

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: EDIFICE COMPLEX: PUBLIC STADIUM  
FUNDING AND URBAN REDEVELOPMENT  
IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Ian Charles Bucacink, Master of Arts, 2018

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In the 1980s, Marylanders engaged in a public debate over the need to replace Baltimore's Memorial Stadium. New stadium proponents, led by an elite coalition of politicians, businesspeople, and the newspapers, argued that Baltimore needed professional sports teams economically, as well as for the positive image they bestowed upon the city. Only a new publically-funded stadium would prevent the baseball Orioles from following the football Colts out of town, these supporters contended. A large segment of the public questioned the need to replace Memorial Stadium and suggested alternative social priorities for state funding, but the state legislature decided to fund the new stadium complex at Camden Yards anyway, despite intense popular opposition. For Baltimore's elites, the issue was about more than sports. The new stadiums were a defense and continuation of the city's neoliberal policies of urban redevelopment, along with all that those policies entailed, both good and bad.

EDIFICE COMPLEX:  
PUBLIC STADIUM FUNDING AND URBAN REDEVELOPMENT IN BALTIMORE,  
MARYLAND

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
2018

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## Preface

This paper has its origins as far back as the Fall 2010 semester, when, as a sophomore undergraduate, I enrolled in the University of Maryland's history research and methods class. The final deliverable for that class was a twentyish page paper of original research. At the beginning of the semester I was given the choice of three topics to write about: the origins of the Martin Luther King holiday, school lunch programs, or antitrust issues in professional football. I chose the latter, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I have always been a fan of sports, particularly ice hockey, but the research I did for that paper on football awakened an interest in professional sports as an industry, and the intersections between sports business, government policy, and the public. The football paper was good enough to earn me a spot in Maryland's history honors program, and it was in that program where I had the privilege of meeting Dr. David Freund, who supervised my undergraduate thesis, "Mighty Ducks and Glowing Pucks: The National Hockey League in the 1990s and the Disneyization of Professional Sports," which was as much fun to write as the title suggests.

This master's thesis is thus the culmination of many years of historical sports scholarship, all at the University of Maryland, College Park. I chose the topic of Baltimore's stadium debate while flailing about for something less ambitious than a complete history of all North American stadium construction. Some of what is included here, specifically the parts about newspaper coverage, were workshopped in a research seminar conducted by Dr. Leslie Rowland. I owe much thanks to her keen editorial eye.

I would like to thank the members my defense committee, Dr. David Sicilia and Dr. Colleen Woods, for their assistance, and above all my advisor, Dr. Freund, for all the help and guidance he has given me over my many years at Maryland. Thanks also to Graduate Coordinator Jodi Hall, without whom, we history grad students would all be lost at sea. And a special shout-out to my fellow crazy HiLS students, for whom one master's degree at a time was not challenging enough, and also to all my friends, former colleagues, and mentors at Special Collections and University Archives. Thank you.

Finally, I wish to thank my friends and family for sticking with me these past few years as I abruptly changed careers and reentered school. Above all, my parents, John and Lori, and my sister, Sara (and Jaxx too!). All my love.

## Dedication

*This paper is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Kathryn Myers Frock –  
A remarkable woman and lifelong Marylander with an unshakeable faith in God and in  
the abilities of her grandchildren.*

*May we meet again up yonder, by and by.*

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## Introduction

On April 29, 1987, Governor William Donald Schaefer appeared before the people of Maryland to sign three bills that he had championed and shepherded through the state legislature. Both houses of the General Assembly had passed them with solid majorities before the annual legislative session ended just weeks before. Ever the consummate showman, Schaefer juggled a giant football and predicted that this legislation, which authorized the state's Stadium Authority to construct a brand-new twin-stadium complex on the site of the old Baltimore and Ohio Railroad's Camden Station rail yards, would result in the return of the National Football League to Baltimore and prevent the city's Orioles baseball club from relocating. But the governor also had a stern admonition for the state's voters. They had best *not* sign two coupled petitions that were spreading like wildfire throughout Maryland. These petitions challenged the General Assembly's approval of Schaefer's bills and sought to put the question of whether to build new sports stadiums with an estimated \$201 million in public money to a referendum at the next general election in November 1988. "A signature on the petition is a signature to destroy professional sports in Maryland," warned the governor, using a phrase he borrowed from Baltimore sports writer John Steadman. And in case anyone missed the gravity of his words, Schaefer repeated himself twice more.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, approximately 45,000 Marylanders did affix their signatures to the petitions in the Spring of 1987. This led the state's attorney general to rule in late May that the legislation represented an appropriation of funds necessary for the functioning of

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Frece, "Don't Sign Petitions on Stadium, Schaefer Urges," *Baltimore Sun*, April 30, 1987.

the state government and was therefore not subject to a referendum. As the two sides prepared to fight it out in court, the editorial page of the state's largest newspaper, the *Baltimore Sun*, fumed about "a petition drive fraught with malevolent undertones, designed to give the metropolitan area a negative, minor-league image . . . [and] a reputation for driving out business development and opposing economic opportunities."<sup>2</sup>

Still, a poll conducted by Baltimore's WBAL-TV Channel 11 found that as many as two-thirds of the city's residents opposed the stadium project, with especially vociferous opposition in the neighborhoods surrounding both Camden Yards and the existing ballpark, Memorial Stadium. Polling conducted by the *Sun* predicted that the stadium referendum would fail should it be put on the ballot, with a plurality of 39 percent of Marylanders against the project and only 29 percent in favor; perhaps more importantly, 81 percent thought that voters, and not the legislature, should have the final say.<sup>3</sup>

How then did the State of Maryland come to build two new ballparks at Camden Yards when faced with what most charitably can only be described as "mixed" support from the community at large? The answer lies in the fact that the scheme had the backing of, among others, a group of influential local elites who supported a pro-growth agenda of urban redevelopment, of which the Camden Yards stadium complex would be "the crowning jewel."<sup>4</sup> In 1980s Baltimore, these stadium boosters included politicians

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Frece, "Md. Rejects Petitions on Stadium: Vote Proponents Sue to Reverse Decision," *Baltimore Sun*, May 29, 1987; "Foul, Offside Referendum," *Baltimore Sun*, April 26, 1987.

<sup>3</sup> John W. Frece, "Legislator Predicts that Maryland Voters Would Reject Stadiums by 2-to-1 Margin," *Baltimore Sun*, May 14, 1987; Sandy Banisky, "Poll Shows Stadium Plan Losing on Ballot," *Baltimore Sun*, June 21, 1987.

<sup>4</sup> Vito Stellino, "Love the Man or Hate Him, NFL Can't Do without Davis," *Baltimore Sun*, January 29, 1984.



(particularly those allied with William Donald Schaefer, Baltimore's mayor from 1971 until 1987 when he became the state's governor), the news media, and business interests (including real estate developer James Rouse, Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone chairman Henry Butta, and the Greater Baltimore Committee).

### Argument

This paper is concerned with how and why professional sports stadiums come to be built at the public's expense, especially in the face of mounting scholarly evidence that stadiums simply do not provide good return on the community's investment. Are citizens aware of the lack of economic benefits from public stadium construction? Does the desire to attract or retain a professional sports franchise outweigh the fiscal cost? How is the argument over whether to fund a stadium project framed? Who are the actors involved in the decision-making process and what are their motivations? To answer questions like these, I chose to investigate in detail the public discourse surrounding a specific example of public stadium construction, the Camden Yards complex in Baltimore, which consists of Oriole Park at Camden Yards and M&T Bank Stadium (previously called Ravens Stadium, among others).

What I discovered is that, in this case at least, the public was very much aware of the dubious nature of promised economic growth resulting from new stadium construction. While there were certainly Marylanders who wanted to see Baltimore's aging Memorial Stadium replaced, there existed at least as many, if not more, who were satisfied with the existing ballpark and did not want to spend hundreds of millions of dollars building new stadiums – even if this meant the baseball Orioles might follow the football Colts out of town. Put simply, there was no popular mandate for stadium

construction, and, until the state's highest court ruled in 1987 against allowing a referendum on stadium funding, it seemed that stadium opponents had the momentum in the battle to stop new stadium construction.

This paper argues that a group of local elites, including members of the political, business, and media communities, supported and facilitated the construction of two publicly-funded sports stadiums in Baltimore without the support and largely against the wishes of taxpayers. Elite support for the stadiums remained unwavering even as costs ballooned from \$80 million in 1985, to \$201 million when the state legislature approved construction in 1987, and finally to \$502 million after construction of the football stadium concluded in 1998.<sup>5</sup>

The Camden Yards stadium project was undertaken to protect the city and state's business-friendly "big league image" and as an extension and defense of "the Baltimore Renaissance," a string of public-private urban redevelopment projects designed to reorient Baltimore's economy around the tourism industry. Camden Yards represents not only the power of sports interests in Baltimore but also the preeminence of the city's neoliberal policies of urban redevelopment, along with all that those policies entailed, both good and bad.

The debate over Camden Yards is more than simply the story of a controversial and expensive public construction project, however. Baltimore's experience with Camden Yards and its larger downtown renaissance provide an instructive window into what David Freund calls the "contested political process" of American metropolitan life

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<sup>5</sup> The final cost of approximately \$502 million is taken from Timothy S. Chapin, "Sports Facilities as Urban Redevelopment Catalysts," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 196.

at a key intersection in history.<sup>6</sup> State and local governments were bereft of money by the 1980s for several interrelated reasons – including the slowing of the postwar economic boom, the decline of American industry, white flight to the suburbs, the hollowing out of the civic tax base, and the ideological rise of conservatism in politics. In boom times, public spending was directed not just to those at the top of the social ladder but benefitted also those lower down through social programs and services. But with fiscal belts tightening and the federal government declining to invest at previous levels, state and local governments cut those selfsame programs and services and instead prioritized attracting private capital to their locales. It should come as little surprise then that as they obtained outsized influence over city planning and the expenditure of public resources, Baltimore’s elite favored urban redevelopment projects like sports stadiums that disproportionately benefitted those like themselves, at the expense of the city’s middle and working classes.

At its core, the story of the Camden Yards stadiums is that of a city and state prioritizing the needs and desires of the professional sports industry over those of the bulk of their citizens, to the tune of \$502 million of public money. Ultimately, the tragedy of Baltimore’s Renaissance is that it failed to deliver the general prosperity that the trickle-down economics of corporate welfare promised. Instead, after years of redevelopment, local elites succeeded only in creating “two Baltimores”: the affluent

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<sup>6</sup> David M. P. Freund, ed., *The Modern American Metropolis: A Documentary Reader* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 4.

largely-white area around the Inner Harbor and along the I-83 corridor, and the under-serviced largely-black communities on the city's east and west sides.<sup>7</sup>

### Historiography

Before delving into the specifics of Baltimore's experience with public stadium construction and urban redevelopment, it is necessary to detour through the scholarly research undergirding the theoretic framework of this study. Academic literature on sports economics developed rapidly during the 1980s as romantic popular notions of professional sports as a civic institution and apolitical pastime came into conflict with increasing corporatization, record profits, labor strife, franchise shifts, and the politics of stadium construction. Put broadly, the major conclusion of early studies was that sports business was a business like any other – that is that sports leagues and franchise owners are primarily concerned with their own bottom lines, and not necessarily the needs of fans or the community. This simple fact becomes complicated because sports consumers identify with and feel connected to their chosen teams in a deeply personal way that is unlike any other consumer product. The business aspect of the sports industry also enjoys the obfuscation provided by the federal government, which has mostly declined to interfere with the monopolistic cartels maintained by the major leagues in each of their

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<sup>7</sup> The concept of “two Baltimores” (one rich and white, the other poor and black) is of popular origin but was notably included among the conclusions of the Department of Justice's damning report on the Baltimore City Police Department in the aftermath of the unrest surrounding Freddie Gray's death: U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, *Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department* (August 10, 2016). For how this inequality maps onto the city's geography, see Lawrence Brown, “Two Baltimores: The White L vs. the Black Butterfly,” *Baltimore City Paper*, June 28, 2016, accessed February 7, 2018, <http://www.citypaper.com/bcpnews-two-baltimores-the-white-l-vs-the-black-butterfly-20160628-htmlstory.html>.

respective sports. Major League Baseball obtained a complete reprieve from the effects of antitrust laws due to a 1922 Supreme Court ruling (*Federal Baseball Club v. National League*), which was upheld on grounds of *stare decisis* in 1972 (*Flood v. Kuhn*) despite the court's admission that the previous decision was an anomaly.<sup>8</sup>

One area of particular scholarly interest is a phenomenon whereby teams demand public funding from municipal or state officials for the stadiums in which they play or else face the prospect of watching the beloved local team relocate to a new home with looser purse strings. These relocation threats are credible because sports leagues intentionally keep the number of franchises lower than the demand for them. While the relocation of sports teams in response to market forces is not new, the lure of public money and free or subsidized stadiums is something that really began to pick up steam only in the 1970s and reached such a frenzied peak in the 1980s and 1990s that demands by teams for public funding are now so common as to be routine. In 1950, Cleveland alone among major-league cities owned its professional ballpark, but today a team that does not play in a stadium built at least partially with public money is all but extinct, and it is those localities that are left holding the bag on a vacant property if the franchise relocates.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For a general survey of the literature of sports economics, see James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort, *Pay Dirt: The Business of Professional Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); James Quirk and Rodney Fort, *Hard Ball: The Abuse of Power in Pro Team Sports* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Andrew S. Zimbalist, ed., *The Economics of Sport*, 2 vols. (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2001); Frank P. Jozsa, Jr., *Sports Capitalism: The Foreign Business of American Professional Leagues* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Mark S. Rosentraub and Samuel R. Nunn, "Suburban City Investment in Professional Sports: Estimating the Fiscal Returns of the Dallas Cowboys and Texas Rangers to Investor Communities," *American Behavioral Scientist* 21, no. 3 (January/February 1978): 393-414; Charles C. Euchner, *Playing the Field: Why Sports Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Kenneth L. Shropshire, *The Sports Franchise Game: Cities in Pursuit of Sports Franchises, Events, Stadiums, and Arenas* (Philadelphia:

Having identified the taxpaying public as a lucrative stream of revenue, sports team owners and their governmental allies set about making the case that publically funded stadium construction would ultimately result in growth for the local economy, which is an argument that scholarship has repeatedly and resoundingly debunked.<sup>10</sup>

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University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Samuel Nunn and Mark S. Rosentraub. "Sports Wars: Suburbs and Center Cities in a Zero-Sum Game," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 21, no. 1 (February 1997): 65-82; Joanna Cagan and Neil deMause, *Field of Schemes: How the Great Stadium Swindle Turns Public Money into Private Profit*, rev. ed. (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1998); Frank P. Jozsa, Jr., and John J. Guthrie, Jr., *Relocating Teams and Expanding Leagues in Professional Sports: How the Major Leagues Respond to Market Conditions* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1999); Kevin J. Delaney and Rick Eckstein, *Public Dollars, Private Stadiums: The Battle over Building Sports Stadiums* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> For an overview on the flawed economics of stadium construction, see Robert A. Baade and Richard F. Dye, "Sports Stadiums and Area Development: A Critical Review," *Economic Development Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (August 1988): 265-275; Dean V. Baim, *The Sports Stadium as a Municipal Investment* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994); Roger G. Noll and Andrew Zimbalist, eds., *Sports, Jobs, and Taxes: The Economic Impact of Sports Teams and Stadiums* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997); Dennis Coates, "Stadiums and Arenas: Economic Development or Economic Redistribution?" *Contemporary Economic Policy* 25, no. 4 (October 2007): 565-577; James T. Bennett, *They Play, You Pay: Why Taxpayers Build Ballparks, Stadiums, and Arenas for Billionaire Owners and Millionaire Players* (New York: Copernicus Books, 2012). Other studies have more narrowly focused on proving the transient nature of the jobs created by stadium construction, the lack of meaningful property value enhancement surrounding new stadiums, as well as the onerous maintenance costs and lack of tax revenue from stadiums. See, for example, Mark S. Rosentraub, David Swindell, Michael Przybylski, and Daniel R. Mullins, "Sport and Downtown Development Strategy: If You Build It, Will Jobs Come?" *Journal of Urban Affairs* 16, no. 3 (September 1994): 221-239; Robert A. Baade, "Professional Sports as Catalysts for Metropolitan Economic Development," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 18, no. 1 (March 1996): 1-17; Dennis Coates, Brad R. Humphreys, and Andrew Zimbalist, "Compensating Differentials and the Social Benefits of the NFL: A Comment," *Journal of Urban Economics* 60, no. 1 (July 2006): 124-131; Xia Feng and Brad R. Humphreys, "The Impact of Professional Sports Facilities on Housing Values: Evidence from Census Block Group Data," *City, Culture and Society* 3, no. 3 (September 2012): 189-200; Judith Grant Long, "Full Count: The Real Cost of Public Funding for Major League Sports Facilities," *Journal of Sports Economics* 6, no. 2 (May 2005): 119-143. Indeed, academic studies have either failed to discern any tangible benefits from public spending on stadiums at all or concluded that those that they have found are limited to the specific context of an individual case and not easily replicated. See, for example, Dennis Coates and Brad R. Humphreys, *Caught Stealing: Debunking the Economic Case for D.C. Baseball*, Cato Institute Briefing Papers, 89 (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, October 27, 2004); Mark S. Rosentraub, "The Local Context of a Sports Strategy for Economic Development," *Economic Development Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (August 2006): 278-291. Scholarship supporting funding stadium projects on economic grounds is limited mainly to people with a strongly pro-corporate mindset or those who advocate stadium construction as a

