

**Collateral Damage:
Unintended Consequences of Urban Renewal in Baltimore, MD**
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Baltimore, MD, circa 1955

A walk through Baltimore's Inner Harbor is a depressing, and, at times dangerous, testament to the City's decline. Throughout most of Baltimore's history, the Harbor was the bustling city center. Merchants of all varieties plied their wares along the picturesque waterfront. Businessmen and employees in the City's vital shipping industry dined in waterfront eateries, and families visited the Harbor for shopping and entertainment.

Turn of the century fire and subsequent disuse has rendered the Harbor a far different locale. Baltimoreans have little reason to venture into the Harbor these days. A few shipping companies still operate, and trucks can occasionally be seen driving into and out of the area, but most businesses have abandoned the region. The Harbor is now home, mainly, to the many rats that inhabit the dilapidated warehouses and unstable, rotting piers. The dingy waterfront, once the vibrant center of a prospering Baltimore, now stands as a deserted memorial to the Downtown that once was.

A twenty-minute walk to the northwest, however, paints a startlingly different picture. The Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood of West Baltimore, a stable blue-collar community and home to many of Baltimore's blue-collar workers, is one of the few viable neighborhoods in the embattled City. Though by no means a high-rent district or tourist attraction, the neighborhood has safe streets lined with well-maintained homes. Baltimoreans can walk down crowded Howard Street, the region's main drag, and visit any number of small business or department stores. Residents work in local office

buildings and dine in local eateries. Shoppers from all across Downtown Baltimore visit Sandtown to patronize Lexington Market, one of the City's last large food markets, for fresh fish and vegetables or to buy the City's best crab cakes. Sandtown is a reminder of what many of Baltimore's now forgotten and abandoned communities once were, and what they could still be.

Baltimore, MD, circa 2002

A northwesterly stroll from the Waterfront to Sandtown now reveals a very different picture. The Harbor, once marred by condemned piers and warehouses, is crammed with high-rise hotels and office buildings. Impressive glass pavilions, home to thriving commercial interests, line the waterfront. A major league ballpark, brand-new football stadium and the National aquarium draw hordes of visitors to Downtown. The water is home to tall ships, and the unusable piers have been revamped into entertainment complexes. Mounted police and well-lit walkways give the Harbor a secure feeling, even at night. Families fill the Harbor to dine in numerous restaurants, and Baltimoreans can spend a summer day by the water, listening to live music in the open-air environment of Baltimore's celebrated Inner Harbor.

Families and tourists rarely visit Sandtown. The once stable neighborhood is now one of Baltimore's notorious "hot spots." Vacancy and crime rates are high, and the area is one of the City's designated "high-risk" zones thanks to a high proportion of residents with syphilis. Gone is the vibrant business district along Howard Street, replaced by check cashing establishments and liquor stores. Lexington Market still exists, though few Baltimoreans will venture into Sandtown to shop there. Rather, crowds gather outside the market to catch unlicensed "gypsy cabs" that will take them downtown to jobs in the

Harbor, or north, to jobs in the county. Locals call the neighborhood “Zombietown.” No longer viable, Sandtown is another of Baltimore’s “failed communities.”

I.) Urban Development in the U.S: A brief history

In order to properly tell the story of urban renewal in Baltimore, and in order to comprehend the lessons taught by its successes and failures, one must look broadly at the practical and theoretical history of this movement. American governmental involvement in urban renewal has its most concrete roots in the now defunct federal urban redevelopment program created by Title I of the Housing Act of 1949. Title I not only marked the inception of federal involvement in urban renewal, but also displayed what would be one of the chief flaws of subsequent renewal efforts: the legislation lacked a definitive focus. Thus, competing and, at times, incompatible interests viewed urban renewal as a panacea for the problems of American cities, and attempted to incorporate their disparate views into the process. In “Urban Renewal and Its Aftermath,” Jon Teaford¹ tells us:

Central-city business interests viewed it as a means of boosting sagging property values; mayors and city councils perceived it as a tool to increase tax revenues; social welfare leaders hoped it would clear the slums and better the living conditions of the poor; and, more specifically, advocates of low-and moderate-income housing thought it would increase the stock of decent, affordable dwellings in the central cities (444).

