stormwater project right to our right and left, or rain gardens. We're unable to do that, and so is that. What is the next best thing we can do? And so planting trees really helps reduce runoff. Slow down the water. Cool the neighborhoods and improve the air quality. Who needed to do environmental restoration projects? They were able to fund the project and then we engaged volunteers to help plant 477 trees over 8 tenths of a mile. I mean, it's not a solution, right? But it helps. So the idea is. To be a forest and it would be absorbing a lot of the particulate matter, the ozone and the other air pollution that the cars are relieving and hopefully cool area for the neighborhood and just make it pretty. I mean, trees are driving down this thing, right? It's like a concrete jungle. It's not very welcoming. This is one of the major gateways to Baltimore and these neighborhoods have been cut off. And we're we're a group that's trying to improve the environmental justice for Baltimore residents. And they got their neighborhoods cut in half. The development of Hwy. to Nowhere opened the door for a slow displacement of Black people, erasure of Black lives, and erasure of Black history in Baltimore.