To understand why civic leaders would promote an economic agenda of building stadiums for private benefit with public money, it is necessary to examine the changing economic fortunes and political philosophies of the postwar United States, especially by the 1970s. Mired in economic malaise, hollowed out by white flight, and beset by the waning of Great Society liberalism and the rising conservatism of the Reagan Revolution, urban governments shifted from a managerial to an entrepreneurial style of governance. “Less interested in enhancing public welfare than attracting private capital,” argue three sports scholars, “the postindustrial city thus emerged with the overriding aim of luring ‘highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space.’”<sup>11</sup>

Largely devoid of their previous sources of revenue – local taxes and federal grants – urban governments embraced the same *laissez-faire* brand of neoliberal economic logic on the rise across the developed world, focused primarily on deregulation, privatization, and significantly lower taxes. “Compelled by the ascendant neoliberal order,” and desperately in need of new sources of revenue, “cities abdicated their responsibility for serving their citizenry, in favor of entrepreneurial strategies designed to encourage and advance private capital in an increasingly competitive

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limited part of a comprehensive overall urban growth plan. For an example of these arguments, see Thomas V. Chema, "When Professional Sports Justify the Subsidy; a Reply to Robert A. Baade," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 18, no. 1 (March 1996): 19-22; Ziona Austrian and Mark S. Rosentraub, "Cities, Sports, and Economic Change: A Retrospective Assessment," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 24, no. 5 (December 2002): 549-563; Mark Rosentraub. *Major League Winners: Using Sports and Cultural Centers as Tools for Economic Development* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2010); Sylvia Trendafilova, Steven N. Waller, Robert B. Daniell, and Jacques McClendon, "'Motor City' Rebound? Sport as a Catalyst to Reviving Downtown Detroit: A Case Study," *City, Culture and Society* 3, no. 3 (September 2012): 181-187.

<sup>11</sup> Michael T. Friedman, David L. Andrews, and Michael L. Silk, "Sport and the Façade of Redevelopment in the Postindustrial City," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 21, no. 2 (June 2004): 121.

globalized world.” The neoliberal capitalist period, which has carried on into the present, is characterized by “the extension of competitive markets into all areas of life, including the economy, politics, and society.” The same drive for ever-increasing profitability and new sources of revenue has transformed the professional sports industry, altering the business practices of leagues like the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League, influencing the design of ballparks, and, critically, identifying the taxpayer as a source of revenue.<sup>12</sup>

The change in city management emphasizing business interests was identified as far back as 1976 when sociologist Harvey Molotch theorized that “the political and economic essence of virtually any given locality, in the present American context, is *growth* [emphasis his],” and that “the desire for growth provides the key operative motivation toward consensus for members of politically mobilized local elites, however split they might be on other issues, and . . . a common interest in growth is the overriding commonality among important people in a given locale.” Sociologists like Molotch have theorized that what has characterized municipal planning and urban development in the last forty years is the concept of the city as a “growth machine” or an engine for generating other economic activity. “Local growth coalitions,” alliances of politicians,

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<sup>12</sup> For the embrace of entrepreneurialism by government, see Michael T. Friedman and David L. Andrews, “The Built Sport Spectacle and the Opacity of Democracy,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 46, no. 2 (2010): 183-184; For the infiltration of markets into all aspects of life, see Simon Springer, Kean Birch, and Julie MacLeavy, eds., *The Handbook of Neoliberalism* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2; For the reorientation of the sports industry around multiple and complementary streams of revenue, see, for example, David L. Andrews, “Disneyization, Debord, and the Integrated NBA Spectacle,” *Social Semiotics* 16, no. 1 (April 2006): 89-102; Ian C. Bucacink, “Mighty Ducks and Glowing Pucks: The National Hockey League in the 1990s and the Disneyization of Professional Sports.” Undergraduate honors thesis, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park, 2013.



businesspeople, and other local elites, work together to direct public spending towards pro-growth projects and away from traditional civic priorities, like education or social programs.<sup>13</sup>

From an historical perspective, the idea that elites dominating the management of public resources and the planning of cities is a recent phenomenon is rather suspect. The modern development of America's cities has always caused inequalities. Beginning in the nineteenth century, landed property and productive resources became concentrated in ever-fewer hands, placing the development of the country's cities in the hands of powerful investors. In each metropolis, small numbers of local elite dictated both development and opportunity in their locale. This created tremendous wealth, both for the elites and also those who seized the opportunity to find employment in America's growing cities, but also limited the influence of all but a select few over municipal

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<sup>13</sup> For the essay that inspired growth machine theory, see Harvey Molotch, "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 2 (September 1976): 309-310. Growth machine ideology has been ascribed to the pursuit by cities for big-ticket projects for everything from convention centers to prisons, and of course, sports stadiums. See, for example, Andrew E. G. Jonas and David Wilson, eds., *The Urban Growth Machine: Critical Perspectives Two Decades Later* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999); Heywood T. Sanders, *Convention Center Follies: Politics, Power, and Public Investment in American Cities* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Eric M. Click, "The Impact of the Growth Machine on Public Financing of Professional Sports Facilities: The Case of the St. Louis Cardinals" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Dallas, 2009). Kevin Delaney and Rick Eckstein coined the term "local growth coalitions" for elites whom they claim "usually have a very different vision than the general population about 'correct' economic growth and development. Growth coalitions often favor large, visible projects that will attract new corporations to the city, tax policies that are favorable to corporate investment, and real estate policies that increase exchange value. They are less interested in everyday neighborhood concerns like trash collection, public safety, pollution, and local mass transit." The quote is taken from Kevin J. Delaney and Rick Eckstein, "Urban Power Structures and Publicly Financed Stadiums," *Sociological Forum* 22, no. 3 (September 2007): 335. See also Kevin J. Delaney and Rick Eckstein, "Local Growth Coalitions, Publicly Subsidized Sports Stadiums, and Social Inequality," *Humanity & Society* 30, no. 1 (February 2006): 84-108.

decision-making. Equally important to the development of the American metropolis is the federal government, which has been a full-fledged development partner to various degrees since the Civil War.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps then, the rising power of a local growth coalition and their devotion to an entrepreneurial government should not be viewed as a recent anomaly, since these features are as old as the American metropolis itself. The outlier here is actually the brief period in the twentieth century when wealth was so plentiful that it became easier for the average American to get a slice of the pie. In the boom years of the post-Depression economy, the liberal federal government made unprecedented interventions to reshape the city and its suburbs to the benefit of the white middle and working classes.

Government programs, veterans' benefits, and fiscal largesse enabled many American families to become homeowners for the first time and funded community infrastructures and public services that made these homes comfortable places to live – all while both implicitly excluding people of color and obscuring the role the federal government had played to begin with.<sup>15</sup>

So, whether one views the ideology of metropolitan development after the collapse of the postwar liberal consensus as a new phenomenon or a continuation of older patterns of inequality, the common thread that runs through both is the concentration of planning and decision-making power in the hands of the elite to the detriment of the masses, especially people of color. Even when the benefits of development were at their most expansive, during the immediate postwar period, they were limited only to whites.

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<sup>14</sup> Freund, *Modern American Metropolis*, 11-15.

<sup>15</sup> David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

The urban redevelopment of the last half-century, while not explicitly segregationist, has nonetheless had the effect of reinforcing and widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots.<sup>16</sup>

The task of local pro-growth elites as they seek to spend the public's money is largely one of messaging. In the realm of sports stadiums, arguments in favor bifurcate between promises of tangible benefits like economic growth, as discussed above, and intangible benefits, which are harder to demonstrate but also harder to disprove. No unquantifiable reason for funding a stadium project is voiced more often than the "big league status" that the stadium will supposedly confer upon its locality and the pro-growth message this status allegedly sends to businesses, tourists, and potential residents alike.<sup>17</sup>

No matter what argument is being made, local elites work carefully to identify and manage stakeholders in debates over stadium funding, with a mind to avoiding at all

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<sup>16</sup> Freund, *Modern American Metropolis*, 19-20.

<sup>17</sup> For analysis on the classification of the arguments of pro-stadium groups as consisting of either "tangible" or "intangible" benefits, see Rick Eckstein and Kevin Delaney, "New Sports Stadiums, Community Self-Esteem, and Community Collective Conscience," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 26 no. 3 (August 2002): 235-247; Kevin J. Delaney and Rick Eckstein, "The Devil Is in the Details: Neutralizing Critical Studies of Publicly Subsidized Stadiums," *Critical Sociology* 29, no. 2 (July 2003): 189-210; Ernest A. Buist and Daniel S. Mason, "Newspaper Framing and Stadium Subsidization," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 10 (June 2010): 1492-1510. For the importance in stadium debates of the perceived status of being a "major league" city, as in a city with a pro sports franchise, see, for example, Veronica Z. Kalich, "A Public Choice Perspective on the Subsidization of Private Industry: A Case Study of Three Cities and Three Stadiums," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 20, no. 2 (June 1998): 199-219; Michael T. Friedman and Daniel S. Mason, "'Horse Trading' and Consensus Building: Nashville, Tennessee[,] and the Relocation of the Houston Oilers," *Journal of Sport History* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 271-291; Kevin Delaney and Rick Eckstein, "Local Media Coverage of Sports Stadium Initiatives," *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 32, no. 1 (February 2008): 72-93; Daniel S. Mason, Marvin Washington, and Ernest A. N. Buist, "Signaling Status through Stadiums: The Discourses of Comparison within a Hierarchy," *Journal of Sport Management* 29, no. 5 (September 2015): 539-554.

costs popular referendums (like the one attempted in Baltimore) where voters often prove less willing than their elected officials to permit tax dollars to enrich sports franchise owners. A critical ally of elites in this messaging campaign is the local media, which, either because of the increased advertising revenue they stand to gain, or because the media outlets are owned by members of the local elites themselves, are often sympathetic to the demands of the local growth coalition.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> For the process of stakeholder management in stadium debates, see Michael T. Friedman and Daniel S. Mason, "A Stakeholder approach to Understanding Economic Development Decision Making: Public Subsidies for Professional Sport Facilities," *Economic Development Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (August 2004): 236-254; Michael T. Friedman and Daniel S. Mason, "Stakeholder Management and the Public Subsidization of Nashville's Coliseum," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27 no. 1 (January 2005): 93-118; Lana L. Huberty, Timothy B. Kellison, and Mike Mondello, "Fan Mobilization and the Minnesota Sport-Stadium Campaign," *International Journal of Sport Communication* 9, no. 2 (June 2016): 191-208. For the outcomes of referenda on public stadium funding, as well as the lengths pro-stadium forces will go to avoid them, see Timothy B. Kellison and Michael J. Mondello, "Organisational Perception Management in Sport: The Use of Corporate Pro-Environmental Behaviour for Desired Facility Referenda Outcomes," *Sport Management Review* 15, no. 4 (November 2012): 500-512; Joshua Sapotichne, "Rhetorical Strategy in Stadium Development Politics," *City, Culture and Society* 3, no. 3 (September 2012): 169-180; Daniel S. Mason and Ernest A.N. Buist, "'Domed' to Fail? Diverging Stakeholder Interests in a Stadium Referendum," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 6 (November 2013): 1146-1162; Alicia M. Cintron, "Civic Pride or Civic Duty? An Examination of Willingness to Support a Professional Sport Stadium Referendum" (PhD diss., University of Louisville, 2017); Timothy B. Kellison and Michael J. Mondello, "Civic Paternalism in Political Policymaking: The Justification for No-Vote Stadium Subsidies," *Journal of Sports Management* 28, no. 2 (March 2014): 162-175; Click, "Impact of the Growth Machine on Public Financing," 2009. For the role of local media, particularly newspapers, in the success or failure of stadium projects, see Robyne S. Turner and Jose F. Marichal, "Exploring Politics on the Sports Page: The Role of Local Media in Sports Stadium Developments," *Review of Policy Research* 15, no. 1 (March 1998): 34-35; Buist and Mason, "Newspaper Framing and Stadium Subsidization"; Delaney and Eckstein, "Local Media Coverage of Sports Stadium Initiatives"; Jacob Hindin, "Long-term Media Framing and Stadium Subsidies: A Case Study of the *Miami Herald's* Coverage of a New Marlins Stadium" (paper presented at the North American Society for Sport Management Conference, Orlando, FL: June 3, 2016), accessed September 15, 2017, [https://www.nassm.com/files/conf\\_abstracts/2016-122.pdf](https://www.nassm.com/files/conf_abstracts/2016-122.pdf); Michael Allen Greenberg, "A Game of Millions: Professional Sports Facilities and the Media's Influence on the Agenda Setting Process" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Dallas, 2009); Damon Sgrignoli, "Media Communication and Professional Sports Stadium Subsidies" (Master's thesis, Gonzaga University, 2014).

### Restatement of Thesis

Baltimore in the 1970s and 80s was in the same situation as a lot of industrial cities in the United States: struggling to cope with a host of social, political, and economic dynamics that had left the city devoid of funds, taxpayers, and employers alike. The solution put forward by leaders like Mayor William Donald Schaefer and James Rouse was to reorient Baltimore's economy around tourism and business hospitality. The resulting Baltimore Renaissance was an interrelated series of redevelopment projects that rehabbed the decaying industrial shipping area around the Inner Harbor into a playground of attractions, shops, offices, hotels, restaurants, and a convention center. While not agreeing with Schaefer and his political allies on every issue, Baltimore's newspapers – and in particular their editorial pages – generally supported and cheered on his agenda of downtown redevelopment.

These three forces: politicians (in particular Schaeferites), businesspeople, and the newspapers, form the core of the local elite consensus I have identified in favor of Baltimore's pro-growth projects. Through the period of this study, they consistently supported directing public funds towards satisfying the demands of Baltimore's sports owners. At first this meant costly repairs to Memorial Stadium in order to get the stadium's two tenants to sign long-term leases with the city, but in 1984 when the Baltimore Colts skipped town in the dead of night, elite consensus shifted to demanding first one and then two brand new stadiums at Camden Yards. Pro-stadium politicians, businesspeople, and journalists consistently tied together the fates of Baltimore's national image, its downtown renaissance, and the stadium project. Should the stadiums fail to get built, Baltimore would lose its sports teams and no longer be a major league city in the

minds of tourists or investors. Whereas conversely, building the Camden Yards stadiums would keep the Orioles in town, return the NFL to Baltimore, keep the renaissance rolling, and pay for itself in long-term economic revitalization.

