

INDYPENDENT READER

toward building a new society on the vacant lots of the old . . .

Published on *Indydependent Reader* (<https://indyreader.org>)

[Home](#) > [Endorse a call for a public meeting with the Baltimore Development Corporation](#)

Endorse a call for a public meeting with the Baltimore Development Corporation

Contributed by:

The Baltimore Independent Reader[1]

Friday, October 28, 2011 - 10:45

LETTER TO THE BALTIMORE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

[CLICK HERE\[2\]](#) TO SIGN THE LETTER

To the Baltimore Development Corporation, We, the undersigned authors and endorsers of this letter, feel that it is time to have a little talk.

The Baltimore Development Corporation should, as a publicly-funded organization entrusted with the public mission of promoting local economic development, be accountable to this city's residents. Instead, we find that the BDC uses technicalities and legal loopholes to hide from democratic control and accountability behind its technical status as a private non-profit, making deals ostensibly in the name of Baltimore—and more often than not involving Baltimore's tax dollars—without Baltimore getting any real, effective say in what those deals are. This is an unacceptable and untenable situation.

More specifically, there are three core problems in the operations of the BDC that must be urgently addressed:

1) **The BDC's lack of transparency**

Despite a landmark 2006 ruling which established that the BDC is legally obligated to comply with the Maryland Open Meetings Act, no real transparency in the BDC's operations has been established. Exemptions and omissions have kept the BDC's operations squarely hidden from public scrutiny. If you are going to be funded with public money, and use public money to advance a development agenda, the public has a right to know what you are doing and how.

2) The BDC's lack of commitment to economic human rights

For decades, the Baltimore Development Corporation and its predecessors have focused on redeveloping Baltimore's Inner Harbor and central business district, on the assumption that economic well-being and prosperity would trickle down to the city's residents through the jobs new projects in these areas would create. What we've seen, increasingly, is a Downtown where labor standards are next to nonexistent, and where developers and employers are never held to account on failing to live up to their promises. The BDC needs to insure that all city-supported development results in good jobs with living wages and dignity, through binding agreements with "clawback" provisions that take back subsidies when these benefits don't materialize.

3) The BDC's lack of vision and popular participation

There is no meaningful participation of any Baltimore community in the operations of the BDC, except for the seat at the table reserved for the well-connected elite business community. We need an economic development agency that works for us, and with us, letting us determine the priorities to be pursued and the strategies to be followed. In an era of extraordinary financial crisis which has shattered economic assumptions and revealed the practical and moral bankruptcy of the development status quo, the need to reinvent and reconstruct the way local economic development works is of paramount importance. We need a BDC that works for a better Baltimore, and not just a better Inner Harbor; a BDC that supports green jobs and sustainable infrastructure, a BDC that operates to democratize wealth in Baltimore's local economy rather than subsidizing the profits of the 1% and the multinational corporate sector. In order for this to happen, Baltimore's neighborhoods, unions, and community groups need a seat at the table and a voice in the development process.

We thereby call upon the Baltimore Development Corporation to account for their conduct and their shortcomings in the areas above, and to work with the residents of the city in whose interest they claim to operate to address these pressing problems. Because so many of these problems have the BDC's lack of transparency at their root, we are calling upon officials of the BDC to meet with us in public, outside their offices at 36 South Charles Street, on Monday, November 7th, at 5PM, where some sunlight can hopefully be cast upon these matters. If the BDC refuses to meet, we will meet without them at the same time and place to collectively discuss what further actions their refusal merits.

Signed,

(YOUR NAME)

Resources

- Download the open letter: 11x17 [3] | 8.5x11 [4]
- Read Baltimore Development Corporation: A Case Study of Economic

Development Corporations, Shadow Government, and the Fight for Public Transparency and Accountability [5] by Maximilian Tondro.

- Read the Good Jobs First [6] report Subsidizing the Low Road: Economic Development in Baltimore [7]
- Read Marc Reutter's "Tax breaks for developers: economic development or corporate welfare?" [8]
- Read the United Workers [9]/NESRI [10] report Hidden in Plain Sight: Workers at Baltimore's Inner Harbor and the Struggle for Fair Development [11]

Source URL: <https://indyreader.org/content/endorse-call-public-meeting-baltimore-development-corporation>

Links:

[1] <https://indyreader.org/contributor/baltimore-indypendent-reader>

[2] <http://anotherbdcispossible.org/>

[3] <http://anotherbdcispossible.org/anotherbdcispossible-11x17.pdf>

[4] <http://anotherbdcispossible.org/anotherbdcispossible-8.5x11.pdf>

[5]

http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=mlh_pubs

[6] <http://goodjobsfirst.org/>

[7] <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/balt.pdf>

[8] <http://www.baltimorebrew.com/2011/07/14/tax-breaks-for-developers-economic-development-or-corporate-welfare/>

[9] <http://unitedworkers.org/>

[10] <http://nesri.org/>

[11] <http://www.nesri.org/resources/hidden-in-plain-sight-workers-at-baltimores-inner-harbor-and-the-struggle-for-fair-development>