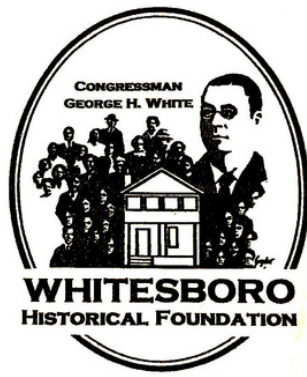




PRESS RELEASE

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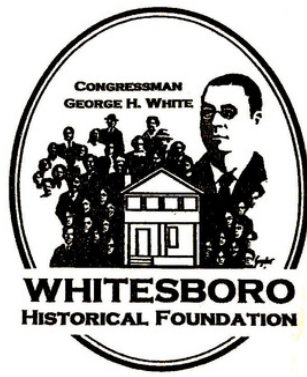
WHITESBORO HISTORICAL FOUNDATION COMMENDS SENATOR BRITNEE TIMBERLAKE AND GOVERNOR MIKIE SHERRILL FOR LANDMARK \$200,000 INVESTMENT IN WHITESBORO LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

WHITESBORO, N.J. — The Whitesboro Historic Preservation Project (WHPP) and its lead organization, the Whitesboro Historical Foundation, are commending State Senator Britnee N. Timberlake and Governor Mikie Sherrill for the inclusion of \$200,000 in New Jersey's Fiscal Year 2027 State Budget for the Whitesboro Historic Preservation Project Legal Defense Fund.

The funding will allow the Whitesboro Historical Foundation to establish the Timberlake Charles Whitesboro Legal Defense Fund, a long-term legal advocacy resource focused on land justice, housing rights, generational property ownership, and protecting low-income and vulnerable Whitesboro residents.

The investment comes at a pivotal moment for Whitesboro, one of New Jersey's most historic African American communities. Founded in the late 1800s as a place where Black families could purchase land, build homes, and pursue economic independence despite racial discrimination, land ownership has remained central to Whitesboro's identity for more than 125 years.

For decades, the Whitesboro Historical Foundation has worked to preserve the history, culture, and legacy of Whitesboro and the generations who built the community.



Through the Whitesboro Historic Preservation Project, that mission has grown to include protecting land, strengthening community institutions, advancing equitable development, and ensuring longtime residents have a voice in Whitesboro's future.

Today, residents face growing challenges involving development pressure, displacement, property-record discrepancies, and eminent domain.

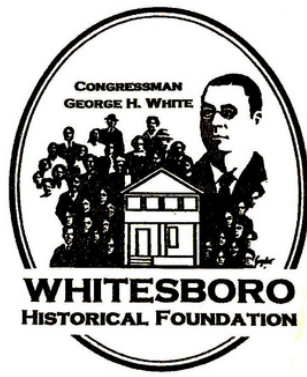
One of the most visible cases involves longtime resident Dawn Robinson, who is fighting Middle Township's effort to acquire approximately 2.4 acres of her family's property through eminent domain for the Indian Trail Redevelopment Project, involving NVR Inc., the parent company of Ryan Homes, the third largest development company in North America.

Robinson has maintained that she wants to keep the land for her family and has questioned why the development cannot proceed without taking her property. Her case illustrates why residents need access to legal resources capable of protecting their homes, property rights, and generational wealth.

Shirley Green, Executive Director of the Whitesboro Historical Foundation, called the investment a defining moment for the community.

"Our ancestors came to Whitesboro because land ownership meant freedom and something they could pass to the next generation," Green said. "More than 125 years later, we still believe families should be able to keep what generations before them worked to build. This funding gives our residents the resources to defend themselves, and we are deeply grateful to Senator Timberlake and Governor Sherrill for standing with Whitesboro."

The appropriation builds on years of organizing through WHPP, which has united residents, churches, nonprofits, labor, housing advocates, and community-development partners around a shared goal: preserving Whitesboro while ensuring longtime residents benefit from its future.



Felicia Simmons, WHPP project partner and Executive Director of Wcc Historic Renovation Association, said the investment moves the community from identifying problems to building solutions.

“Preservation cannot only mean saving buildings and telling history,” Simmons said. “It must also mean protecting the people who made that history and their right to remain on the land they have stewarded for generations. This investment gives families real tools to protect their property and their future.”

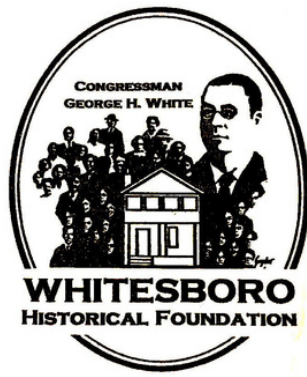
The investment was publicly celebrated during the 38th Annual Whitesboro Reunion Festival, where the ceremonial check was accepted not simply by one organization, but on behalf of the entire Whitesboro community and beyond.

The presentation brought together generations of residents and community leaders, including Mr. Bernie Blanks, Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro; Bishop Edgar Robinson, Christ Gospel Church; Rev. Andrea Davis, Asbury AME Church and St. James AME Church; Pastor Maria Brooks, True Deliverance Praise and Worship Center; Rev. Douglas Moore and First Lady Angela Rodriguez Moore, First Baptist Church of Whitesboro; Rev. James R. Hatch Sr., Mt. Olive Baptist Church; and Pastor Steven Bailey, New Hope Pentecostal Church.

Rev. Elorm Ocansey, a project partner with WHPP, said the significance of the investment extends far beyond its dollar amount.

“This is fundamentally a question of justice,” Ocansey said. “Whitesboro was built by Black families who understood that land ownership meant freedom, dignity, and self-determination. Protecting that land and the families who call it home is how we protect Whitesboro’s future.”

Senator Timberlake’s advocacy reflects her longstanding work on housing, community development, property rights, and protections for vulnerable communities.



The appropriation also represents an important recognition by the State of New Jersey that historic preservation must protect more than buildings and landmarks. It must protect the families whose ownership, labor, faith, and resilience created those communities.

The Timberlake Charles Whitesboro Legal Defense Fund will support legal advocacy involving land ownership, inheritance, housing rights, redevelopment, displacement, eminent domain, and the protection of community institutions and historic assets.

More than a response to individual cases, the Fund is intended to become lasting community infrastructure, giving Whitesboro residents greater access to the legal resources needed to navigate development and protect generational ownership.

Development may come to Whitesboro, but displacement does not have to come with it.