Baltimore's elite were abetted by local media in their effort to promulgate their vision of urban redevelopment directed towards private interests as a rising tide that would lift the boats of all of the city's residents. However, while the newspapers editorially pushed the pro-growth line, they simultaneously documented a public debate over the proper use of taxpayer money that was anything but the consensus shared by Baltimore's elite. The location of anti-stadium voices within the newspaper (a minority of columnists but mostly in the reader feedback sections) as opposed to the uniformity of pro-stadium voices in the editorial pages underscores the power dichotomy between top-down support for stadium construction in Baltimore and bottom-up resistance.

### Overview of Contents

The following study of Baltimore's stadium debate will proceed roughly chronologically and will focus mainly on the period from 1982-1987. The first chapter contains brief backgrounds on the Baltimore Renaissance and key actors in the city's coalition of pro-growth elites. It concludes with a short history of professional baseball and football in Baltimore.

The second chapter is about the period up to March 1984 where city and state leaders tried to find a package of Memorial Stadium improvements acceptable to the owners of the Baltimore Colts and Orioles. It ends with Colts departing Baltimore for a brand new domed stadium in Indianapolis.

The third chapter centers on the efforts to overturn a Baltimore City Charter amendment that prevented public money from going to any ballpark apart from Memorial Stadium. Elite efforts to successfully repeal the charter amendment are juxtaposed with concurrent efforts by city schools and teachers to receive adequate funding.

The fourth and fifth chapters, taking place in 1985 and early 1986, feature the shift in elite consensus toward a position that claimed Memorial Stadium was beyond repair and that a new stadium was needed in Baltimore. Two separate businessman-led commissions, appointed by the mayor and governor, respectively, would differ only in their preferred location for a new stadium while ignoring popular assertions that Memorial Stadium remained an adequate sports venue.

In the sixth and seventh chapters, the 1986 Maryland Democratic Party primary election becomes a proxy fight over where to build a new stadium, with neither of the leading gubernatorial candidates, or the sitting governor, disagreeing over the fact that a new stadium needed to be built with public money. The General Assembly created the Maryland Stadium Authority that year and empowered it to recommend a solution to the stadium debate, and before the year was out, it declared that Baltimore needed two new sports stadiums.

The eighth and ninth chapters are both set in 1987 and deal respectively with the debate in the General Assembly over approving the legislation funding the proposed Camden Yards stadiums and the subsequent failed effort by the general public of Maryland to put a stop to the stadium funding by putting it to a referendum.

The penultimate chapter recounts Baltimore's decade-long battle to obtain a National Football League franchise to occupy the new stadium the state had committed to

build. The paper concludes with a critical look at the legacy of the Baltimore Renaissance and questions the social cost of the city's "edifice complex."



## Chapter 1: Baltimore's Local Growth Coalition

The origins of what became known as the Baltimore Renaissance stretch back almost to the beginning of the postwar period. Like most Frostbelt cities, argues urban historian Marc Levine, downtown redevelopment became the dominant concern of economic development in Baltimore by the 1950s. Early efforts, however, were more modest in the scope of their public cost and were balanced by the social spending of the Great Society. A quintessential example in Baltimore is the Charles Center, an interconnected area of office buildings, housing, parking, and shops. Originally proposed by a group of a business leaders that became the Greater Baltimore Committee under the leadership of James Rouse, “the business elite of Baltimore had proudly prepared to accomplish the twenty-two-acre Charles Center redevelopment plan without federal money. . . . In the end, of course, they succumbed, and the federal money began to roll into Baltimore for project after project, hundreds of millions of dollars to underwrite a parade of new buildings and projects leaping out of the tired old landscape.” With public money firmly married to private development interests, the Baltimore Renaissance was underway.<sup>19</sup>

By the 1970s, the mindset of Baltimore's leaders had firmly shifted to an entrepreneurial form of governance. By making concessions to private interests, Baltimore's leaders hoped to accomplish the following related goals: symbolically enhance the local business climate to attract new firms and mobile capital to the city,

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<sup>19</sup> Marc V. Levine, "Downtown Redevelopment as an Urban Growth Strategy: A Critical Appraisal of the Baltimore Renaissance," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 9, no. 2 (June 1987): 103-104. Quote taken from, C. Fraser Smith, *William Donald Schaefer: A Political Biography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 165.

directly create jobs and broaden the tax base by bringing corporate offices downtown, generate ripple effects to other parts of the local economy (trickle-down economics at the urban level), and spearhead the adjustment to the new economy (by creating service sector jobs to replace those lost in traditional industry).<sup>20</sup>

The result of this entrepreneurial governance was a series of joint public-private development projects that completely reshaped Baltimore's downtown, including the Inner Harbor, Harborplace, the Gallery, the National Aquarium, the Science Center, the World Trade Center, the Convention Center, hotels, restaurants, and, ultimately, Camden Yards. So thoroughly had Baltimore appeared to reinvent itself that by the 1980s it was recognized as a "Cinderella City" by news outlets across the country. "Its downtown redevelopment, business incentives, and public-private partnership approach to urban economic development" made Baltimore at the height of its renaissance "the town other cities unabashedly seek to copy to revive their own decaying downtowns."<sup>21</sup>

#### *James Rouse and the Greater Baltimore Committee*

The avatar of Baltimore's pro-growth business ideology was real estate developer James Rouse. A true visionary and Maryland original, Rouse was among the mid-century businessmen who abhorred the "creeping socialism" that they saw taking over postwar Western Europe. These men feared the potential popularity of the Soviet Union's solution to urban problems through "national health care, massive housing projects, universal education, and national employment schemes" when compared to the blight of

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<sup>20</sup> Levine, "Downtown Redevelopment," 104-105.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

segregation, decay, and poverty in urban America. Equally, they despised the government spending and market interference of the New Deal. So, to counter the influence of the liberal federal government, Rouse advocated for business interests to partner closely with local government in planning development.<sup>22</sup>

Rouse was more idealistic than most but, similarly to the socialists, he and his compatriots believed in a utopian future through careful and controlled planning – albeit directed by business and not the state. His vision of a slum-less city was ironically achieved most completely not downtown but in the suburbs and is reflected in his shopping malls and planned communities, such as Columbia, Maryland.<sup>23</sup>

The ultimate irony, of course, was that Rouse’s “Businessman’s Utopia” could not be achieved without a massive amount of government action. He needed the broad condemnation and planning authorities of local government and so he convinced his conservative business allies that local government was a force for good against the liberal federal government, that it was more business-friendly and could be more easily controlled. And yet, it was public money – even at the hated federal level – that undergirded all of Rouse’s redevelopment projects.<sup>24</sup>

The conduit for aligning business and government in Baltimore’s public-private redevelopment projects was very often the Greater Baltimore Committee. Founded in 1955, membership in the private lobbying organization was restricted to no more than 100 of Baltimore’s leading citizens, mainly businessmen, who could afford the hefty

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<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Dagen Bloom, *Merchant of Illusion: James Rouse, America’s Salesman of the Businessman’s Utopia* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), ix-xvii.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, xii-xix.

<sup>24</sup> Bloom, *Merchant of Illusion*, xviii; Edward Gunts, "Rouse Works with Cities as Partners – or Not at All," *Baltimore Sun*, May 27, 1985.

dues. Under the leadership of lawyer Clarence Miles (who brought the Orioles to Baltimore) and James Rouse, the Greater Baltimore Committee succeeded in lobbying for a string of early redevelopment efforts: the aforementioned Charles Center, the Baltimore Civic Center, and the Jones Falls Expressway, which carries Interstate 83 over and through several city neighbors from the beltway south to downtown.<sup>25</sup>

Baltimore's business community had its fingerprints all over the planning and implementation of the urban redevelopment of the Baltimore Renaissance, and it has continued and celebrated its strong public-private relationship with the municipal government ever since. Take, for example, a 1991 government planning report appropriately titled "the Renaissance Continues": ostensibly prepared for the mayor by his Downtown Strategy Advisory Committee, this public policy document was created in partnership with the Legg Mason Realty Group and was funded by city taxpayers as well as business interests like Baltimore Gas and Electric, the First National Bank of Maryland, the Greater Baltimore Committee, Mercantile Bank and Trust, and the Rouse Company. Unsurprisingly then, the report called for things like a "flexible regulatory environment" downtown and the pursuit and acquisition of an NFL franchise, all while celebrating "Baltimore's unique . . . public-private cooperation."<sup>26</sup>

In Baltimore since at least the mid-fifties, city planning and the enterprises of local business elites have gone together like hand and glove. Part of this, of course, was a concerted effort by actors like Jim Rouse and the GBC to cultivate ties with local

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<sup>25</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 106-109; Bloom, *Merchant of Illusion*, 31-32, 37-41; "First Birthday of the Greater Baltimore Committee," *Baltimore Sun*, January 6, 1956.

<sup>26</sup> City of Baltimore, Mayor's Downtown Strategy Advisory Committee, *Final Reports of the Technical Advisory Committees: The Renaissance Continues*, by the Legg Mason Realty Group, Inc., and the Baltimore City Department of Planning (Baltimore, May 1991).

government, but city and state politicians also sought out influential businesspeople to support and facilitate the passage of development projects. Perhaps no single politician did more in this regard than William Donald Schaefer.

William Donald Schaefer

Baltimore has always had a chip on its shoulder from its perceived status as a second-class city. It has some justification in this paranoia, the legacies of its two most famous residents, Babe Ruth and Edgar Allan Poe, must be shared with other cities, and it frequently finds itself unfavorably compared to its southerly neighbor, Washington, DC. But Maryland's largest city was in particularly bad shape when City Council President William Donald Schaefer was elected mayor in 1971. In particular, Baltimore was suffering from the aftermath of the April 1968 riots instigated by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Perceived ineffectiveness at combating the unrest drove the burned-out incumbent mayor, Thomas D'Alesandro III, to retire (whereas, conversely, his hardline response to black militancy made Maryland Governor Spiro Agnew an attractive pick for running mate to Richard Nixon in 1968). Schaefer's sphinxlike views on race made him an acceptable candidate to Baltimore's dwindling white and rising black populations alike.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> A few grudges Baltimore holds against Washington: Baltimore built the first Washington Monument, only to have it outdone in height and fame by the one in the capital; it failed in its bid to acquire the Hirshhorn art collection when Washington built a museum to house the collection with federal money; its largest newspaper, the *Baltimore Sun*, once boasted bureaus throughout Europe, but its status was forever eclipsed by the *Washington Post* after the latter's Watergate coverage; even the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad featured a DC landmark – the Capitol Dome – in its logo. As enumerated in Peter Richmond, *Ballpark: Camden Yards and the Building of an American Dream* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 45. For the racial dynamics of the 1970 mayoral election, see Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 73-82.

William Donald Schaefer was an oddball and an outsider. A lifelong bachelor, he lived for most of his adult life with his mother in the same West Baltimore rowhouse where he grew up. He did not come from a political dynasty like his predecessor “Young Tommy” D’Alesandro, whose father, “Old Tommy,” had served in the House of Representatives and then as Mayor of Baltimore for twelve years (and whose sister, Nancy Pelosi, would go on to become the first woman elected Speaker of the House of Representatives). As a matter of fact, upon entering office in 1971, most of the local establishment had a low opinion of Schaefer – including the D’Alesandro’s, Jim Rouse, former mayor and governor Theodore McKeldin, and the *Sunpapers*. His experience on the city council aside, Schaefer’s critics viewed him as a man of limited abilities, a “dummy,” even “unstable,” and completely in the pocket of the political boss who “made” Schaefer and Maryland’s corrupt governor, Marvin Mandel. Most predicted Schaefer would serve out a single term as a “caretaker” mayor before being replaced by a better establishment candidate or defeated by a black candidate due to the irresistible demographic changes taking place within the city (Schaefer’s own council district had rapidly degentrified).<sup>28</sup>

Instead, Schaefer proved them all wrong. He was reelected handily three times and left City Hall reluctantly in 1987 only because he had been elected governor. Rouse,

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<sup>28</sup> Schaefer was not a “confirmed bachelor” in the euphemistic sense of politely denoting a homosexual. His longtime girlfriend, Hilda Mae Snoops, even followed Schaefer to the Governor’s Mansion in Annapolis, where she served as his official hostess and de facto first lady. But despite years of exclusive companionship, the pair never married. Accusations that Schaefer emerged from the smoke-filled backrooms of political bosses were rather meaningless considering the tremendously corrupt and machine-like nature of Maryland’s, and especially Baltimore’s, politics at mid-century. Schaefer was certainly never connected with the scale of illegal misdeeds that brought down a number of contemporaneous state officials, most famously Mandel and Agnew. For opinions on Schaefer, see Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 3-5, 52.

who worked closely with Schaefer on building the Baltimore Renaissance, had completely reversed his prior opinion of the mayor by 1983. In a piece in the *Evening Sun* the real estate developer wrote, “I have come to meet and know and work with many mayors . . . I have never seen the equal of Schaefer.”<sup>29</sup>

The last of the larger-than-life twentieth-century mayors, in the mold of Richard Daley or Fiorello La Guardia, Schaefer’s preferred function as mayor was being cheerleader-in-chief for Baltimore. Any chance he had to bring notoriety or pride to what he called “the best damned city in the United States” was taken. Schaefer had mountains of bumper stickers printed with the slogan “Baltimore’s Best/Baltimore Is Best” and would go to ridiculous lengths to commemorate local achievements. Most famously he donned a straw hat and “gay nineties” Victorian bathing suit and jumped into a seal pool to publicize the opening of the National Aquarium in 1981, garnering headlines and free publicity across the globe.<sup>30</sup>

No detail of operating Baltimore City was too small to escape Schaefer’s attention. “As mayor,” remembered the *Sun* in Schaefer’s obituary, “he would patrol the city at night and on weekends, calling city officials to demand immediate action to fill a pothole or clean a garbage-strewn alley.” Mayor Schaefer would even make public projects out of these upkeep activities, by asking people to sponsor pothole repair valentines or encouraging proper garbage disposal habits by inventing the sport of “trashball.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 221.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-208, 218, 243.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Dresser, "William Donald Schaefer, Governor and Mayor, Dies," *Baltimore Sun*, April 19, 2011, accessed February 23, 2018, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-ob-schaefer-20110418-story.html>; Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 216-218, 245-247.

But though Schaefer proved more than willing to “sweat the small stuff” as mayor, he is remembered primarily as a builder, a proponent of grand city construction projects. So enamored was Schaefer with redeveloping Baltimore’s landscape that his critics frequently accused him of harboring an “edifice complex.” Schaefer’s proclivity for building emerged during his time on the city council, where he was a supporter of the various construction projects endorsed by the Greater Baltimore Committee. And although many of these projects were completed, Schaefer was not always successful in his advocacy of business-oriented growth. In the 1960s he supported efforts to build “the Road,” a planned highway that would bisect the city from east to west along the U.S. Route 40 corridor and connect at either end to what became the Baltimore Beltway, much as Interstate 83 does from north to south. Grassroots opposition led by community organizer Barbara Mikulski (later a longtime congresswoman and senator) brought intense pressure from neighborhoods that would be in the path of the bulldozers and put a stop to the project. Still, it was an early indicator of Schaefer’s willingness to do what he deemed was best for the city, whether the city liked it or not. As mayor he governed through proposing a series of big construction projects, hopping from one to another in rapid succession lest “people think we are doing nothing” in City Hall. If he and his growth machine rested, even for one moment, Schaefer worried, the collapse – his and the city’s – would surely come.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 54-55, 112-113, 149-150, 243. Interestingly enough, Baltimore was largely spared from the midcentury downtown expressway construction binge that tore up so many urban neighborhoods, particularly ones occupied by minorities. Although the Jones Falls Expressway was built down the center of the city, it never made it all the way to I-95 south of the Inner Harbor as planned. Instead it stops at Fayette Street downtown and empties onto surface roads. Also, as stated above, an east-west expressway never made it past the planning stages, due to intense community opposition. To this day, I-70 abruptly ends at the



Although Schaefer was certainly an accolade of James Rouse's belief in the partnership between private developers and local government, the mayor understood there simply were not enough tax dollars in Baltimore to pay for his construction program and also fund governmental operations. Thus, Mayor Schaefer was frequently spotted in Annapolis begging state funds for his beleaguered city, or in Washington, where Baltimore successfully "marketed itself . . . as a laboratory for HUD and other agencies" and won much-needed federal dollars in the process. Schaefer's courtship of Washington began during the Carter administration, and although the two Democrats never hit it off personally, few mayors were more successful at extracting funds from the Georgian's urban initiatives, which Schaefer used for summer jobs programs and public works projects. Schaefer's stream of federal funds largely slowed to a trickle under President Reagan but the mayor nonetheless still personally lobbied for money in Washington, trying to thread the needle between respectfully criticizing the harmful effects of Reagan's New Federalism and praising the Gipper's enthusiasm for "enterprise zones" and public-private partnerships.<sup>33</sup>

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Security Boulevard exit, just inside the beltway. The eastern half of the cloverleaf interchange, originally intended to carry traffic into the city, has been retrofitted into a park-and-ride.