In its rather misguided attempt to be all things to all people (and thus court legislative supporters), Title I was ambiguously worded. Some provisions seemed to indicate that housing would be the primary focus of federally subsidized (and directed) renewal programs. However, requirements that residential renewal could only take place in previously residential districts - coupled with provisions allowing for slums to be razed in

¹ Jon Teaford is Professor of History at Purdue University.

order to make way for commercial development - created a loophole that nonresidential developers could (and would) exploit. Furthermore, nothing in Title I explicitly called for low-income housing development. As Mark Gelfand² tells us in *A Nation of Cities: The Federal Government and Urban America*, federal conceptions of urban renewal lacked a unified vision “because different groups of people, like the blind man feeling the elephant, made entirely different assumptions as to the essential nature and purpose of this legislation” (153).

This lack of exact definition of renewal’s goals would prove a constant source of controversy. The overly wide net cast by renewal’s early legislative advocates would also serve to disappoint many of its more partisan supporters. In others words, attempts to facilitate consensus would also necessitate the sort of compromise that leads to an overall dilution of quality. Although both commercial and residential development advocates would be let down by the product of early urban renewal, the latter would certainly have more to complain about. Because of the ambiguous goals of Title I, renewal projects tended to be granted to the best-organized – and best-funded – “applicants” rather than to the best or most beneficial ideas. Generally, these were the commercial projects.

To be fair, many of the earliest Title I projects were residential, and indeed were usually directed toward moderate-income housing (this fact may indicate a pro-residential intent at the heart of the flawed Title I). New York’s earliest Title I projects were apartment facilities intended for union workers and African-Americans. Similar projects in Philadelphia and Cleveland created low-cost rental units designated for integrated

² Gelfand is Associate Professor of History at Boston College.

housing. However, by the mid 1950s, such residential development had almost universally given way to commercial projects (Koebel, 19).³

At the same time that residential development began to wane, the attendant concern of displacement began to rear its head. Renewal leaders began to advocate the razing of slums in order to erect commercial ventures or high-income housing. A notable example was Boston's West End, a close knit and stable Italian community. In 1959, much of the neighborhood was "slated for leveling; in its place were to rise 2,400 swank, high-rent apartments in soaring towers" (Teaford, 446). West Enders fought hard against the project, but it was constructed by 1960. By 1962, many had been displaced from their homes, and rent in the surrounding neighborhoods had increased by an average of 73 percent (Gans, 166).⁴

Growing discontent with such actions, combined with attitudinal shifts in Washington (thanks largely to the Great Society's Model Cities scheme⁵) led Congress to abandon the federal urban redevelopment program in 1974. In its place, the federal government created the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) program. Both programs emphasized flexibility and local control over projects. However, many critics saw in these programs the same problems that derailed Title I, namely a lack of any kind of unifying vision, coupled with an inherent bias toward projects that lure tax-rich business and commercial

³ From Theodore Koebel's "Urban Redevelopment, Displacement and the Future of the American City." Koebel is the Director of the Center for Housing Research at Virginia Tech.

⁴ From Herbert Gans' *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*. Gans is Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, and is known as a radical, if influential, sociologist.

⁵ Lyndon Johnson's Model Cities plan targeted inner city neighborhood for receipt of subsidies designed primarily to rebuilt communities by stimulating employment.

development. The CDBG and UDAG projects would form the basis for Baltimore's renewal projects, which were explicitly commercial.

II.) Urban Development in Baltimore: A Brief History

The decline of the Inner Harbor began, in all functional senses, with the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904. Then called Cheapside Wharf, the Harbor was a bustling commercial district and shipping center, with all manner of merchants operating in a thriving business environment. The fire, however, destroyed nearly 140 acres of this prime business location, and many merchants could not afford to rebuild.

By the 1950s, the decimation of the Inner Harbor was complete. During the past half-century, this decline had spread from the Harbor to nearby neighborhoods, and Baltimore's downtown had lost its appeal as a commercial center. As offices and large department stores moved out of the area, the reduced population of local workers could no longer support the smaller, neighborhood businesses in and around the Harbor. With the exception of the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood's Howard Street and a few other pockets of commerce, the economy of downtown Baltimore had dried up. In *The Inner Harbor Book*, Denise Pike⁶ claims Baltimore was perceived as "a city with a great past and no future, and if you made it, you were moving to New York or Philadelphia or Chicago" (27).

