

My opposition to the current iteration of proposed Harborplace redevelopment is rooted in a very simple notion. Baltimore deserves better. While it has been claimed that the City managed a public engagement process, that process must have been a mere exercise in going through the motions. I'm quite sure that Baltimoreans did not ask to be excluded from a substantial share of its most visible public park. Instead of being greeted with open space, they will be told that they are not allowed in gigantic apartment buildings guarded by security and intended only for the affluent.

I'm quite sure that they did not ask for existing views of the waterfront to be destroyed, resulting not in a net gain in value, but an extraction of existing value by an already-wealthy developer. I'm quite sure that they do not want hundreds of millions of dollars to be gifted to the project by Baltimore City when there are so many challenges to be tackled, whether affordable housing, juvenile safety, education, or infrastructure.

Speaking of which, no one seems to be paying much attention to the impact of 900 apartments on wastewater treatment capacity. No one seems to be talking about the impact of so much construction material being brought to the water's edge on water quality. Few seem focused on the impact on traffic attributable to proposed lane closures that have yet to be subject to a timely traffic study.

Some will say that something is better than nothing. That is Baltimore at its worst – when it settles. Once again, insider dealing and a lack of vision are supplying our families, businesses, and visitors less than they deserve. Rather than serving wealthy renters, who could easily be situated on the other side of Pratt Street, this project should be a gathering place for both families and small business entrepreneurs. Visitation at scale generates massive economic impacts, supports proximate institutions like the Aquarium, Maryland Science Center, American Visionary Art Museum, Port Discovery, the Orioles, and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, while supporting additional tax base and supplying abundant opportunity for small business owners. By all means, work with the current developer, but insist on something far better.

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