<sup>33</sup> For the laboratory quote, see Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*. Carter information in Dresser, "Schaefer Dies." For a sampling of Schaefer's frequent lobbying activities in Washington, see, for example, *Impact of Administration's Economic Proposals on Programs Under the Jurisdiction of the Education and Labor Committee: Hearings before the Committee on Education and Labor*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., March 26, 1981 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 467-471; *New Federalism, Its Impact to Date (Part 1): Hearings before the Joint Economic Committee*, 98th Cong., 1st sess., March 8, 1983 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 402-412; *Trends in the Fiscal Conditions of Cities: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Investment, Jobs, and Prices of the Joint Economic Committee*, 98<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., December 12, 1983 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 2-9.

No matter how frequently or how urgently Schaefer begged for funds to keep his program of projects moving forward, money was not always forthcoming and the gears of bureaucracy often ground too slowly for the famously impatient mayor. Schaefer's need to get things done in a hurry "drove him to find ways to get around the cumbersome processes of city government. He and his allies were heavily criticized after they established a multimillion-dollar development loan bank that the *Sun* would dub 'the shadow government.' Operated by nonelected trustees, the bank was used to expedite projects the City Council might take months to approve." Schaefer jokingly embraced "the Shadow" character and blamed the media for making him out to be a thief, but insinuations of being too cozy with unaccountable business figures dogged him throughout his political life. Schaefer's entire approach to running the government was entrepreneurial, blurring the boundaries between public and private. He was in awe with the business community even as he manipulated its members to chip-in on various fundraising efforts and support his unending list of projects.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Newspapers*

William Donald Schaefer was a frequent critic of how he was portrayed in the local newspapers, like during the shadow government scandal, but on the whole the coverage he received was most often supportive of his renaissance agenda. Certainly the *Sun* did not always agree with Schaefer, even as it endorsed him – neither was the

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<sup>34</sup> Quote taken from Dresser, "Schaefer Dies." See also, Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 181-183, 196-200.

creature of the other – but both newspaper and mayor often found themselves working towards the same ends, as would be the case during the debate over stadium construction.

The *Sun* was chosen as the primary newspaper to study in this paper for several reasons but mainly because it was the most-read Baltimore newspaper of the 1980s and circulated widely throughout the state. There were only two other general interest daily papers in Baltimore at this time: The *Evening Sun*, which was editorially separate from the morning *Sun* but jointly owned (Marylanders thought of them as a single entity and referred to them collectively as the *Sunpapers*), and the *News American*, an amalgamation of several previously-independent newspapers united through their purchase by William Randolph Hearst. At one time the *News American* was the most circulated paper in the city owing to its popularity with Baltimore's blue-collar residents, "truly a beer and crabcakes paper for a beer and crabcakes town," as the *Sun* would later eulogize. But by the 1970s, the *News American* had fallen behind the *Sun* due to several factors, including the reduction of Baltimore's industries and its white working-class population, the decline of afternoon newspapers in general, and the broader troubles within the Hearst newspaper empire. The *News American* ceased publication in 1986 and the *Evening Sun* continued until it too disappeared in 1995. Besides the fact that, unlike the *News American*, the *Sun* existed through the entirety of the period of this paper, the *Sun* was also the paper of the state's more conservative-minded elite, including the politicians who voted on stadium funding. Furthermore, the *Sun*'s editorial stance on the need to spend public money on sports was no different from that of the *Evening Sun* or

the *News American*, while the latter existed. All three editorial boards generally supported stadium construction.<sup>35</sup>

It should come as no surprise that Baltimore's sports writers, from John Steadman of the *News American* and the *Evening Sun* to Bob Maisel and Vito Stellino of the *Sun*, uniformly supported efforts to expend public money to keep the city's sports teams. As Mike Littwin of the *Sun* admitted, "I'd love to see two new stadiums. Of course. I'm a sports writer. It's my business to write about sports. I'm the absolute last person – if you exclude [Orioles owner] Edward Bennett Williams – you should listen to." Even in

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<sup>35</sup> Gerald W. Johnson, Frank R. Kent, H. L. Mencken, and Hamilton Owens, *The Sunpapers of Baltimore, 1837-1937* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), 320; Paul Scott Girsdansky, "The Decline and Fall of the Baltimore *News American*" (Master's thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 1989), 2-5; Glynnis G. Gilbert, Finding Aid, *Baltimore News American Collection*, Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries, College Park; Harold A. Williams, *The Baltimore Sun, 1837-1987* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 364-365; "The *News American*," *Baltimore Sun*, May 28, 1986; Frank D. Roylance, "It's the Final Edition for the *Evening Sun*," *Baltimore Sun*, September 15, 1995. Established in 1837, the *Sun* was only one among many newspapers that called Baltimore home during the golden age of the medium in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. A morning paper published seven days a week, the *Sun* created a weekday afternoon paper, the *Evening Sun*, in 1910 to do battle with the *Baltimore News*, its chief rival for late-breaking stories. Although the *Sun* and the *Evening Sun* became editorially separate in 1920, they remained under joint ownership. Hearst entered the Baltimore market in 1923 when he purchased the *News* and a morning paper, the *American*. The *American* rather tenuously claimed to be the oldest continuously-published daily newspaper in the country and traced its origins to the 1773 debut of the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*. It was the *Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* that published Francis Scott Key's "Defense of Fort McHenry" in 1814, which eventually became the lyrics to "The Star Spangled Banner." Hearst disbanded all but the Sunday edition of the *American*, and further winnowed the local market by purchasing the *Baltimore Post* in 1934 and merging it with the *News*. The reduced production of the *American* left the *Sun* with no competition in the morning except on Sundays, but the *Evening Sun* and the *News-Post* battled for control of the lowbrow weekday afternoon newspaper market. The *News-Post*, and, after a 1964 rebranding, the *News American* consistently outsold each of the *Sunpapers* until 1976, but the combined resources of the latter put it in a stronger economic position, and the morning *Sun*, especially, considered itself a finer journalistic product written for a more educated reader than the sensationally populist *News American*.

Baltimore's *Afro-American* newspaper, sports correspondent Sam Lacy argued in favor of committing city money to a new stadium away from a residential area.<sup>36</sup>

Stadium support from sports writers was far less important than the consistent and influential backing that it received from Baltimore's editorial pages. From efforts to renovate Memorial Stadium to the satisfaction of Colts owner Bob Irsay through the various plans for new stadiums proposed after the Colts fled to Indianapolis, the *Sun's* editors in particular were a constant voice in the ear of Maryland's legislators arguing for public money to be spent and promising that such an investment would result in increased economic activity and civic pride. Such support for a pro-growth agenda is consistent with scholarship indicating that newspapers are important members of a local growth coalition, as well as an assertion by a James Rouse biographer that the developer's pro-business political ideology succeeded not necessarily because it was superior to liberal alternatives, but because it was better at messaging.<sup>37</sup>

Here, again, we have the three legs of Baltimore's pro-growth elite: the business community that desired a closer relationship with government in planning and directing the future of downtown development, including the real estate developer who would do much of the building; the mayor and his allies in city and state government who viewed attracting business downtown as the likeliest cure for restoring Baltimore's glory; and the newspapers that tirelessly promoted the same agenda of corporate-directed publically-

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<sup>36</sup> Mike Littwin, "Let's All Sing the Guv's Stadium Tune: It's Now or Never," *Baltimore Sun*, February 13, 1987; Sam Lacy, "C'mon, Ballmer," *Baltimore Afro-American*, February 25, 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Bloom, *Merchant of Illusion*, xxii.

funded redevelopment on their pages. All that remains is to introduce Baltimore's two major league sports teams of the 1980s and the stadium that they shared.

### *Professional Sports in Baltimore*

Memorial Stadium became the home of Baltimore's professional sports teams more or less by accident. Its location on an oversized lot bounded by 33rd Street, Ellerslie Avenue, 36th Street, and Ednor Road in the northeastern section of Baltimore was previously part of a city park carved out of a colonial-era estate. In 1922 the city opened on the site a U-shaped amphitheater called Venable Stadium, which was intended for use as a place for public concerts and high school and college athletics, such as football, track, and lacrosse. The area around Venable Stadium was heavily developed by Baltimore home builders and by mid-century the park was inside a densely-populated residential area. This setting made the stadium less than ideal for high-capacity events. Nevertheless, Mayor Theodore McKeldin offered the renamed Municipal Stadium to Baltimore's minor-league baseball team when its ballpark burned down in 1944. The city retrofitted the stadium for baseball and it hosted large crowds throughout the subsequent summers. Baseball proved so popular that in 1954 the American League's St. Louis Browns moved to Baltimore and became the Orioles. The city hastily constructed an upper deck for the ballpark and dubbed the new creation "Memorial Stadium," in honor of the city's war dead.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Jordan Vardon, "*Green v. Garrett: How the Economic Boom of Professional Sports Helped to Create, and Destroy, Baltimore's Memorial Stadium*" (Unpublished student paper, University of Maryland, Baltimore, 2010), [http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/mlh\\_pubs/22/](http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/mlh_pubs/22/); James Edward Miller, "The Dowager of 33rd Street: Memorial Stadium and the Politics of Big-Time Sports in Maryland, 1954-1991," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 87, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 187-200. The history of professional sports in Baltimore is much too long an interesting a story than

The city operating what was now a major-league ballpark in a residential neighborhood elicited complaints from local residents (a fact that did not escape the *Sun* when those same residents begged for the stadium to stay in the 1980s), but they did not slow Baltimore's desire to acquire a "major league" image, which it bolstered by acquiring an NFL team, the Colts, to join the Orioles in Memorial Stadium. Together, the two franchises ascended to the upper echelons of their respective leagues through the 1960s and into the early 1970s, but the owners of both teams believed that profitability would increase if only they could play in a modern domed structure of the sort that was the current fad in stadium design. In 1972, Governor Marvin Mandel established a Maryland Sports Complex Authority, which recommended building a domed multi-use facility at Camden Yards for more than \$100 million, but the sports authority refused to issue bonds to fund the project unless the teams signed thirty-year leases, which the owners refused to do until a new stadium was actually built, and as momentum stalled

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can be told here. For the nineteenth-century origins of major-league baseball in the city, see Burt Solomon, *Where They Ain't: The Fabled Life and Untimely Death of the Original Baltimore Orioles, the Team that Gave Birth to Modern Baseball* (New York: Main Street, 2000). For the history of the present-day Orioles up to the construction of Camden Yards, see James Edward Miller, *The Baseball Business: Pursuing Pennants and Profits in Baltimore* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). And for the definitive account of the Baltimore Colts relocation and the city's subsequent theft of the Cleveland Browns, see Jon Morgan, *Glory for Sale: Fans, Dollars, and the New NFL* (Baltimore: Bancroft Press, 1997). The city was also home to an NBA team, the Baltimore Bullets, from 1963-1973. The Bullets played in the Civic Center, which also nearly landed an NHL expansion team in 1967, see Mike Commito, "Why Baltimore Failed to Land an NHL Franchise During the Expansion Era," *Vice Sports*, March 10, 2017, accessed March 6, 2018, [https://sports.vice.com/en\\_ca/article/537zy3/why-baltimore-failed-to-land-an-nhl-franchise-during-the-expansion-era](https://sports.vice.com/en_ca/article/537zy3/why-baltimore-failed-to-land-an-nhl-franchise-during-the-expansion-era). Unfortunately, the Civic Center (now Royal Farms Arena) was, like Memorial Stadium, outdated almost from the moment it opened and the Bullets abandoned it only a decade after moving in for the Capital Centre in the Washington suburb of Landover, MD.

city voters approved an amendment to Baltimore's charter prohibiting municipal funds from being spent on any ballpark other than Memorial Stadium.<sup>39</sup>

By 1982, both Orioles owner Edward Bennett Williams and Colts owner Robert Irsay were locked in a stalemate with the city and state government concerning the stadium. The team owners would not commit to a long-term lease until an upgrade was made (although whether this involved improvements to Memorial Stadium or a new facility was never clear) and the General Assembly refused to appropriate any funds until the owners committed themselves to remain in Baltimore. Making the situation worse was the fact that neither Williams nor Irsay was from the state, and speculation abounded that the teams might be relocated. In the case of the Orioles, the prospect seemed less dire – despite being a Washingtonian, Williams never seriously threatened to flee Baltimore and fill the baseball-less market in the Capital (he merely let the idea float in the back of everyone's minds) and the Orioles maintained a high level of play, including a World Series win in 1983. Irsay, however, was an entirely different story.<sup>40</sup>

Robert Irsay was a man so cartoonish in his miserliness and villainy that he was essentially the living caricature of a bad sports owner. He drank too much, swore in public, used his inheritance to start a competitor to the family company and drove his own father out of business. He fabricated his war record and lied about graduating college. His erratic behavior led some to believe he was emotionally unstable. When he acquired the reins to the Colts in 1972, he took a once-proud franchise and drove it into the ground. He traded away star players and fired coaches – believing he could

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<sup>39</sup> Vardon, “*Green v. Garrett*”; Miller, “The Dowager of 33rd Street,” 187-200; Miller, *The Baseball Business*, 203-206.

<sup>40</sup> Miller, “The Dowager of 33rd Street,” 196-197; Richmond, *Ballpark*, 58-59.



micromanage gameplay decisions himself – and cut spending to the bone, all while raising ticket prices and delivering a worsening product to the dwindling number of Colts faithful who bothered to come out to the games. He also flew all over the country courting seemingly every market without a football team (Jacksonville, Memphis, Phoenix, Indianapolis, even an attempt by Donald Trump to move the Colts to New York City) in an open effort to extract the highest civic concessions for his team. To the people of Baltimore, losing the Colts began to seem more like a matter of “when” than “if.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Robert Benjamin and Vito Stellino, "Irsay: Chicago's Jekyll Becomes Hyde in Baltimore," *Baltimore Sun*, March 4, 1984; Morgan, *Glory for Sale*, 104-108; Vito Stellino, "Irsay Says Colts Losing Maxwell – Too," *Baltimore Sun*, June 29, 1983; Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 105.

## Chapter 2: Renovating Memorial Stadium, 1982-1984

Talk of building a domed stadium in downtown Baltimore had come to naught in the 1970s. Public opinion had moved so firmly against the idea that city voters amended Baltimore's charter to explicitly ban municipal funding from going to any ballpark except Memorial Stadium. This left local pro-growth elites in a tricky situation. They very much wanted Baltimore and Maryland politicians to do all they could to keep the Orioles and Colts in town – at the very least because of the symbolic prestige they lent to the city's image (some true believers may have even bought into the notion that the franchises meaningfully impacted the economy). However, unless Annapolis suddenly decided to bear the entire cost of a new stadium that Baltimore voters explicitly did not want, there was no mechanism for developing a ballpark downtown without using (*horror of horrors!*) private money. Instead, from 1982 to early 1984 local elites advocated a series of public financial packages that would improve Memorial Stadium and hopefully convince Edward Bennett Williams and Robert Irsay to sign something longer than the year-to-year leases they had with the city and Memorial Stadium.