The 1954 closing Baltimore O'Neil's Department store (evidently something of a Baltimore landmark) was the last straw for many local retailers. The Retail Merchants Association turned to other cities for advice and examples of how to combat similar problems. It was promptly determined that, without help, they alone could not save

⁶ Pike's work was published by Baltimore's Department of Planning

Downtown. These merchants (along with other large property owners from within the city) consequently formed the Committee for Downtown, and still more concerned executives formed the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC). By 1956, the Planning Committee of the GBC hired city planner and architect David Wallace to develop a plan for the revitalization of Downtown. Wallace's first project was a relatively conservative effort of to revitalize and rebuild 33 acres of office space at Charles Center. By the mid 1960s, with the blessing of then Mayor Theodore McKeldin, Wallace shifted his focus to the waterfront, and constructed a broad, 30-year, \$260 million plan for revitalizing the Inner Harbor.

Most of this broad revitalization effort would be focused on so-called infill development. Infill development refers to larger scale projects usually carried out in previously developed subareas⁷ that have lost feasibility or usefulness. Infill development projects often require much demolition and infrastructure modification (such as water and sewer lines and roads). The Harbor Project also incorporated a renewal technique known as adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse describes the “imaginative reworking of existing buildings to suit new uses” (ULI, 370). In some specific, environmentally sensitive subareas, renewal centered on so-called Brownfield developments, overseen by the EPA and other environmental specialists.

Thanks to the infill development focus of the project, the redevelopment would drastically alter the Harbor’s character, and would be extremely expensive. Many Baltimoreans saw the project as overreaching. However, after the GBC launched a

⁷ Subarea is a technical term often used by city-planners. It refers to neighborhood-sized or smaller urban units. City-planners use “subarea,” rather than “neighborhood,” because development plans often ignore the boundaries of economically or socially defined communities typically termed neighborhoods. This tendency to ignore organic conditions in urban areas when planning renewal schemes may speak to the relative lack of community input in many UR projects.

comprehensive PR campaign in order to calm such nervous residents, and to help secure an initial \$2million voter-approved bonds, the redevelopment of the Inner Harbor began. The first new attraction was a rebuilt Pier 1, featuring a restored U.S.S. Constellation, the U.S. Navy's oldest ship. This was followed in 1976 by the Christian Lutheran Apartments (the first new buildings in the Harbor), along with a large IBM office structure, the Maryland Science Center and the Harbor Campus of Baltimore Community College (Pike, 31).

The revitalization efforts took off in the late 1970s, thanks largely to an infusion of federal money. In 1977, the City secured a \$10 million UDAG. That money, along with a \$2 million settlement from a previous interest, was loaned to the Hyatt chain for the construction of the Baltimore Hyatt along the waterfront (Hyatt agreed to repay the loan at 7 percent interest and pay base rent plus 2/3 of the profits back to the city) (Pike, 31).

Around this time, the Rouse Company, the celebrated (Baltimore-based) city-planning firm, approached the City with a proposal to construct "Harborplace," a "festival marketplace" consisting of two large commercial pavilions filled with an eclectic variety of shops, along a waterfront promenade. The creation of Harborplace, proponents argued, would mark the Harbor's return to its pre-1904 role as a bustling commercial center.

Not all Baltimoreans were as enchanted with the Rouse Company's plan. Merchants in nearby neighborhoods like Little Italy and South Baltimore⁸ (two of the city's most stable regions) worried that their (smaller, more neighborhood-based and generally family-owned) businesses would be hurt. Baltimore's African-American

⁸ One can safely assume that other communities, such as Sandtown-Winchester, were similarly concerned, but without the organizational structures present in other neighborhoods, their voices were never clearly heard.

community worried about "being frozen out of high-priced shops and restaurants" (Koebel, 23). And still others worried about the aesthetic destruction of open space along the waterfront. James Rouse convinced city voters that significant minority hiring, high tax returns and "careful attention to design" should calm their fears. In 1978, voters approved Harborplace by a 54 percent majority. The facility opened on July 2, 1980, to a crowd of over 50,000.

