

Devoting full attention to the harbor

Waterfront Partnership is working to make sure 'city icon' is preserved

By **ETHAN ROTHSTEIN**
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When then-Mayor Martin O'Malley told the **Greater Baltimore Committee** to assemble a task force to assess the status of the Inner Harbor in 2003, the members found an area in disarray.

Graffiti, litter, broken bricks and curbs, and streetlamps that didn't work were some of the lowlights in the area, and there was no organization or authority to try to sort it all out.

The **Inner Harbor Management Task Force** filed its report in July 2005. Three months later, the **Waterfront Partnership** was born. A nonprofit corporation, the group's mission is to improve, preserve and sustain what Executive Director Laurie Schwartz calls "a city icon." The partnership is charged with maintaining the promenade and the water from the **Rusty Scupper** restaurant to the Bond Street Wharf.

"[The Inner Harbor] is a major economic generator for the city," said Schwartz. "The city wasn't devoting the attention to it that it needed to. There was some efforts, but they weren't organized or enough."

Michael Hankin, CEO of **Brown Advisory**, moved his moved his business to 901 S. Bond St. in 2002.

"It was an exciting place to be, but the streets were filled with trash, and there wasn't as much landscaping as we'd like to see," said Hankin, who is also the chairman of the Waterfront Partnership's board of directors. "We knew it was safe, but we weren't always sure of it."

Up until 2007, the Waterfront Partnership was funded completely by voluntary contributions from busi-

nesses in the area, such as **H&S Properties Development Corp.** and **Brown Advisory**.

In 2007, the area was officially designated a Business Management District, meaning that all business in the area are required to pay an additional tax, 17 cents for every \$100 in assessed value, which goes to the Waterfront Partnership.

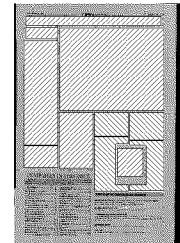
"We wanted to spread the burden among everyone who benefited from it," said Hankin. "The Business Management District has been a great help."

Some businesses donate even more. According to Hankin, Brown Advisory's required payment is approximately \$3,000, but it's donating an additional \$10,000 a year. Hankin also said that H&S Properties donates \$100,000. These contributions make up 60 percent of the funds for the partnership, with the other 40 percent coming from the tax.

Hankin said that the changes to the area are well worth the cost.

"We were a group of very impatient business owners down here who wanted to make a difference soon," said Hankin. "Any one of the business owners could have backed out, but not a single one did. A group of people came together with their own money and their own time, with the support of the mayor, and realized that they could make a difference in a hurry."

Among the services they provide, according to Schwartz, are safety and hospitality guides, who provide services such as directing visitors and asking how their stay is, cleaning up litter and painting over graffiti, planting seasonal flowers and hanging flower baskets, and cleaning up the water itself.



Paying for these tasks make up by far the majority of the partnership's \$1.7 million budget, said Schwartz, though a small part of the budget is put into marketing campaigns, which have come to the forefront this summer in the form of the "Waterfront Invasion," a joint campaign between the **Maryland Science Center** and the **National Aquarium in Baltimore** featuring jellyfish and "Chinasaurs," around the Inner Harbor.

The area's status as a Business Management District expires every four years, but it very likely will be renewed in 2011, according to a spokesman for the **Baltimore City Council**.

"The council president believes that the Waterfront Management District has been a valuable asset to the city of Baltimore and sees no reason why its life won't be extended within the law," he said.

Schwartz said the partnership plans on expanding in the near future. Not geographically speaking, but in taking on more tasks and focusing

more on the environment.

According to Schwartz, the partnership's two initiatives are sustainability and transportation. She said the partnership plans on doing more to clean the water and make the promenade more eco-friendly.

"This fall we're launching a transportation initiative to make sure that employees on the Inner

Harbor can get to work in other ways besides driving by themselves," Schwartz added.

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MICHAEL HANKIN
Brown Advisory



HARRY KATZ

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