Mayor Schaefer tried his best to placate the irascible Irsay. In 1980 Schaefer had lobbied the General Assembly for \$22 million in state funds to modernize Memorial Stadium, contingent on the team owners signing fifteen-year leases. Irsay waffled and delayed, first saying he would not sign until Williams did (the Orioles' owner balked at improvements that seemed geared to the needs of the football team), then objecting to a clause that would require him to personally reimburse the state for part of the improvement costs should he break the lease and move the team. With the offer set to

expire in 1982, Schaefer returned to the legislature to beg for more time to negotiate with the team owners.<sup>42</sup>

The *Sun*'s editorial page came out strongly in favor of an extension, despite its poor prospects in the General Assembly, arguing, "If a state bond issue of \$22 million to enlarge and improve Memorial Stadium was right in 1980—and it was—extension of that offer by the state is right and proper now." Nothing had changed except the decreased buying power of \$22 million. "Mr. Irsay, it is said, is not popular," admitted the *Sun*, but it insisted that Irsay's days of shopping the franchise had ended. It followed up the next month with another editorial pushing the extension that featured the paper's two favorite sports spending arguments: "The Colts are an economic resource for Baltimore," argued the *Sun*, but "[m]ore than that, the football club is part of the area's pulse, a spectator sport that draws together [the state's diverse population] for one common purpose."<sup>43</sup>

After some horse-trading with rural conservatives to kill a planned tax on corporate windfalls, as well as placating a Republican senator who had planned to use the tax revenue to fund a project for the Association of Retarded Citizens, the General Assembly extended the \$22 million bond offer for another year. Irsay, however, refused to sign. In defense of the Colts owner, he was very busy – busy firing his coach and general manager, overseeing a winless team in the strike-shortened 1982 season, feuding with the consensus top draft pick, John Elway (who swore he would accept an offer from the baseball Yankees rather than play football for Irsay), drafting Elway anyway, and then trading the future Hall of Fame quarterback to the Denver Broncos without

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<sup>42</sup> Doug Struck, "Stadium Bill Faces Deadline," *Baltimore Sun*, March 16, 1982.

<sup>43</sup> "Stadium Replay," *Baltimore Sun*, March 5, 1982; "'No' to \$22 Million," *Baltimore Sun*, April 4, 1982.

consulting his new coach and general manager. Meanwhile, Al Davis had moved his Oakland Raiders to Los Angeles without the permission of the NFL and won a preliminary lawsuit brought by the league. Speculation grew in the NFL boardroom and back in Maryland that Irsay was merely waiting to see how the Davis case concluded before moving the Colts to Arizona, whose governor and a group of Phoenix businessmen were actively courting the team owner. In Baltimore, whispered one NFL official, Irsay “hates the city, he hates the state and he hates the governor. . . . If the courts let Davis move, then Irsay won’t be far behind.”<sup>44</sup>

To counter these persistent rumors, Mayor Schaefer returned to the General Assembly. Getting Bob Irsay to agree to a fifteen-year lease was impossible, the mayor now admitted, but Edward Bennett Williams would sign a six-year lease “tomorrow” if he was offered Memorial Stadium improvements that were tailored to the needs of his Orioles, as opposed to the football-centric improvements contained in the \$22 million bond measure. Schaefer now wanted the legislature to offer \$15 million in conditional improvements tied to six-year leases for each of the teams. Should only one of the owners sign – everyone knew this meant Williams – his team would still get its \$7.5 million share of the improvements.<sup>45</sup>

The *Sun* enthusiastically endorsed Schaefer’s \$15 million bond package and encouraged the Assembly to approve it. “Both clubs,” the paper editorialized, referring to

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<sup>44</sup> Doug Struck, "Tradeoff Gets Stadium Deal past Filibuster," *Baltimore Sun*, April 9, 1982; Alan Goldstein, "Irsay Really Holds the Reins, and Colts Suffer for It," *Baltimore Sun*, May 4, 1983; Rick Ostrow, "Phoenix Beckons, and Irsay May Just Follow: Davis Decision Could Seal Colt Fate," *Baltimore Sun*, August 22, 1982.

<sup>45</sup> Tom Linthicum, "Mayor Makes New Pitch for Stadium Funds," *Baltimore Sun*, February 10, 1983.

the Orioles and Colts, “are immense economic contributors to all of Maryland and particularly to the Baltimore region.” It was “dismaying,” the *Sun* allowed, that cities like Baltimore were forced to compete with public money to keep franchises from leaving, but any solution to the problem could only be made at a higher (i.e., federal) level; Maryland had no choice but to play the stadium game.<sup>46</sup>

The General Assembly proved less enthusiastic than the mayor of Baltimore or the *Sun*’s editorial page about voting yet again to offer Robert Irsay money that he refused to accept. “There just isn’t much sympathy for the Colts down here [in Annapolis],” explained one delegate who supported Schaefer’s plan, and this feeling was shared by many in the public at large. One letter-writer to the *Sun*’s sports page questioned whether Irsay’s decision to raise ticket prices after the Colts’ winless season was a ploy to drive down attendance still further and give him an argument to take to the NFL boardroom in favor of a relocation.<sup>47</sup>

The state legislature had a much more positive view of Edward Bennett Williams, whose Orioles had lost the American League East pennant to Milwaukee only on the final day of the season and were about to embark on a season culminating with a World Series victory, and the House of Delegates therefore considered amending the measure to offer \$7.5 million to the Orioles’ owner only. House Speaker Ben Cardin, a Schaefer ally, confessed that although he believed “[t]he franchises are very important to our economy . . . [and] very important to our state,” he was not confident that the \$15 million version would pass the full House and did not want to put his delegates on the record with a

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<sup>46</sup> “The Stadium Again,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 11, 1983.

<sup>47</sup> Sandy Banisky, “Mayor Makes Pitch to Wary Panel for Stadium Bonds,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 8, 1983; Gilbert Goldman, Letters to the Sports Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, March 6, 1983.

difficult vote that would be purely “academic” if Irsay refused to sign a lease. But both Schaefer and Governor Harry Hughes persisted in demanding that the money must be offered to both franchises, and the measure eventually moved through both houses of the General Assembly before the legislative session ended in April, partially because of confidence that Irsay would not sign a lease and therefore would not receive his \$7.5 million. The deal “makes sense, dollars and cents,” declared Baltimore City Delegate Dennis McCoy, referring to the “economic development and public relations benefits” sports teams provided the city. Montgomery County Republican Constance Morella disagreed, comparing the bill to a “phoenix” that “just keeps rising from the ashes” and slamming Schaefer and his city’s “edifice complex.”<sup>48</sup>

“‘City-bashing,’ once the sport of vindictive legislators out to deny Baltimore City a fair share of state aid for its poor and elderly,” was thankfully absent from the 1983 General Assembly session, concluded the *Sun* in an editorial applauding lawmakers for their work. Curiously, the first example the newspaper gave of this new magnanimity was the Memorial Stadium improvement bill, hardly a social program directed at the city’s poor and elderly. As “the economic hub of the state,” the *Sun* continued, Baltimore deserved its share of state funding and then listed as examples a series of Schaefer’s urban renewal projects: Harborplace, the Aquarium, and the Inner Harbor – all wonderful

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<sup>48</sup> Banisky, “Mayor Makes Pitch to Wary Panel”; Karen Hosler, “Stadium Loan Supported: House Leaders Back Orioles Aid, Bar Colts,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 17, 1983; Sandy Banisky, “Schaefer, Hughes Still Want Colts in Bond Bill,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 18, 1983; Karen Hosler, “House Passes Stadium Bond,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 1, 1983; Doug Struck, “Senate OKs Stadium Money Bill,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 7, 1983.

edifices, certainly, but hardly places that were offering meaningful employment to Baltimoreans.<sup>49</sup>

Yet despite all of Schaefer's positive predictions and the *Sun* editorial page's crowing concerning the \$15 million stadium improvement bill, both Irsay and Williams continued to delay signing the six-year leases that would activate the bond sales. *Sun* sports writer Vito Stellino argued that the improvements promised by the bill were not nearly enough to fix all the problems with Memorial Stadium; if the state was serious about keeping its sports teams, it needed to construct a modern multi-use facility. Stellino opposed publicly-funded stadiums "on a philosophical level," he acknowledged, but "we have to live in the real world." This suggestion, reopening a debate that the state had put to rest a decade before, irked some readers (one letter-writer questioned if Stellino had ever sat in one of the cheap seats he complained about at Memorial Stadium) and it also drew a rebuke from Mayor Schaefer. The Superdome had "nearly broke" New Orleans, and he was not about to repeat the mistake by building a new public stadium in Baltimore. Quietly though, Schaefer began using local businessmen as intermediaries in his continuing negotiations with Irsay, hoping that they would have better luck connecting with one of their own than Schaefer or Governor Hughes. Stellino questioned how a mayor who was so in favor of building could be opposed to a downtown stadium. "Maybe we could even disguise a new stadium as a second Harborplace by building chic little shops all around it," mused the sports columnist.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> "No City-Bashing This Session," *Baltimore Sun*, April 13, 1983.

<sup>50</sup> Vito Stellino, "Bet the Ball Park? That's One Way to Get a New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, November 27, 1983; J. H. Deford, Letters to Bob Maisel, *Baltimore Sun*, December 25, 1983; Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 108.

Everything changed in the early morning hours of March 29, 1984. Just the day before, having finally exhausted all patience with Robert Irsay, the Maryland Senate ratified a House resolution altering Baltimore's power of eminent domain so as to explicitly allow the city to condemn a sports franchise and seize ownership of it for the public good. When news of the vote reached Robert Irsay in Chicago, the Colts owner – who had spent the entire offseason playing the cities of Phoenix, Indianapolis, and Baltimore against one another for the “privilege” of hosting him and his football club – finally did what he had never quite had the courage to do before: move the Colts from Baltimore.<sup>51</sup>

Irsay called officials in Indiana and agreed in principle to their standing offer to lease him (almost rent-free) use of the brand new and unoccupied Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis, while also refinancing his considerable personal debt. He then ordered a fleet of Mayflower moving vans to the Colts' training facility in Owings Mills, Maryland (when the Indiana-based company offered Irsay its services for free, he pocketed the \$25,000 in moving expenses Indianapolis had already provided him). Pads, blocking sleds, computers, and financial documents were packed into the trucks and hurriedly driven past the crowd of reporters gathering outside the gates in the falling snow and then down Interstate 70, lest state troopers arrive and stop the Colts' midnight flight.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, Mayor Schaefer was left in the dark. Although he had been more than accommodating to the mercurial Irsay and his misbehavior over the years, Schaefer did

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<sup>51</sup> Karen Hosler, "Senate OKs Eminent Domain," *Baltimore Sun*, March 28, 1984.

<sup>52</sup> Vito Stellino, "Irsay Ends the 31-Year Marriage," *Baltimore Sun*, March 30, 1984; C. Fraser Smith, *William Donald Schaefer: A Political Biography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 240.



not even receive a phone call from the Colts' owner informing him of the move; instead Schaefer heard about it on the radio. Irsay "may have finally crossed the wrong man," said a mayoral aide upon witnessing Schaefer's fury at the villain who had besmirched the image of his beloved city. The mayor promised to bring the team back to Memorial Stadium through the courts or, barring that, an expansion team that the NFL surely owed the city as restitution. But Bill Tanton of the *Evening Sun* had a more prescient prediction the month before. "You know what will happen if we lose the Colts?," he asked his readers. "First there will be lawsuits filed and all kinds of frantic action in the legislature, none of which will bring back the Colts. Then there will be a drive to get 50,000 season-ticket pledges for a new franchise. Finally, there will be a campaign to build a new \$100-million stadium."<sup>53</sup>

The Colts move needed to be responded to. Not because of any personal insult to Schaefer politically or personally (he didn't even like football) and certainly not because of any direct economic implications, despite what he and his stadium boosters would later insist. (Before the move, Schaefer had declined a proposal to subsidize Irsay at \$7 million annually, deciding that sports ranked below education and far below the renaissance in his priorities). The psychological blow to the city's spirit could destroy Schaefer's hype machine and with it the ongoing renaissance – much of what he did, he admitted years later, was smoke and mirrors, and a lot of smoke drifted away with the Colts.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 113; Bill Tanton, "Life Will Not End if Colts Do Leave," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, February 29, 1984.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 243.

### Chapter 3: Stadiums, Schools, and Parking Lots, 1984

Losing the Colts became a turning point in the elite consensus over the need to do something to retain Baltimore's status as a major-league city. The situation had not seemed so dire in the 1970s when the lack of modern sports facilities downtown had caused the basketball Bullets to decamp for hated Washington and the Colts and Orioles to grumble about following them out of town, but, after years of empty threats, the Colts were gone. And with only the Orioles left, Baltimore was perilously close to becoming a second-class sports city. Having resolved to spend whatever public resources necessary to remedy Baltimore's stadium situation, local elites would move in 1984 to strike down the charter amendment banning city money from funding new stadiums. However, concurrent events concerning Baltimore's perpetually ignored and underfunded public schools – including one directly across the street from Memorial Stadium – would throw into sharp relief the battle between private business interests and students for the city's limited resources. Victories for publically funded pro-growth projects necessarily came at a social cost.

In the wake of the Colts' departure, Schaefer did what he was wont to do when faced with a problem: he tapped his friends in the Baltimore business community to help come up with a solution. Schaefer appointed J. Henry "Hank" Butta – CEO of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company – to chair the Mayor's Special Sports Task Force, which was tasked with studying Memorial Stadium and determining how to return football to and preserve baseball in the city. Butta was one of Schaefer's biggest backers in the business community and someone he leaned on again and again during the Reagan years as he increasingly turned to private resources to replace federal money in

funding his social programs. This public commitment to buying back the loyalty of Baltimore's sports owners struck some in the public as a poor appraisal of civic priorities. Baltimore resident Tina Owens complained that newspaper coverage of the Colts had overshadowed the closing of the Western Electric plant on Broening Highway. "We are willing to risk anything at any price to keep a lousy football team in town," she wrote, "when there will be 3,500 plus [plant employees] wondering where their next meal is coming from. . . . So what would happen if the Colts stayed in Baltimore and all our major industries moved to Indianapolis?"<sup>55</sup>

Edward Bennett Williams, who had always seemed like an angel compared to Bob Irsay, was suddenly much less interested in committing his world champion Orioles to the six-year lease that Schaefer and the state legislature had been so confident he would sign. He instead toured a Port Covington site being bandied around as a potential new stadium location, and Schaefer had to step in personally to save the Memorial Stadium lease negotiations after community members on the city's parks board complained that Williams was taking too cutthroat of a position in bargaining. The Orioles eventually did agree to stay for three more years, with the option of more, but did not accept the state's offer of \$7.5 million in improvements – a jarring indication that they no longer viewed Memorial Stadium as a place worth improving. Meanwhile, the *Sun's* Vito Stellino reiterated that if Baltimore was serious about recovering its football team, a new stadium was the only solution.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 230-234; John W. Frece and Sandy Banisky, "Stadium Focus of New Game: Gubernatorial Politics," *Baltimore Sun*, January 27, 1985; Tina Owen, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, April 7, 1984.

<sup>56</sup> Ron Davis and Karen Hosler, "Mayor Says Stadium Work Is in Peril, Asks Senate to Compel Colts' Return," *Baltimore Sun*, April 28, 1984; Ron Davis, "Orioles and City Near Accord on Stadium Lease," *Baltimore Sun*, May 1, 1984; "Orioles to Stay," *Baltimore Sun*, June 20, 1984;

Robert L. Paris, a resident of Laurel, Maryland, facetiously predicted a near future when the *Sun* would print “articles and editorials . . . blasting retired teachers and state employees for wallowing in the lap of luxury on their ‘Cadillac’ pensions. ‘It’s time these parasites cease their arrogant demands and stop ripping off the state treasury at taxpayer expense.’” Paris imagined this attack on state employees to be part of an effort by the newspaper and the legislature to find public money “for a new domed stadium” for the Orioles and to get the Colts back.<sup>57</sup>

Talk of “parasite teachers with Cadillac pensions” was not idle speculation. Public employees, and particularly educators, were having their retirement benefits targeted in 1984 as both city and state tried to balance their budgets. At the same time that the Colts departed for Indianapolis, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, the Baltimore Teacher’s Union, and the Teacher’s Association of Baltimore County were all boycotting the *Sunpapers* over the newspaper company’s editorial advocacy for reducing retirement benefits and restructuring pensions. One columnist had even compared teachers to starlings, noting that “like starlings, teachers can be a pestilence.”<sup>58</sup>

Mayor Schaefer did his best to stay at arm’s length over the pension issue. Education policy was not high on the list of the mayor’s interests. In fact, during Schaefer’s decades of public service, education was consistently “a nettle he feared to touch.” Assisted by white flight and a shrinking tax base, Baltimore City’s schools

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Vito Stellino, "If Baltimore Loses in Court, New Stadium Is Needed," *Baltimore Sun*, May 27, 1984.