The Inner Harbor redevelopment, and Rouse's Harborplace in particular, accomplished many of its goals. The once decrepit and condemned Harbor is often described as an exemplar for other cities attempting urban renewal. The waterfront continues to be a popular tourist attraction - the Baltimore Hyatt is one of the chain's most profitable. Furthermore, the development along the Inner Harbor has spread to Baltimore's adjacent waterfront neighborhoods, particularly Fells Point and Federal Hill. That commercial redevelopment was successful along the waterfront should come as no surprise. In "Defining, Measuring and Analyzing Community Investment" Koebel tells us "areas with exceptional [commercial development] gains are often neighborhoods with strategic location or property characteristics" (i.e. waterfront) (21).

The story has not been as happy for many of Baltimore's landlocked neighborhoods. During the 1970s, Baltimore poured all of its discretionary UDAG and CDBG resources into revitalization of waterfront regions: the Inner Harbor (recipient of the vast majority of federal funds), Fells Point, Federal Hill and Canton. These neighborhoods (along with the university community of Guilford, around Johns Hopkins) all experienced "healthy increases in neighborhood commercial development" with attendant increases in negative factors, such as percentage of rent-stressed households,

crime, high-school dropout rates, etc. Otherwise, Koebel⁹ tells us, large sections of Baltimore saw decreases in neighborhood commercial establishment. Ironically, though perhaps not surprisingly, the hardest hit region was the Sandtown-Winchester's Howard Street area, once the last surviving remnant of Baltimore's thriving Downtown.

III.) Effects of Urban Renewal and Manifestations in Urban Baltimore:

It bears analyzing some of the commonly observed and advertised effects, both positive and negative, of urban renewal in general, and their particular realization in Baltimore. What follows is an analysis of urban renewal's effects on Baltimore's commercial development, crime, housing, population flow and employment.

Commercial Development:

Baltimore's Inner Harbor project is an example of the sort of commerce-centered urban renewal schemes taken on with great frequency since 1950. It should be noted that residential development is not entirely absent from the Inner Harbor. Townhouses and luxury apartments in Fells Point and Canton, as well as the recently completed Harbor View Apartments on the Key Highway, account for most of the roughly 2,500 residential units along the Harbor. However, such development occurred in the very latest stages of the Harbor's development, and was not part of the integrated plan for Downtown renewal conceived decades ago. Indeed, until very recently, most developers believed that residential development was not a realistic option for downtown Baltimore (Clarke, 14). The vast majority of construction (as well as the totality of federal and city money spent)

⁹ "Defining, Measuring and Analyzing Community Investment."

along the Harbor was on commercial development. Hence, it seems fair to treat the Harbor Project as a primarily commercial one.

Measuring the successes of commercial urban redevelopment projects is a difficult affair, primarily because goals of commercial development are rarely clearly defined. Often, successful commercial development is tied solely to the profitability of businesses in the particular subarea targeted for redevelopment. Under this narrowly construed framework, the commercial development in Baltimore's Inner Harbor has been successful. Over 1.5 million square feet of office-using businesses (including the 497,000 square foot Deutsche Banc headquarters) feed commercial interests in the immediate vicinity. The vacancy rate in commercial spaces within downtown Baltimore is less than 10%. Expanding tourist attractions along the waterfront (including the National Aquarium, Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Rouse's Harborplace shopping area and the Pier 6 entertainment complex) continue to attract upwards of 13 million tourists to Baltimore's harbor each year. Downtown hotels (including the Marriott, recipient of so much early financing) are booked tight enough that plans are in the works to provide an additional 3,200 rooms around the waterfront. Commercial interests in the downtown Baltimore/Inner Harbor subarea are flourishing. This subarea, once the home to rotting warehouses and piers, has most assuredly benefited from urban renewal.

Unfortunately, the news is not so encouraging elsewhere. Sandtown, located just a few blocks northwest of the Harbor was hit hardest. While most regions within the City lost an average of 10 commercial establishments between 1981 (i.e. the construction of Harborplace) and 1995, the Howard Street region (Sandtown's commercial district) had

a staggering net loss of 120 commercial establishments. Koebel describes the neighborhood's decline:

The department stores that lined the street have moved into the suburbs, or south into the Inner Harbor. As large retailers moved out, many of the smaller shops have also left due to lack of revenue. Some restaurants and convenience shops remain, but they are of a very different quality. Lexington Market, one of the remaining large markets in Baltimore, is no longer a stop for local office workers. The market instead serves the basic grocery needs of the low-income Sandtown neighborhood. The hardware, grocery and five-and-dime shops that once operated here have disappeared, replaced by gas stations, wig shops and nail salons (27)¹⁰.

