Maryland Cemeteries

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The Blackstone Cemetery has been the final resting place for the members of one of Howard County's most prolific and once-wealthy African-American families for more than 100 years. Now, commercial development threatens to cut-off access to this cemetery, nestled along side I-95, and while the cemetery proper is not in immediate danger of destruction, its plight illustrates the increasing danger development of the greater Washington-Baltimore region poses to old graves as builders and developers scour the region for land. In Howard County alone, it is estimated that hundreds of old graves have been isolated or ruined by development.

In response to this problem the Maryland General Assembly established an Office of Cemetery Oversight to help enforce existing laws protecting graves, but most enforcement falls to county officials who review development proposals. Over 2,500 residential building sites were proposed in Howard County last year.

For now the Blackstone Cemetery is safe, even if access has been reduced to a narrow foot-path, and bulldozers worked within the 50-foot buffer required by Howard County planners.