<sup>57</sup> Robert L. Paris, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, May 9, 1984.

<sup>58</sup> Joyce Price, "Teachers, Public Workers Union Urge Boycott of Sunpapers," *Baltimore News American*, March 31, 1984.

deteriorated during Schaefer's time as mayor. Preferring to focus his efforts on urban renewal, Schaefer did precious little to improve the schools. This indifference may have been partly due to conflicts of personality for the emotionally prickly mayor. Shortly after the riots, black Baltimoreans first took control of the city schools before any other area of local government. The subsequently strong feeling of prideful independence within the school system's leadership and Schaefer's obvious disinterest in matters of education characterized a difficult relationship between the mayor and his educators.<sup>59</sup>

Whatever the cause of his negligence, as Schaefer focused on the redevelopment of downtown, the city's schools disintegrated, unemployment rose, and society decayed. Eventually, Baltimore's black churches, as well as its unions and educators, formed a coalition (BUILD) to force action on improving city schools. After initial hostility, the Greater Baltimore Committee also came around to recognizing the need for a better-trained workforce, but Schaefer ignored them. Political scientist Marion Orr blames the lack of school reforms at this time despite popular and business support on Schaefer's general apathy toward education issues, his wish to avoid implication in the schools' failings (by washing his hands of them and blaming the school board instead), his obsession with funding the Inner Harbor and other redevelopment, and his hostility towards his critics within BUILD.<sup>60</sup>

There is perhaps no better symbol than for the conflict between Baltimore's school system and its pro-growth mayor than Eastern High School, which was located on 33rd Street directly across from Memorial Stadium. Originally built in the 1930s, Eastern

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<sup>59</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 135-138, 262-264, 357.

<sup>60</sup> Marion Orr, "Urban Regimes and Human Capital Policies: A Study of Baltimore," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 14, no. 2 (June 1992): 175-181.

was beginning to show its age a half-century later when its campus began to be eyed by city planners and Mayor Schaefer as a potential solution to the congestion and lack of parking around Memorial Stadium. Local residents much preferred to see the school renovated than sacrificed to the needs of sports owners, but, as negotiations with Robert Irsay and the Colts deteriorated during the 1983 offseason, the city paved over green space on Eastern's campus to increase the size of the school parking lots shared with sports fans on game days. The lack of prior community input and seemingly overnight nature of the paving prompted complaints that Eastern High's students were being shortchanged in a symbolic gesture of goodwill toward the sports owners. An investigation would later bear this out, finding that city procedures were rushed and streamlined to appease the owners and avoid community opposition.<sup>61</sup>

Eastern High's situation only grew direr by Autumn 1984 with the school now targeted for closure by the school system. Eastern's stakeholders were convinced that the only explanation was the desire for more parking at Memorial Stadium. The *Sun* acknowledged that people had a right to be suspicious of the city's motives in closing the school, especially after the paving scandal the year before, but the paper reminded its readers that the need for stadium parking was also a "legitimate concern" that should be considered in deciding the school's fate. The city's claims that it did not make financial sense to renovate Eastern High also rang hollow to local residents due to the fact that nearby Baltimore City College (a high school, despite the name, and William Donald

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<sup>61</sup> Bill Free, "O's to Stay on 33d, Says EBW," *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 1983; "Put the Grass Back at Eastern," *Baltimore Sun*, November 19, 1983; Hyman A. Pressman and Mary Pat Clarke, Debate & Discussion, "Parking Lot at Eastern High," *Baltimore Sun*, December 17, 1983; Ron Davis, "City Streamlined Procedures to Get New Eastern High Lot," *Baltimore Sun*, December 26, 1983.

Schaefer's alma mater) recently received \$7 million in renovations despite falling attendance; yet it was fully-enrolled Eastern being targeted for closure.<sup>62</sup>

Against the backdrop of the debate over whether to keep Eastern High School open or turn it into a parking lot for Memorial Stadium, a movement was building to render the parking situation around the stadium moot. A group of former Colts fans in favor of a modern domed "sportsplex" petitioned to allow city voters to repeal the city charter's decade-old ban on new stadium spending. The amendment had been adopted in 1974 amid fears that Schaefer and the Sports Complex Authority would attempt to build a new downtown stadium, but now the amendment's author, City Comptroller Hyman Pressman, himself called for its repeal. "The situation is different now," he explained to the City Council. "We've lost the Colts."<sup>63</sup>

The *Sun*'s editorial page enthusiastically took up the charge of calling for the amendment's repeal, but curiously chose to frame the issue not as the first step in allowing city money to be spent on a new stadium, but as a good governance housekeeping measure necessary to declutter the Baltimore City Charter. The city's constitution should not be "a peg board to be cluttered up with . . . details for every passing interest," argued the *Sun* in July 1984. It continued in October with an official endorsement for "yes" on Question O, the ballot measure proposing to repeal the charter amendment in question. Its repeal would not be a vote for a new stadium, the *Sun* promised, but merely a step to create "a clean City Charter as a framework for

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<sup>62</sup> Jane A. Smith, "Students Rally to Eastern's Defense," *Baltimore Sun*, September 28, 1984; "Eastern and Other Schools," *Baltimore Sun*, September 29, 1984; Mary R. Lester, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, November 11, 1984.

<sup>63</sup> Sandy Banisky, "Stadium Amendment Repeal is Urged," *Baltimore Sun*, June 23, 1983.

government devoid of improper legislative impedimenta.” In their 1984 election primer, the editors devoted an entire paragraph to reminding voters to vote “FOR” Question O, the same amount of print they dedicated to their approval of Questions A through L combined.<sup>64</sup>

From the *News American* press offices, sports editor John Steadman warned his readers that a failure by Baltimore voters to approve Question O would reduce the city “to a whistle stop between Washington and Philadelphia.” Long the city’s biggest cheerleader for sports business, Steadman very much wanted the vote to be viewed as a referendum on a new stadium and hoped the state’s elected officials would “see the light” on the issue as well. Steadman was confident his position would win the day, especially considering the editorial unity around approving Question O from both the *News American* and the *Sunpapers*.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the efforts of the three newspapers, the issue of amending the charter remained very contentious within the Baltimore City Council. Supporters of the repeal repeated the *Sun*’s assertion that it was *not* a vote for replacing Memorial Stadium – a position that was somewhat undercut by their alliance with the group “Fans for a ’Plex,” which supported building a new stadium complex and had petitioned to place the amendment question on the ballot. The amendment’s opponents questioned why the measure needed to be voted on before studies of improving Memorial Stadium had even been completed. And when the voters consented to remove the “silly stadium ban” from

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<sup>64</sup> "Silly Stadium Ban," *Baltimore Sun*, July 9, 1984; "Clean Up the Charter," *Baltimore Sun*, October 19, 1984; "The Ballot on Tuesday," *Baltimore Sun*, November 3, 1984.

<sup>65</sup> John Steadman, "Question O Must Pass for Our Good," *Baltimore News American*, November 5, 1984; John Steadman, "Passage of Question O a Big Relief," *Baltimore News American*, November 7, 1984; "In Tuesday's Election . . .," *Baltimore News American*, November 4, 1984.



the city charter, supporters of a new stadium immediately characterized the outcome as a popular mandate for stadium construction.<sup>66</sup>

The *Sun* itself added to the impression of popular support for a new stadium when it published a poll under the problematic headline “Most in Favor of New Stadium: 52.8 Percent Back Facility to Attract Pro Football Team Back.” The poll was flawed in several ways, including its focus solely on respondents in the Baltimore area when any public sports facility would require state money from all corners of Maryland. The question, whose answer the *Sun* chose to interpret as “a majority of those polled are in favor of building a new stadium to attract a football team,” was actually worded “Do you favor or oppose a football team in Baltimore if that requires building a new stadium,” a question that prioritizes whether respondents want a football team and considers stadium construction only secondarily. The poll also featured leading response choices, with possible pro-stadium answers outnumbering those against. The result enabled the newspaper to say that 79 percent of respondents thought having major league sports was “important” to Baltimore, while one could just as easily use the same linguistic gymnastics to say that 68.9 percent of respondents thought major league sports were “nonessential” to the city.<sup>67</sup>

The same problem existed in the question of whether a football team was important to Baltimore. The *Sun* reported that a majority responded that a football team

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<sup>66</sup> Ron Davis, "Question O, on Stadium, Divides City Councilmen," *Baltimore Sun*, October 28, 1984; Sandy Banisky, "DiBlasi to Seek Repeal of Law Banning New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, June 2, 1984; Sandy Banisky, "Voters Reject Changes in Council, School Panel," *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 1984.

<sup>67</sup> Susan Reimer, "Most in Favor of New Stadium: 52.8 Percent Back Facility to Attract Pro Football Team Back," *Baltimore Sun*, November 14, 1984.

was “important,” but the same results also indicated that a plurality found a team “not important” and almost 75 percent, not “very important.” Perhaps sensing as much about the public at large, Mayor Schaefer continued to repeat his personal opposition to constructing a new stadium rather than improving Memorial Stadium even after the vote amending the city charter. How much longer the mayor would continue to be an ally of the pro-Memorial Stadium forces was anybody’s guess, especially as his allies in the business community prepared to release a report justifying the need for a new stadium.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Reimer, “Most in Favor of New Stadium”; Sandy Banisky, “Vote Didn't Sell Mayor on Stadium,” *Baltimore Sun*, November 8, 1984.

## Chapter 4: “Fix or Replace?,” 1985

Mayor Schaefer, the *Sun*, and other members of Baltimore’s elite had declared before the city’s November 1984 vote on whether to abolish the charter amendment forbidding municipal money to be spent on a ballpark other than Memorial Stadium that it would not be interpreted as a referendum on whether a new stadium should be built. Once the ballot measure succeeded in removing this statutory ban, however, momentum in the press calling for a new stadium became irresistible. A preliminary report from the businessmen Schaefer had tasked with studying the stadium problem would add fuel to the fire of those arguing nothing could be done to adequately improve Memorial Stadium. And despite a contradictory conclusion about the old stadium’s usefulness from the city council and popular skepticism that a new stadium was needed, with the promise of more reports to come from government committees helmed by business leaders as 1985 dragged on, it remained unclear whether the decision to fix or replace Memorial Stadium had already been made.

The Mayor’s Special Sports Task Force returned in January 1985 with a bombshell of a preliminary report that concluded Memorial Stadium was beyond saving. It would take \$57 million to improve the old ballpark, the task force reported, and the upgrades would still not make it a “first-class facility.” Instead, the task force recommended construction of an \$80 million multi-use facility at Camden Yards. The task force stated that it came to its decision to abandon the effort to renovate Memorial Stadium after consulting with stadium architect Ronald Labinski who, unsurprisingly, recommended the construction of a new modern stadium like the many he himself had built. Task force chairman Hank Butta claimed his recommendation had the support of

Mayor Schaefer, the Orioles, and the Baltimore Stars – a United States Football League team playing out of Byrd Stadium at the University of Maryland, College Park, until a planned move to Memorial Stadium in 1986.<sup>69</sup>

Without specifically endorsing the plan, the *Sun* treated the suggested new stadium as a *fait accompli*, not only in an editorial, but also in a piece by sports columnist Alan Goldstein waving goodbye to Memorial Stadium, and finally in a news story about the feeling of disappointment among neighbors of Memorial Stadium. Legislative leaders in Annapolis, including Ben Cardin, began to speak of appropriating funds for a new stadium if Edward Bennett Williams would sign a long-term lease, while Mayor Schaefer remained coy about his position, claiming that he would let the task force continue to do its work and chastising the press for being more interested in writing about a new stadium than about the city's poor.<sup>70</sup>

Within days, however, the *Sun* shifted its position to one of official endorsement of a new stadium. In a series of editorials, it advocated that the legislature act on the Butta plan, conditional on the Orioles and the Stars signing long-term leases and a “thorough” exploration of the possibility of supplementary private funding. The newspaper also encouraged the city to continue looking out for the interests of those living in the neighborhoods surrounding Memorial Stadium – while simultaneously upbraiding those same residents for their opposition to stadium construction, encouraging

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<sup>69</sup> Sandy Banisky, "Mayor's Panel Urges New City Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, January 16, 1985; "Commitment Is the Key," *Baltimore News American*, January 17, 1985.

<sup>70</sup> "A Case for a New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, January 16, 1985; Alan Goldstein, "It's R.I.P. Memorial Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, January 16, 1985; Katie Gunter, "Memorial Stadium's Neighbors 'Hate to See It Go' Despite Traffic, Unruly Fans," *Baltimore Sun*, January 16, 1985; Ron Davis and John W. Frece, "New Stadium Funds Hinted by Legislators," *Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1985.

them to “look beyond parochial concerns to the overriding goal of keeping Baltimore a big league city in every sense of the word.” The *Sun* endorsed a new stadium for the same reason it had endorsed improving the existing one: the supposed combination of economic benefits and intrinsic pride that sports bestowed upon a city. “Building a new sports stadium is not just an issue for the Baltimore region,” the *Sun* argued. “The economic benefits would be immense and would be felt throughout the state. A new stadium would be a symbol of Maryland on the move and a commitment to a revitalized Baltimore.” Providing no evidence whatsoever to support those claims, the *Sun* declared, “The question for many citizens is no longer whether to build a new sports facility, but where, when and how.”<sup>71</sup>

The *News American*, whose editors had been calling for a new stadium since the Colts left, celebrated Schaefer’s predicted enlistment to the stadium-replacement ranks and declared that “there’s hardly any question that a new stadium is a must to assure the future of big-time professional sports in Baltimore.” Meanwhile, the paper’s sports editor and the city’s biggest NFL booster, John Steadman, encouraged Baltimoreans to think even bigger than the USFL and its audacious attempt to compete head-to-head with the NFL for fall football dollars in 1986. Although Steadman could not get NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle to commit to promising Baltimore and Oakland replacement expansion teams, Steadman did quote the commissioner as being very impressed with Baltimore’s choice of Hank Butta and Ron Labinski to lead its stadium replacement efforts, these being two businessmen the NFL boss held in high esteem. In Steadman’s

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<sup>71</sup> "Before Building a Stadium. . .," *Baltimore Sun*, January 18, 1985; "What About the Old Stadium?," *Baltimore Sun*, January 21, 1985; "Consensus for a New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, January 27, 1985.

telling, the only thing keeping the NFL from committing to Baltimore and Oakland was the presence of USFL franchises in those markets and the ongoing antitrust suit brought by the upstart league.<sup>72</sup>

Not every Baltimore journalist was on board the new stadium train. *Sun* social critic Michael Olesker declared that Edward Bennett Williams was holding the Orioles hostage and demanding a new stadium as ransom, and, in a piece of investigative reporting, the *Sun* newsroom delved into the closed-door nature of the mayor's private task force that had produced the report, the contents of which were not made public. The paper floated the theory that Schaefer might be using the task force as a screen to distance himself from its findings and his own wish for a new stadium, especially considering his possible candidacy for governor in 1986. This theory was strengthened in February 1985 when Schaefer further distanced himself from complicity in the stadium report, declaring that the task force was not taking direction from him but from its business-community members; Butta's group even changed its official name to the "Corporate Stadium Task Force."<sup>73</sup>

Public reaction to the Butta task force's report indicated that Schaefer may have been wise to portray himself as non-complicit in its recommendation of a new stadium. Edward Miller, a resident of Baltimore, questioned why it was so imperative to build a new stadium if Edward Bennett Williams was not demanding one and speculated that

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<sup>72</sup> "A Sad Goodbye," *Baltimore News American*, March 30, 1984; "Commitment Is the Key"; John Steadman, "New Stadium Might Attract NFL Franchise," *Baltimore News American*, January 16, 1985.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Olesker, "\$80 Million Is a Ransom to Keep Orioles in Town," *Baltimore Sun*, January 20, 1985; Steven M. Luxenberg and Sandy Banisky, "How Task Force Decided to Ask for New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, January 20, 1985; Sandy Banisky, "Mayor Says His Special Sports Task Force Is Business Community's Now," *Baltimore Sun*, February 23, 1985.