The commercial decline in Sandtown was the worst in any area within the six cities covered by Koebel's study. By creating an attractive new business center along the Harbor, city planners created a commercial vacuum. The Inner Harbor, it seems, drew businesses away from neighboring communities to the promise of better pedestrian traffic and new commercial space. Businesses did not necessarily disappear from the City – just from neighborhoods like Sandtown. Largely as a result of this commercial displacement, Sandtown accounts for 72 blocks of the city's dilapidated or vacant housing. A full 50% of the adult population of roughly 10,000 is unemployed, and most families have an income below \$11,000. A recent wave of CDBG and HOPE-VI¹¹ funds approaching \$60 million have been funneled into housing rehabilitation and adaptive reuse in the Sandtown area. Few retain any hope that it can once again regain its former status as a viable neighborhood. One wonders how much the city and federal governments could have saved by considering Sandtown while conceiving the Harbor project.

¹⁰ "Defining, Measuring and Analyzing Community Investment."

¹¹ HOPE VI is a federal program designed to improve conditions in and around severely distressed public housing.

Sandtown-Winchester has not been the only area affected by the large-scale commercial shifts created by the Harbor Project. Downtown's West Side, which abuts directly against the vibrant downtown to its east, and to the university and medical centers of West Baltimore to its west, has also lost much of its previous commercial viability. Thanks largely to its enviable location, the West Side has not suffered anything approaching the commercial devastation of Sandtown. However, retail facilities that once served workers and students in West Baltimore and residents in the city's center have disappeared from the subarea. Though the City has plans for the revitalization of the West Side, the neighborhood serves as a reminder that even the regions that appear least vulnerable can still be adversely affected when urban renewal redraws a city's commercial map.

Crime

Urban renewal projects are often advertised as possessing the secondary benefit of reducing crime. Indeed, subareas targeted by urban redevelopers often do see an attendant drop in crime rate. Several so-called "situational crime prevention factors" often present in urban renewal projects do help reduce criminal activity (Press, 71)¹². Increased security presence (both police, presumably stepping up patrols response to the higher volume of residential and commercial interests, and private security personnel in corporate and commercial establishments) serve as an effective crime deterrent for reasons that should not need mentioning. Improved street lighting and increased pedestrian traffic (thus providing "casual surveillance") are also effective crime reduction factors.

¹² From "Some Effects of an Increase in Police Manpower in the 20th Precinct in New York City" by SJ Press, professor of statistics at university of California, Riverside.

The redevelopment along Baltimore's Inner Harbor certainly features all three of these factors. A pedestrian mall, complete with well-lit elevated walkways to ferry visitors over roadways, provides ample lighting and pedestrian traffic. And one must assume that the steady stream of police, complementing the traditional vehicular units and private security personnel in Downtown Baltimore, account for a dramatic increase in security presence since the Harbor's days as a rundown shipping pier. Indeed, crime rates have fallen in much of downtown Baltimore, particularly the aggressively redeveloped waterfront subareas of Fells Point, Canton and the Inner Harbor¹³ (Schumacher and Leitner, 13)¹⁴.

However dramatic crime reductions (and socio-economic improvements) may have been in the regions most immediately effected by urban renewal (Inner Harbor/Camden Yards, Fells Point, Canton and lower Downtown), crime rates throughout the city remained at high levels. Indeed, Schumacher and Leitner remind us that even in most of downtown, crime rates were unaffected by the Harbor Project. Indeed, in many of the city's poorest neighborhoods, crime rates made a statistically significant increase after the Harbor Project began to significantly impact crime rates along the waterfront. Analysis of city crime rates through the use of Global Information Systems (GIS) data seems to indicate that urban renewal in downtown Baltimore did not solve, to any consequential degree, the City's crime problems, and in fact may have

¹³ Burglary rates, considered because this property crime afflicts high and low-income areas alike, as well as residential or commercial zones, fell dramatically in along the Harbor (Schumacher and Leitner, 13). Subsequent discussion of effects of Baltimore's urban renewal program on crime will treat burglary as a representative example.

