

Dixon: raising expectations

SHEILA DIXON LEFT THE FLOWERY allusions, high-flown rhetoric and grand promises for others. Instead, Baltimore's mayor offered in her inauguration address yesterday a clear-eyed assessment of the city and a short list of initiatives to keep Baltimore safe, clean and prospering. She's focused on some basic but intractable issues — putting gun criminals out of business, strengthening "suffering families" and ending homelessness in a decade — and if she maintains that focus, she may achieve results. Gains in any of these areas would strengthen the city and its prospects.

Where Ms. Dixon can quickly make a difference — and use her influence — is in finding summer jobs for any city youth who wants one. That was her pledge, and she is going to need the business community's help to make it happen, but it's an investment with the promise of a good return.

An expanded summer jobs program would benefit teens and their families, but it also has the potential to reduce crime and help prepare the next generation of workers. It's a

partnership that the **Greater Baltimore Committee** should embrace.

As interim mayor, Ms. Dixon advanced the city's economic development with a variety of projects and pushed for creating a land bank to deal with vacant or abandoned properties, of which the city owns 10,000. But relying on the private sector to rebuild large areas shouldn't be the city's answer to its considerable affordable-housing problem.

Ms. Dixon needs to develop a plan that would complement private investment in neighborhoods but ensure that the housing needs of the poor are met. So far, the city's response to this pressing concern has been muted, unlike Ms. Dixon's ambitious effort to reduce homelessness. And the two are connected: The city's homeless census shows that 32 percent of respondents blame their situation on the inability to find affordable housing.

In her speech yesterday, the mayor described herself as someone who is neither excessively patient nor tolerant of mediocrity. Those traits should keep her — and the city — moving forward.