Memorial Stadium could be improved for less than the \$80 million price tag of a new stadium. Ann Buckley of Glen Arm thought “\$80 million . . . can be used to build shelters for the homeless, fix state roads, better the quality of education in Maryland, etc.” She then asked, “[w]hen people in this state are starving and freezing due to lack of money, how can the state legislature possibly consider spending \$80 million to build a new stadium?” Of Memorial Stadium, Nancy Menefee from Baltimore wrote, “I can only assume that the adjectives used to describe it – outdated and obsolete – translate to a lack of comforts for the rich. . . . The question that needs to be addressed is not where to put the new stadium, but why build it?” J. G. Clarkson, also from the city, attacked the mayor’s assumed support for a new stadium: “\$57 million in repairs to do what? Put in sky boxes? Baloney! That’s some help to us fans. . . . But if he spends \$80 million – or 80 cents – for a new Schaefer Stadium that we need like a hole in the head, that *is* my money as a taxpayer and/or a ticketholder. There I draw the line on feeding the mayoral ego.”<sup>74</sup>

“Fix or Replace: Who Will Make Stadium Choice?” asked a *Sun* article about the ongoing debate. “Not the public,” the answer seemed to be. “Right now, there isn’t an appropriate forum for the public to react to all this,” complained one city councilperson. Mayor Schaefer insisted that the public would have input through the ballot box by voting for or against a bond measure that would presumably fund the stadium’s

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<sup>74</sup> Edward Miller, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, February 3, 1985; Ann Buckley, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, February 4, 1985; Nancy Menefee, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, February 8, 1985; J. G. Clarkson, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, February 11, 1985.

construction. Memorial Stadium proponents argued that it would be too late for their input by then.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, Councilman Frank X. Gallagher from the Memorial Stadium area, suspicious of the Butta task force's unpublished findings, commissioned his own report on the cost of renovating the existing stadium. The resulting study found that it would be "feasible, practical and extremely worthwhile to modernize Memorial Stadium" and that the cost would only be \$37 million to fix its major deficiencies – \$20 million less than the cost claimed in the Butta task force's preliminary report. The findings included a major concession by Gallagher on behalf of his constituents, a trade-off of Eastern High School in exchange for keeping Memorial Stadium in operation. The committee's report recommended demolishing Eastern High and turning the entire campus into a parking structure with an elevated pedestrian walkway over 33rd Street to the stadium. This may also have been a recognition of the inevitable by Gallagher, since Eastern High was still being targeted for closure despite intense community opposition. Other Memorial Stadium fixes included in the report's budgeted total were: replacing deficient seating with wider molded plastic or aluminum, replacing temporary bleachers with permanent retractable seating that could be swapped in and out for football and baseball, eliminating all obstructed view seats in the lower deck by converting the area behind the cement support pillars into a lounge level of luxury boxes, extending the upper deck over the

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<sup>75</sup> Steven M. Luxenberg and Sandy Banisky, "Fix or Replace: Who Will Make Stadium Choice?," *Baltimore Sun*, March 25, 1985; Sandy Banisky, "Councilman Stages Local Counterattack," *Baltimore Sun*, January 31, 1985.



entirety of the lower deck, and upgrading the stadium's amenities, bathrooms, and vendor options.<sup>76</sup>

The *Sun*'s editorial page complimented the findings as "a responsible report that makes a serious contribution to the discussions of the issue," but noted, "[t]he Gallagher committee makes no secret of its motive to save Memorial Stadium" and questioned whether the Orioles (not to mention the NFL) would find an upgraded Memorial Stadium acceptable. The *Sun* concluded by darkly predicting that, with a forthcoming report still due from Governor Hughes's stadium study commission, "[t]he confusion of the stadium issue with gubernatorial politics appears, like a collision course with an iceberg, as inevitable as it is damaging."<sup>77</sup>

It is unfortunate that Gallagher's committee report was so quickly discarded in the rush to build a new stadium. Of the numerous reports on the stadium situation in Baltimore during this decade, it was the only one that seriously attempted to make Memorial Stadium useful. Its solution would probably have worked in its goal to keep professional baseball, if not football, in Baltimore.<sup>78</sup> However, just as the *Sun* predicted,

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<sup>76</sup> City of Baltimore, City Council, Stadium Modernization Committee, *Proposed Modernization of Baltimore Memorial Stadium*, by Richter Cornbrooks Gribble, Inc., and Iffland Kavanagh Waterbury, P.C. (March 21, 1985), 1-24; Sandy Banisky, "First-Rate' Stadium Fix-Up Called Feasible," *Baltimore Sun*, May 3, 1985; "Eastern High: Location Won't Be Factor in Deciding School's Fate," *Baltimore Sun*, March 30, 1985; Will Englund, "Student Makes a Solo Protest of Eastern Closing at Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, April 9, 1985.

<sup>77</sup> "Renovating the Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, May 7, 1985.

<sup>78</sup> Despite Edward Bennett Williams' dissatisfaction with Memorial Stadium, his feared relocation of the Orioles to Washington was likely just posturing. The nation's capital and Robert F. Kennedy Stadium were hardly the desirable baseball market that they were made out to be at the time. Two separate Washington Senators franchises abandoned RFK for greener pastures when the stadium was brand new, and the MLB thereafter declined to grant the city an expansion franchise for decades. Washington would finally get a baseball team in 2005 only because the Montreal Expos were strictly drawing friends and family for games in Quebec, and, more importantly, DC promised to build a new baseball-only facility. Not to mention the fact that if Williams spurned Baltimore *after* the state spent \$40 million renovating Memorial Stadium, he

the stadium debate was about to become a major political tug-of-war between Maryland's governor and two men trying to replace him.

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would have alienated quite a number of Maryland taxpayers who doubled as prospective fans of his Washington Orioles. As far as professional football at Memorial Stadium is concerned, the NFL might not have wanted to return an expansion team there, but that would have hardly mattered if the USFL Stars had remained a viable option. The Canadian Football League's Baltimore Stallions would prove in the mid-1990s that Memorial Stadium was still an attractive venue for football. Unfortunately, the USFL, which was doing brisk business as a spring football league, died an early death in 1986 when New Jersey Generals owner Donald Trump browbeat the USFL's other owners into switching to fall ball and suing the NFL for antitrust violations. The rebel league risked everything on a positive legal settlement and won only a pyrrhic victory: a ruling that the NFL was indeed behaving monopolistically and an award of \$1 in damages, which was automatically trebled to \$3. As is his propensity, Trump took a reasonably successful business enterprise and drove it to bankruptcy. See, for example, Vito Stellino, "Trump's Arrival Killed USFL's Concept of Spring Play, Which May Have Worked," *Baltimore Sun*, August 3, 1986; *Small Potatoes: Who Killed the USFL?*, directed by Mike Tollin (ESPN Films, 2009).

## Chapter 5: A Tale of Two Commissions, 1985-1986

Over a year after the Baltimore Colts left town and engendered a sense of urgency in the debate over the continuing usefulness of Memorial Stadium, the political advisory committees empaneled to study the situation were on the verge of offering their findings. Although they would spend most of 1985 and 1986 arguing over their respective choices for a new stadium location, there was much in common between the Baltimore Corporate Stadium Task Force and the Maryland Special Advisory Commission on Professional Sports and the Economy. Each commission was formed by a powerful Maryland politician (Mayor Schaefer and Governor Harry Hughes, respectively), each was led by an important state businessman (Hank Butta and Bernie Manekin), each had the support of a leading candidate for governor (Schaefer and Stephen Sachs), and, most importantly, each shared a belief in the need for public money to fund the construction of a new sports facility.

One might also say that the two commissions shared a lack of support from a large number of Marylanders who were unconvinced that the state and Baltimore's economic viability hinged on spending a large amount of their own money on a new sports facility. But as elite consensus coalesced around building a new stadium before the 1986 Democratic primaries, Marylanders could be forgiven if they felt that the decision to replace Memorial Stadium had already been made for them.

The stadium issue had indeed become caught up in Maryland Democratic Party politics and the upcoming primary election, which effectively determined the winner of the general election most years in this deeply Democratic state. In one corner was Attorney General Stephen Sachs, who had already attempted to paint the expected

frontrunner, William Donald Schaefer, as parochial by proclaiming his own preference for a stadium located somewhere off the interstate highway in the Baltimore-Washington corridor, where it would be accessible to more Marylanders than either Memorial Stadium or Camden Yards. Schaefer hesitated to throw his own hat in the race before he determined whether his ally Ben Cardin could improve the lagging numbers the house speaker held in the gubernatorial polls. Meanwhile, incumbent Harry Hughes bristled at the idea of giving up decision-making authority a day sooner than his term expired in January 1987 and waited impatiently for his Special Advisory Commission on Professional Sports and the Economy – led by Sachs supporter, real estate developer, and former Greater Baltimore Committee Chairman Bernard Manekin – to return with its own report.<sup>79</sup>

When word reached the public in the Summer of 1985 that the Manekin commission was likely to call for replacing Memorial Stadium, Schaefer was forced to move off his official position of non-committal, acknowledging that in his estimation the NFL would never return to Memorial Stadium and that he, too, would support a new stadium if the Orioles would agree to a long-term lease. If Maryland would simply build this new stadium, *News American* sports editor John Steadman promised his readers again and again, an NFL expansion team was all but guaranteed – just as soon as the league's legal battles with the Raiders and the USFL were over with. The NFL made no such assurances to Baltimore, but this did not stop Steadman from quoting local

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<sup>79</sup> Stephen H. Sachs, "A Pro Sports Strategy for Maryland," *Baltimore Sun*, September 6, 1984; Barry Rascovar, "Sachs vs. Schaefer: The AG Comes Out Slugging – Early," *Baltimore Sun*, January 31, 1985; Barry Rascovar, "Camden or Nothing," *Baltimore Sun*, August 29, 1985; Richard H. P. Sia, "Manekin Stamped His Style on State Sports Panel," *Baltimore Sun*, February 2, 1986;

businesspeople with league connections “whose names cannot be revealed” that all signs pointed to an NFL return. Just days before the Manekin commission would issue its recommendations, Mayor Schaefer finally shifted to the position that many expected he had privately held all along: he wanted the new stadium built at Camden Yards. “That’s where I wanted to put it back in 1972,” he reminded the public. “It’s the same site and it would have been built by now.”<sup>80</sup>

Schaefer was aided in his new pro-Camden Yards public position by the final report of Hank Butta’s Corporate Stadium Task Force, which came out later that year. Prepared by stadium construction firm Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, the report considered four potential sites for a ballpark: Memorial Stadium, a new location downtown (like Camden Yards or Port Covington), in the southwestern Baltimore suburbs (near Baltimore/Washington International Airport), or along the Baltimore-Washington corridor (at Maryland City, near Fort Meade). The report then rejected locations outside of the city for several reasons, including the drain of a potential Washington baseball team, the veto power many believed the NFL Redskins had over new teams in suburban Maryland, and the estimated \$14–18 million dollars downtown Baltimore would lose in economic activity without professional sports.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Susan Reimer, “Md. Sports Panel is Expected to Call for New Stadium,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 9, 1985; John Steadman, “New Stadium Might Attract NFL Franchise,” *Baltimore News American*, January 16, 1985; John Steadman, “All Signs Point to NFL Return,” *Baltimore News American*, August 23, 1985; John Steadman, “Stadium Site in the City Logical Pick,” *Baltimore News American*, December 5, 1985; Sandy Banisky and Luther Young, “Mayor Prefers Camden Yard Stadium Site,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 23, 1985.

<sup>81</sup> City of Baltimore, Corporate Stadium Task Force, *Baltimore Stadium Study*, by Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum, Inc., Ayers/Saint, Wilbur Smith and Associates, and Laventhol & Howard (Kansas City, MO, December 3, 1985).

Despite its favorable location inside Baltimore City, Memorial Stadium too was rejected by the Corporate Stadium Task Force report because it was not seen as a location that could attract an NFL team, either through expansion or relocation. Instead, the report detailed twenty-two potential new stadium sites inside the city, most of them clustered around the harbor. Camden Yards and Port Covington were the two locations selected for recommendation. The report also detailed plans for a new open-air multi-sport stadium shaped like an elongated octagon, which could be built at either the Camden Yards or Port Covington sites (although the included artistic renderings conveniently depicted it at Mayor Schaefer's preferred destination of Camden Yards).<sup>82</sup>

The report estimated the costs to build this new stadium at Camden Yards or Port Covington at \$85 and \$88 million, respectively, compared to the \$57 million it pegged as the cost to renovate Memorial Stadium and install new parking facilities. The subsequent highly-circulated cost estimates of a new stadium in the \$80 million range blatantly ignored the total cost the project including land acquisition and preparation, which the report estimated at \$157.4 million for Port Covington and \$169.8 million for Camden Yards (Memorial Stadium would, of course, require no additional spending to purchase land). Incensed at the outright dismissal of his district's Memorial Stadium, Councilman Gallagher enlisted a University of Maryland, Baltimore County public policy professor to examine the Corporate Stadium Task Force report. The professor concluded that the cost for the Camden Yards location, in particular, had been underestimated by at least \$18 million. A spokesman for the Butta task force dismissed Gallagher's critique as "nothing

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

but hot air” and his committee’s desire to preserve Memorial Stadium as showing “no recognition of modern baseball trends.”<sup>83</sup>

Mayor Schaefer may have made up his mind where a stadium should be built, but he could not take action without agreement from the state government, and Governor Harry Hughes had no inclination to defer the state’s executive decision-making authority to his potential successor, the mayor of Baltimore. Hughes hailed from Maryland’s patrician Eastern Shore region. He had ascended to the governor’s office in 1978 mainly due to his status as a clean-nosed outsider in an age of massive state corruption. Incumbent Governor Marvin Mandel had bequeathed his power onto Lieutenant Governor Francis Preston Blair Lee III in 1977 when the former was convicted on racketeering and fraud charges. Hughes then upset the heavily-favored Lee (scion of Maryland and Virginia’s noble Blair and Lee families) in the 1978 Democratic primaries. Lee blamed his election loss on the treachery of the last-minute endorsement of Hughes’ candidacy from the *Sunpapers* – a symbol of their political influence that the newspapers fully embraced.<sup>84</sup>

Unlike with Governor Mandel, a fellow Baltimore machine politician with whom Schaefer worked closely with to funnel state funds into Baltimore projects, the mayor did not have a good relationship with Harry Hughes. “Our interactions were not always

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<sup>83</sup> Corporate Stadium Task Force, *Baltimore Stadium Study*; Ron Davis, "Cost Estimate for Camden Yards Stadium Faulted," *Baltimore Sun*, January 4, 1986.