¹⁴ From Brian Schumacher and Michael Leitner's "Spatial Crime Displacement Resulting From Large-Scale Urban renewal Programs in the City of Baltimore." Schumacher and Leitner are professors of anthropology and geology, respectively, at Louisiana State University.

displaced criminal activity, shifting crime away from the Harbor and into adjacent communities.

Unsurprisingly one of the areas that saw startling increases in crime after renewal began was Sandtown. One of downtown Baltimore's stable subareas before the city began its ambitious urban renewal schemes, this location seems to have received much of Downtown's displaced criminal activity. Changes in crime rates are affected by numerous factors: prosecution patterns,¹⁵ drug trade and vacancy are merely a few of these. But the facts on Sandtown remain undeniably clear: the once stable area became one of Baltimore's most dangerous after renewal began. In addition to the measured increases in burglary, the neighborhood also became one of the centers for the city's active open-air drug market. The violent crime rate in Sandtown is three times that of the Inner Harbor. It also experienced simultaneous increases in poverty and vacancy rates. With limited police presence, unlit, narrow streets and little established commerce, Sandtown stands in stark contrast to the vibrancy of the Harbor. It is certainly unfair to suggest that (despite circumstantial evidence of crime displacement) renewal in the Harbor is chiefly responsible for increases in criminal activity in Sandtown. However, the neighborhood stands as a rather stark reminder of the neighborhoods left behind by urban renewal.

Housing, Population Flow and Employment

Urban renewal has many affects on housing. Surrounding neighborhoods are often gentrified at an alarming rate. Such is certainly the case in waterfront (and

¹⁵ For example, crime rates are sometimes inflated slightly in areas of concentrated urban poverty because prosecution and conviction for identical crimes is more likely in such regions than in, say, the suburbs.

adjacent) communities like Fells Point, Canton and Federal Hill. Once filled with affordable middle-income housing for the city's blue-collar workers, these areas now cater almost exclusively to Baltimore's professionals and Washington, D.C. area commuters. Luxury apartments and high-rent townhouses (products of adaptive reuse of multi-family homes) have replaced affordable, livable housing in these communities, displacing residents to less-desirable locales in West Baltimore and further uptown. Family-owned restaurants and businesses have been replaced by Barnes and Noble bookstores, Starbucks coffeehouses and purveyors of expensive foods and goods.

Destruction of public housing is often a prerequisite to urban renewal. Baltimore leveled all of the city's downtown-area high-rise public housing for families during the Harbor project in order to make way for commercial structures and luxury apartments. Five-thousand housing units were eliminated. Under Title I, urban renewal programs that eliminated residential structures had to compensate by creating new residences on a 1:1 ratio with preexisting structure eliminate. This provision was rarely followed to the letter since the abandonment of Title I, and was in fact was removed some years later. Furthermore, no regulations stipulate that low-income housing must be replaced by similarly affordable alternatives. Though 3,200 new housing units were constructed after renewal began, most of these came in the form of luxury high-rises and townhouses, further displacing Baltimore's poor community to neighborhoods with higher concentration of poverty, vacancy and crime, and identifying the benefits of urban renewal as only applicable to individuals of a certain socio-economic status.

A notable exception to this pattern is Little Italy. This small, clearly defined neighborhood has maintained its status as a residential neighborhood for middle-income

and working-class families. Businesses in the subarea are almost exclusively operated by Little Italy residents, vacancy is almost nonexistent and crime rates are among the city's lowest. This phenomenon is largely due to an informal neighborhood defense system by which residents only rent or sell to friends, family members or known associates. Also, gentrification has remained low and commercialization has not upset the neighborhood's aesthetic character. This is largely thanks to the highly-organized communities' unwillingness to allow the establishment of outside commercial interests in Little Italy, and to the neighborhood's status as one of the city's premier dining and tourist locales. Little Italy's comparative success speaks to the power of community organization and input in order to mitigate possible ill effects of urban renewal.

