

Advisory panel studying development of new city arena gets to work

Baltimore Business Journal - by Rachel Bernstein Staff

A nine-member panel of state and city officials and leaders of local business groups has been formed to weigh seven proposals to build a new sports arena in Baltimore.

The group, convened by the **Baltimore Development Corp.** (BDC), the city's economic development arm, is charged with picking the best proposal to replace the First Mariner Arena downtown, a 45-year-old building **deemed "operationally inefficient and increasingly obsolete"** by a **Maryland Stadium Authority** study released in May.

Local officials estimate a new arena could cost as much as \$160 million.

The BDC said Friday the group -- which held its first meeting Dec. 12 -- plans to pay a visit to Kansas City, Mo. in January to learn about the development of that city's Sprint Center, a \$276 million, 18,500-seat arena which opened in October and replaced the outdated Kemper Arena.

The panel's members are:

- Clarence Bishop, deputy secretary of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development;
- J. Kirby Fowler, president of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore;
- Donald Fry, CEO of the **Greater Baltimore Committee**;
- Carla Nelson, director of the Mayor's Office of Minority and Women-Owned Business Development;
- Douglas McCoach, director of the Baltimore City Department of Planning;
- Carolyn Blakeney, assistant deputy mayor for neighborhood and economic development;
- Kaliopé Parthemos, deputy chief of staff for Baltimore City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake;
- Frederick Puddester, chairman of the Maryland Stadium Authority; and
- BDC President M.J. "Jay" Brodie.

The city and the BDC asked interested developers in August to submit their ideas for a new arena, including strategies to finance construction. **Seven groups of developers, including some of the city's biggest players in commercial real estate, submitted proposals.**

The proposed homes for the arena include the \$200 million Gateway South development that neighbors the Camden Yards stadium complex, and the Westport development just to the south.