



# **BUILD seeks assurances on Port Covington**

Nonprofit wants guarantees development will benefit all

## EAST WATERFRONT DISTRICT EAST CROMWELL STREET



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The Port Covington project south of Interstate 95 would include office space, housing, retail and manufacturing, and a new Under Armour headquarters. (Sagamore Development)

**By Yvonne Wenger** The Baltimore Sun

A group of local religious leaders wants Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank to agree to an array of community benefits in exchange for any city subsidies given to his Port Covington redevelopment project.

Clergy with Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, or BUILD, say they will attempt to hand-deliver a letter to Plank today asking for a meeting to discuss local hiring requirements and other guarantees as part of the massive South Baltimore project.

The request is one in a series of actions planned this month by the group. BUILD has hired an independent consultant to study how much the project will cost taxpayers; the group's plan is to present the findings of that review next week.

“This is a citywide commitment that puts taxpayers on the hook for the next 40 years,” said the Rev. Andrew Foster Connors of Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, BUILD's co-chairman.

“Everyone in the city understands we have some deep, deep divides, and a proposal like this only comes along once in a generation,” he said. “It's incumbent on all residents to ensure it includes opportunities to bridge the divides.”

The proposed \$5.5 billion redevelopment project on the peninsula south of Interstate 95 would include offices, homes, stores and light manufacturing. The centerpiece would be a new Under Armour campus.

Plank's development firm, Sagamore, has said it wants \$1.1 billion in public financing and grants to help build infrastructure including streets, parks and sewers. The City Council is scheduled this month to consider \$535 million in tax-increment financing, in which the city would sell bonds that would be repaid with the revenue from future property taxes.

Officials have estimated the project will generate an average of \$40.3 million annually for the city after tax credits,

debt service and other expenses.

Sagamore said it will release Thursday the details of an agreement with a coalition of community leaders from neighborhoods surrounding Port Covington, including Cherry Hill, Westport and Curtis Bay.

Sagamore officials say they have met with Gov. Larry Hogan, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, members of Congress and the City Council, and with civic, business, community and faith organizations to discuss the project.

“A large delegation from BUILD was extended the same courtesy several times, and will be again should they wish to have another meeting,” Sagamore said in a statement Monday.

Rob English, lead organizer with BUILD, said members have met with Plank's top deputies but want to meet with him directly, as the company's top decision maker.

BUILD wants a majority of the jobs created by the project to go to Baltimore residents and a profit-sharing agreement that treats the city as a “first-in” private investor.

The group also wants Sagamore and city officials to create a fund to steer as many tax dollars into blighted neighborhoods as are going toward Port Covington.

English said BUILD developed the requests after an extensive “listening campaign” that included meetings with more than 5,000 city residents.

BUILD's membership includes representatives from 40 congregations and 20 other organizations, including school groups.

“BUILD is not negotiating the deal for BUILD,” English said. “BUILD is demanding that our city unite to leverage a generational moment so we can build our city together, not just Port Covington.”

The consultant hired by BUILD to assess project costs is scheduled to present findings at 6:30 p.m. July 18 at Zion Lutheran Church.

The consultant will estimate the future cost of city services used by Port Covington, including fire and police protection and trash collection, and evaluate whether revenue projections are inflated, how much profit Sagamore stands to make, and whether the company underestimated the cost of the development.

Elected officials and Sagamore executives have been invited to next week's meeting.

Marc Weller, president of Sagamore Development, said the company is working to ensure Port Covington has as “far-reaching an impact as possible in the city.”

He said the company has been “committed from the very beginning” to making sure jobs are available to residents, as well as transportation and a workforce development program.

“We are also proud of the unprecedented citywide commitments that we have already made, but look forward to doing much more in both philanthropy and investment over the decades to come,” Weller said in a statement.

[ywenger@baltsun.com](mailto:ywenger@baltsun.com)

[twitter.com/yvonnewenger](https://twitter.com/yvonnewenger)

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