Not all displaced persons remain within Baltimore city once they are priced out of their old neighborhoods (or driven out by escalating crime and poverty concentrations). Indeed, Baltimore still suffers a considerable net loss of residents yearly, as families and individuals move to the growing communities in northern Virginia, or to Philadelphia and New York (Teaford, 28).

Urban renewal has a two-fold effect on this population flow. On one hand, the commercial growth in certain sectors driven, in part, by urban renewal, creates new jobs. By attracting corporate and commercial interests to downtown Baltimore, the city has not only created new employment opportunities for potential employees of these establishments, but has also expands the customer base for service and retail sector companies that provide for larger corporations (and their employees). During lunch hour, downtown restaurants and shops are ordinarily packed. This stimulates commercial

business and generates tax revenue, to be sure. But it also creates jobs, and more jobs in Baltimore, one might roughly assume, means more residents in Baltimore.

One the other hand, urban renewal can clearly push some small businesses under (as should be clear from the data we have seen on Sandtown) and can price individuals out of their homes. This creates flight from the city's center (to Baltimore county or further) – by those with the economic and situational means to leave. Such exodus creates the twin dilemmas of increased vacancy and reduced tax base. Thus, the astronomical spending efforts behind urban renewal actually reduce the city's disposable income. Data indicate that residences of individuals employed in managerial work (typically those with higher than average incomes) are disproportionately located on the City's outskirts, nearer to the county (where median incomes are higher), perhaps indicating such flight from the City center by relatively wealthy residents.

Such flight can weaken communities substantially. Orfield¹⁶ tells us that in urban Baltimore:

...successive groups moved outward and left inner-city poverty community housing at the abandoned end of a “chain” of housing displacement...housing at the inner city end of the chain becomes less and less attractive and winds up as substandard housing for the very poor or as abandoned housing blighting those communities (15).

Flight by successful role models or community leaders is of course most present in “hot spot” neighborhoods like Harlem Park, Patterson Park and Sandtown. I can recall driving through Baltimore City while Jelili Ogundele (the executive director of the Harlem Park Revitalization Corporation) pointed out residential blocks slated for demolition to make room for urban renewal. When I inquired as to where displaced

¹⁶ From Myron Orfield's *American Metropolitics: the New Suburban Reality*. Orfield is president of Amergis, a Minneapolis-based research firm focusing on public land use.

individuals would move, I was told “most of these people won’t leave the city – they can’t afford it.” Gentrification and flight by the (relatively) wealthy leave only the poorest in remaining blighted communities. Thus urban renewal, while a potential lure for new corporate dollars and new jobs, can also be a driving force behind creating ghettos.

IV.) Looking Ahead: Community Development in Harlem Park

In the summer of 2002, construction began on the Harlem Gardens Senior Apartments, a mixed-income senior housing facility in Harlem Park, a low-income community in west Baltimore, adjacent to Sandtown-Winchester. The Harlem Gardens project, which calls for the demolition or redevelopment of twenty-four blocks of vacant housing and empty lots in order to make room for primarily residential complex, differs from the Harbor Project in several key respects. By considering these differing approaches, much can be revealed about the benefits and drawbacks of large-scale urban renewal.

First, the Harlem Gardens project is financed differently from the Harbor project. The Gardens project is a unique joint venture between the Harlem Park Revitalization Corporation (or HRPC, a local community development corporation) and the Bank of America, the financial services giant. Financing comes exclusively from a loan, secured by HRPC, from Bank of America’s community development group; unlike the Harbor project, the Gardens received no governmental money. As it is an exclusively nongovernmental project, the approach taken by the Harlem Gardens planners does not exhibit, as one might prefer to see, a refocusing of urban renewal policy on the federal (or

even citywide) level. Nevertheless, successful execution of the project could speak volumes about the ability of nongovernmental organizations to effectively influence urban renewal.

