

Baltimore's Harbor is unique in the world. It has the feeling of a four-sided living room that is connected ultimately to the Atlantic Ocean. We are not like most urban waterfronts, which simply face a linear river with two shorelines. The real estate under consideration at the Economic and Community Development Meeting of the City Council on Tuesday may be the most valuable piece of waterfront real estate in the U.S.A. It belongs to all of Baltimore's neighborhoods and citizens. Councilmanic courtesy, which maintains that council people do whatever Eric Costello wants because the bills pertain to a project in his district, does not apply in this situation. It is the duty of all council people to weigh in with their opinions about what should happen with this precious location.

The legacy of my father, James Rouse, that I wish to restore is not the two pavilion buildings of his original design. Retail has changed in the 21st century. These buildings need to change. The legacy of my father that I wish to restore is the legacy of having 20 million visitors come to our harbor each year. Our city desperately needs to give the many visitors that come to our two stadiums, the Convention Center and the arena a reason to spend more time and money in Baltimore and come visit our Inner Harbor.

I respect developer David Bramble, the managing partner and co-founder of MCB Real Estate, which has put forward a proposal to redesign the Inner Harbor. David is sincere in his desire to revitalize the heart of our city. I would like to see him succeed in bringing 20 million visitors back to our exquisite harbor. People will not come to the harbor to see high-rise residential buildings. They will come to experience the magic of our harbor if we give them a place to sit down within 60 feet of the water's edge and break bread with their families and friends. Water is magic. People will come if given a chance to experience that magic while having a meal on the harbor. People won't come for a non waterfront park or an interior facing food court.

As Jane Jacobs, author of "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," once said: There is nothing like the hustle and bustle of human activity to create public safety. Residential towers by themselves do not create activity on the street. The beauty of 1,200 linear feet of waterfront seating for restaurants, such as exists at Harborplace (on two levels), is that it creates public/private space with eyes on the promenade. Having eyes on the promenade from 40 feet away creates safety. Having eyes on the promenade from the interior of a residential tower does not create safety. MCB Real Estate's current plan has no outdoor waterfront eating areas (within 60 linear feet of the water as Harborplace has). Potentially it could at most have 400 linear feet of such space, but that space would be too far from the waterfront and not nearly enough critical mass of people on the waterfront to create safety.

Three bills are before the City Council. One would permit "multifamily residential development and off-street parking" on the land, designated as being for "public park uses." Another eliminates the 100-foot cap on building heights in the commercial district. And the third amends technical requirements to develop certain parcels of land as proposed by MCB.

The bills are putting the cart before the horse. The public engagement process has been a sham. At Struever Bros Eccles and Rouse, where I was a partner for 25 years, we presented more than 30 projects to the Planning Commission and City Council in order to obtain zoning or other changes. We always presented our proposed plans to the communities affected for their feedback. We always came back a second time with new plans that addressed the community's concerns. In the case of this project, plans were presented to the community for the first time with the Baltimore mayor and Maryland governor on stage saying that they would do everything possible to rush this project forward before ever showing the plans to the community. That is not public engagement, and the fact that the developer was given \$1 million of predevelopment grants in order to do public engagement that wasn't done is truly an insult to the citizens of Baltimore.

The Economic and Community Development Committee should refuse to approve these three bills until the developer has changed its plans based on the Urban Design and Architecture Advisory Panel's input and participated in a true public engagement process that records how the input shapes the redesign. This can be accomplished with amendments to the proposed bills that includes making UDAAP approval mandatory; making parking, if any, underground; and requiring legally binding commitments for all necessary public and private financing before demo of the existing pavillions can begin.

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