Second, the Harlem Gardens project is a focused subarea development, with narrowly defined goals, serving an impoverished community. While the Harbor Project was a far-reaching plan to revitalize much of Baltimore City, the Gardens' goals are less ambitious. The primary aims of the project are to reduce blighted conditions caused by high degrees of vacancy in the surrounding area and, to a lesser extent, to create conditions for further development of the area. Also, as a renewal project focused entirely in a low-income community, Harlem Gardens strives to benefit primarily the members of that community, rather than the corporate and political interests primarily served by the Harbor Project. Certainly, such limited applications have their drawbacks: no one claims that Harlem Gardens will radically alter the face of Baltimore, draw tourist dollars to Harlem Park, or swell the City's tax base. Nonetheless, by implementing a focused plan designed to alleviate poor conditions in a needy neighborhood, the planners behind Harlem Gardens may well stand a better chance of achieving their goals than the more ambitious planner behind the Harbor Project. Furthermore, the smaller scale of renewal projects like Harlem Gardens should mitigate most of the unintended side effects that often accompany larger projects.

Third, the Harlem Gardens project is primarily residential in nature. The development will serve residents over the age of 62 with incomes between 40 and 60 percent of the area's median. The project is thus designed to provide area residents (and other low and middle-income seniors) with affordable, quality housing, while

simultaneously eliminating blight. Furthermore, by replacing vacant structures with a well lit, secure residential development, the Harlem Gardens project should make strides toward reducing crime in and around Harlem Park. Also, by limiting widespread commercial development, the project should also stave off subarea gentrification and job displacement, a concern with heavily commercial renewal schemes like the Harbor Project.

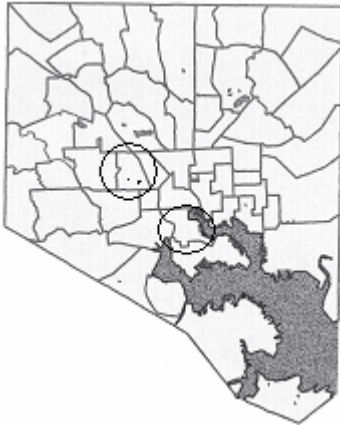
Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Harlem Gardens, unlike the Harbor Project, is not primarily the product of planning by corporate interests and City Hall. The expertise and monetary support of the Bank of America is coupled with input from both a local CDC and hundreds of local residents. The planning began in 1998, giving locals ample opportunity to consider its consequences, and the close proximity of chief planners to the neighborhood (HPRC is, predictably, located within Harlem Park) allowed resident's voices to be easily heard. Though it is perhaps overly optimistic to assume that, through such an approach, all local concerns will be addressed, the project can reliably claim to have considered community voices. Through such consideration, the project might well give the community what it wants and needs, rather than serving the interests of city government and corporate interests. For example, the limited commercial development accompanying the project will provide Harlem Park with its only pharmacy, doctor's office and dine-in café. This attention to community needs is perhaps the chief lesson larger-scale urban renewal projects should learn from Harlem Park.

The construction of the Harlem Gardens Senior Apartments is an encouraging development in the history of Baltimore's urban renewal programs. As a narrowly

construed project designed to serve a disadvantaged community, it takes an approach that could be corrective to some of the ills of urban development. Nevertheless, such projects are still vastly less popular than fashionable downtown redevelopment schemes and continued suburban expansion, both in Baltimore and throughout the nation. Without the promise of big corporate profits feeding city budgets (one should carefully note that *political* forces drive urban renewal along with market forces), it seems likely that focused subarea residential and light commercial developments will continue to be overshadowed by large-scale urban development projects. Hopefully, the Harlem Gardens project will succeed, thus both revitalizing a needy community and potentially altering city-planners to the lessons of a useful alternative approach. Indeed, even planners of large-scale urban renewal projects could (and probably should) incorporate many of the characteristics of the Harlem Gardens project into their own schemes: a focused plan and consideration of residential and community effects would be a beneficial complement to any urban development plan, regardless of its scope. At the very least, one can hope that future urban renewal projects might, like Harlem Gardens, consider the effects on communities other than the commercial and governmental leaders who drive most development in America's cities.

Appendix: Statistical and Neighborhood Maps of Baltimore City

Fig. 1 - Neighborhoods of Baltimore - Marked neighborhoods are Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park (north) and Inner Harbor (south)



Violent Crime Per Capita



Darker regions have higher per capita crime rates

Vacant Units/Total



Darkest regions (i.e. around Sandtown/Harlem Park) have >21% vacancy.

Light grey (i.e. around the Inner Harbor) is between 7% and 10%

Residents Employed in Managerial Work, Per Capita



Darker regions denote higher concentrations (note high concentrations on city's outskirts and in the Inner Harbor)

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