<sup>84</sup> Dale Russakoff, “Sundown Reflections of Harry Hughes,” *Washington Post*, September 10, 1986, accessed March 12, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1986/09/10/sundown-reflections-of-harry-hughes/0e68e3e7-e404-43b4-8783-a362e3ea62d6/>; John W. Frece, “Harry Hughes’ 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Reminds Attendees What the Country has Lost,” *Baltimore Sun*, December 1, 2016, accessed March 12, 2018, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-trump-hughes-20161201-story.html>; Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 257.

friendly; that is putting it mildly,” remembered the Eastern Shore reformer. So, in the Summer of 1985, even as Schaefer began advocating for a new stadium at Camden Yards, Hughes waited for his own stadium study from the Maryland Special Advisory Commission on Professional Sports and the Economy. Hughes hoped that the MSACPSE would provide him with actionable recommendations that he might undertake before his term expired and possibly even before the same 1986 Democratic primary where Schaefer hoped to be crowned the next governor-in-waiting and the term-limited Hughes hoped to fill a U.S. Senate seat vacated by the retiring liberal Republican, Charles Mathias. Stealing the thunder of Mayor Schaefer by providing a fast and decisive conclusion to Baltimore’s stadium uncertainty could only help improve the likability and electability of the emotionally-reserved Hughes.<sup>85</sup>

Governor Hughes’ choice to lead his special advisory council was commercial real estate developer Bernard Manekin. As chairman of the Manekin Corporation and a former chairman of the Greater Baltimore Committee, Bernie Manekin was the epitome of the “shadow government” bogeyman that Schaefer’s electoral rival, Stephen Sachs, had in mind when he decried the Baltimore mayor’s “penchant for turning the people’s business over to businessmen, for operating in private and for demolishing established procedure.” And indeed, Manekin was once a close friend of Schaefer’s and had helped lead the mayor’s corporate-funded social programs, but by persisting in leading Governor Hughes’ stadium commission (which Schaefer found unnecessary next to his own),

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<sup>85</sup> Dresser, “Schaefer Dies”; “Quotes: Remembering Schaefer,” *Baltimore Sun*, April 18, 2011, accessed February 23, 2018, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-schaefer-quotes-20110418-story.html>.



preferring a stadium location in the Baltimore suburbs, and supporting the candidacy of Attorney General Sachs, Manekin and Schaefer became estranged.<sup>86</sup>

Bernie Manekin and the Maryland SACPSE released their preliminary report August 29, 1985, with the final version due out in January, confirming that they were advising the General Assembly to construct a new baseball stadium with the capability of being converted to accommodate a football team should the NFL agree to return. They declined to suggest a specific construction site, though, and lobbied for the creation of a semi-public sports authority to make the final recommendation.<sup>87</sup>

The Manekin commission considered stadium sites at Camden Yards, Lansdowne in Baltimore County, and an area in Linthicum Heights, Anne Arundel County, near the airport. All three locations fulfilled the criteria of being within a thirty-minute drive of at least eighty percent of Maryland's population and were close enough to the city to provide the "image" of a Baltimore stadium to the outside world. The planned stadium consisted of three phases of construction: an initial U-shaped baseball stadium largely devoid of outfield seating; an enclosure of the baseball outfield into a full oval of retractable seating for football and the extension of the upper deck into a longer horseshoe; and finally, the complete encircling of the upper deck topped with a domed roof. The MSACPSE highlighted the fiscal responsibility of their plan – only the initial baseball stadium needed to be built for \$62 million, the second football phase (costing an

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<sup>86</sup> C. Fraser Smith, "Sachs Squares Off with Schaefer on Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, September 1, 1985; Richard H. P. Sia, "Manekin Stamped His Style on State Sports Panel," *Baltimore Sun*, February 2, 1986.

<sup>87</sup> Sandy Banisky, "New Stadium in Two Phases Is Urged: Report Suggests Baseball Facility That Can Grow," *Baltimore Sun*, August 27, 1985.

additional \$25 million) was conditional on the NFL returning to Baltimore, and the dome could be added later if and when the state felt it was necessary.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike the Butta task force, the Manekin commission did not even go through the motions of planning for the renovation of Memorial Stadium, assuming that at the very least the Orioles would be leaving the old stadium and leaving the decision of whether to reconfigure Memorial Stadium for football-only use or redevelop it entirely for a later date. The MSACPSE report stated that their multi-stage stadium could be built at any of the three sites studied, the primary difference from location to location was the cost of land acquisition and site development. Another issue the commission factored in were the number of jobs that would be displaced by a stadium (from hundreds at Camden Yards to near zero by the airport). The report attempted to offset these losses with estimated gains from building a stadium but was forced to conclude (in a stunning rebuke of the economic logic of pro-stadium ideology) that “for each site, alternative development would likely generate more jobs and income taxes than a stadium.” Final costs of stadium construction at each location were estimated at \$200.8 million for Camden Yards, \$173.9 million for Lansdowne, and \$167.9 million for the Anne Arundel County site. The final recommendation rated the Lansdowne site as most-preferred, followed by Anne Arundel County, and lastly Camden Yards. Nevertheless, an official site endorsement was not made but was left to the discretion of the state sports authority that the commission recommended be established.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Maryland Special Advisory Commission on Professional Sports and the Economy, *New Stadium Site Evaluation*, by HNTB and Touche Ross (Kansas City, MO, January 28, 1986).

<sup>89</sup> Maryland SACPSE, *New Stadium Site Evaluation*; Richard H. P. Sia, "State Sports Panel Will Not Endorse 1 Site for Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, January 15, 1986.

The decision by the Manekin commission not to officially endorse a stadium site (though Manekin himself clearly preferred Landsdowne) left the momentum with Schaefer, who very much did have a stadium site in mind. The *Sun* applauded the mayor for his decision to support replacement of Memorial Stadium and announced its own advocacy of the Camden Yards site, “because it would stimulate the dynamic redevelopment of downtown Baltimore as a sports and entertainment mecca.” The newspaper also reiterated that building a new stadium was imperative to the economic health and image of the entire state; “it would be far more than a *sports* center.” Sports editor Bob Maisel concurred, reminding people that, like Schaefer, he too had endorsed a domed multi-use stadium ten years ago, “and so did most others who had been around this town long enough to know its needs through the good times and the bad.” Political columnist Barry Roscovar believed he already knew where the General Assembly would decide to build a stadium. “Forget about consultants’ studies and cost estimates and financing plans,” he wrote. A stadium would be built at Camden Yards for the simple reason that William Donald Schaefer wanted it built there. Schaefer was now the dominant force in all of Maryland politics, Roscovar added, and others feared to cross him. Even should Sachs prevail in the forthcoming contest, he would find it hard to get a Schaeferite general assembly to approve his preferred concept of a suburban sports complex, like the one at the New Jersey Meadowlands.<sup>90</sup>

For his part, Attorney General Sachs took credit for “winning” the first stadium fight against Schaefer by pushing the mayor from “no” to “maybe” to “yes” on the

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<sup>90</sup> "Schaefer and the Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, August 10, 1985; Bob Maisel, "It's Now Time to Move Ahead on New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, August 10, 1985; Barry Roscovar, "Camden or Nothing," *Baltimore Sun*, August 29, 1985.

question of replacing Memorial Stadium. Sachs failed to realize that he was probably doing Schaefer a favor by allowing the mayor to appear to be forced to fight for a new publicly funded stadium in the city – although Schaefer perhaps let his mask down a bit when he reminded the public that he had supported a stadium at Camden Yards before he opposed one. MSACPSE head Bernie Manekin gave his preferred candidate Sachs a location to advocate against Schaefer’s Camden Yards when he announced that although the commission was studying several sites, its members favored one in Lansdowne, in southwest Baltimore County, just across the city line. Mayor Schaefer did little to shed his image of stubbornness and Baltimore parochialism when he declared that a stadium site “even twenty-five feet down the road” from the city was unacceptable.<sup>91</sup>

Public responses to the *Sun*’s coverage again demonstrated a disconnect between popular sentiment and the growing “consensus” between the *Sun*’s editorial office, city hall, and Annapolis. Some of the paper’s readers were upset at how the *Sun* was choosing to cover the stadium issue. “[T]o read your account, it has been decided to build a new sports stadium somewhere within the state in the near future,” wrote T. Herbert Dimmock of Baltimore, when in fact, he contested, stadium boosting was just the talk of political office-cravers with no other ideas to run on. If the state was so flush with cash as to be able to construct a new stadium, Kelley Brohawn, also a resident of Baltimore questioned, why did it not just buy the Orioles and an NFL team and save itself the hassle of negotiating with troublesome owners? Lewis M. Bish Jr. of Grensboro on the Eastern

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<sup>91</sup> C. Fraser Smith, "Sachs Squares Off with Schaefer on Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, September 1, 1985; Sandy Banisky, "Lansdowne Site Favored for Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, October 3, 1985; Sandy Banisky and C. Fraser Smith, "Stadium Site Again Spurs a Schaefer-Sachs Clash," *Baltimore Sun*, August 28, 1985.

Shore accused Mayor Schaefer of living inside the “Great Wall of Baltimore” and demanded that voters have an opportunity to weigh-in on the stadium question at the next general election. Meanwhile, the *Sun* reported that nobody on the Manekin commission had bothered to tell the people of Lansdowne they were being considered as the stadium site, and two-thirds of the community members who showed up at a hastily arranged meeting at Lansdowne Elementary expressed opposition to the idea.<sup>92</sup>

Although the stadium issue was devolving into a political battle between the rival Schaefer and Hughes/Sachs camps, there was considerable cause for optimism both for Orioles owner Edward Bennett Williams and advocates of Rouse-like government-funded private development projects. Excepting a Republican victory (the longest of longshot election upsets), the next governor of Maryland, whoever he might be, was already wedded to a businessman-developed plan for a new publically-funded ballpark. To the disservice of Marylanders, the gubernatorial election of 1986 would hinge partially not on *whether* a new stadium should be built but *where* it should be located.

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<sup>92</sup> T. Herbert Dimmock, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, September 15, 1985; Kelley Brohawn, Sports Letters, *Baltimore Sun*, October 6, 1985; Lewis M. Bish, Jr., Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, October 23, 1985; Scott Shane, "Lansdowne Holds Debate on Pros, Cons of Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, October 9, 1985.

## Chapter 6: The Maryland Stadium Authority, 1986

If 1985 was the year Baltimore's pro-growth elite decided Maryland's taxpayers would pay for a new sports stadium, 1986 would be the year they decided where to put it. Each of the two leading candidates for governor that year had a stadium study report to point to that supported their respective position on stadium location. It would fall to the voters to choose a stadium location through proxy by voting for governor. This was a rare and rather ironic opportunity for public input into the stadium debate, considering the general public had yet to reach the same consensus as the state's elite on the need to replace Memorial Stadium. Meanwhile, social programs and public education would continue to get stuck with the chaff as Maryland's state and federal representatives prioritized public spending on business interests and redevelopment projects.

With a contentious Democratic primary election approaching in September, even outgoing Governor Harry Hughes could not escape the political football (or baseball?) that the stadium issue had become for the two leading candidates to replace him. When he went to the General Assembly to ask for passage of a resolution establishing the sports authority recommended by Bernie Manekin and the governor's sports commission, Speaker Ben Cardin and other pro-Schaefer legislative leaders reduced both Hughes' proposed power and the ability of the authority to begin work on the project in 1986 – clearly hoping thereby to delay important executive decision-making until their ally the mayor of Baltimore could assume the governor's office.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Jack Krost, "Sports Authority Hits a Snag," *Baltimore News American*, January 22, 1986; John W. Frece and Richard H. P. Sia, "Legislators Seek to Curb Sports Panel's Authority," *Baltimore Sun*, January 22, 1986; Richard H. P. Sia, "Cardin Balks at Use of Lottery Solely for a New Sports Panel," *Baltimore Sun*, January 23, 1986.

The *Sun* editorial board condoned the slowing of Hughes' stadium authority legislation by the General Assembly despite the newspaper's eagerness for a new stadium to be built, citing the "unaccountability" the proposed panel would have from the oversight of the state legislature. In curbing its enthusiasm for a quick resolution to the stadium problem during Governor Hughes' last year in office, the *Sun* undoubtedly did a favor for William Donald Schaefer, perhaps foreshadowing the endorsement the newspaper would bestow upon the Baltimore mayor's candidacy later in the summer. Opponents of the stadium authority Hughes supported, including Speaker Cardin, echoed the *Sun*'s claims that the panel would be too unaccountable and added complaints about the lottery the governor had proposed as the authority's funding mechanism. "It's greed at the expense of poor people," complained Baltimore City Delegate the Rev. Wendell H. Phillips about lotteries. "If there's a legitimate need [for a stadium], we ought to pay for it." While sports authority opponents were factually (and perhaps morally) correct about the adverse social effects of lottery games, much of their opposition rings hollow in retrospect. Schaefer's legislative allies would later support lottery games to fund the Camden Yards stadiums for the same reason that Hughes proposed them in 1986 – lotteries are much more palatable to voters as a funding mechanism than a tax increase.<sup>94</sup>

As the stadium authority legislation stalled in the General Assembly, gubernatorial candidates Schaefer and Sachs each took turns attacking the stadium commission that the other preferred. Each commission was accused of starting its study with a conclusion in mind and writing its report in such a way as to validate its particular

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<sup>94</sup> "Stadium Politics," *Baltimore Sun*, January 26, 1986; John W. Frece, "Md. Lotteries: Revenue Source of Last Resort," *Baltimore Sun*, January 20, 1986.

argument. “There are so many errors in that report,” said Schaefer of Bernie Manekin’s stadium study, which Attorney General Sachs and Governor Hughes supported. “It’s an atrocious report.” Meanwhile, Sachs decried Hank Butta’s Corporate Stadium Task Force as representative of a process typical of Schaefer-style governance, done by private interests outside of the public eye. The attorney general declared that the report’s recommendation of a stadium at Camden Yards was evidence of the mayor’s Baltimore parochialism and he even suggested that Schaefer’s stubborn intransience in negotiations was to blame for losing the Colts. The mayor fired back with a report his city planning department “volunteered” to him that claimed there were serious errors in the data used in the Manekin commission’s report, which had given Lansdowne an unfair advantage.<sup>95</sup>

Even as Maryland’s leading politicians squared-off over their preferred plans for replacing Memorial Stadium, it remained unclear whether this was actually an action the public supported, not to mention whether such a replacement was necessary to begin with. Arthur T. Johnson, a political science professor at UMBC and a member of City Councilman Gallagher’s Stadium Modernization Committee, wrote an article in the *Sun* questioning the validity of the arguments calling for a new stadium. Johnson believed the public was only being presented with two options – build a new stadium at Camden Yards or build a new stadium at Lansdowne – when in fact there were two other choices available: do nothing or renovate Memorial Stadium. Johnson dismissed the do nothing option but advocated the state renovate the existing sports facility rather than build a new one, believing that fears of an Orioles relocation as well as the promise of an NFL return

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<sup>95</sup> C. Fraser Smith, "Stadium Issue Returns to Political Spotlight," *Baltimore Sun*, January 30, 1986; Katie Gunter, "County Stadium Proposal Held Flawed, Biased against City Site," *Baltimore Sun*, March 5, 1986.



were both overstated. Johnson argued that the millions of dollars in new economic activity the Butta report claimed a Camden Yards stadium would create would actually be existing entertainment dollars transferred from other locations. He also dismissed the intangible big league image or “civic pride” arguments for new stadium construction, arguing that citizens had the right to weigh-in and ask “at what cost?”<sup>96</sup>

Dr. Johnson’s critical review of the stadium debate struck a chord with several *Sun* readers who took the time to express their agreement with the professor and his assessment of the situation. Dan Jerrems of Baltimore questioned the propriety of spending public money on “a luxurious game palace” instead of curbing homelessness, hunger, and underfunded schools, especially given the likelihood that Maryland would lose a lot of federal money under President Reagan’s proposed budget. Sarah Schuck, also from the city, pointed out that Memorial Stadium already had all of the requirements Edward Bennett Williams was demanding in a new stadium: it was open-air, it seated over fifty thousand, and it had natural grass turf. She insisted that *of course* the Orioles owner wanted a new stadium for free, she wanted a brand-new Rolls-Royce paid for by the taxpayers, but that did not mean she should get one. New stadiums, to her thinking, were overrated in their importance. Washington’s RFK Stadium was newer than Memorial Stadium, she pointed out, but that city still did not have a baseball club. Baltimore resident Leon K. Shanack called for a public referendum on the necessity of a new stadium before any more time and money was wasted on the project.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Arthur T. Johnson, "The Stadium Debate," *Baltimore Sun*, February 8, 1986.

<sup>97</sup> Dan Jerrems, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, February 23, 1986; Sarah Schuck, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, March 4, 1986; Leon K. Shanack, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, February 23, 1986.

A skeptical general public was questioning the need to replace Memorial Stadium, but it was unclear if anyone in Annapolis was listening. With the end of the annual legislative session approaching in early April 1986, Mayor Schaefer's allies in the state Senate agreed to a committee version of Governor Hughes' stadium authority legislation that solved some of their concerns with how independent the authority would be from the rest of the government without killing the organization entirely and derailing the momentum for a new stadium. Even these checks on the power of a sports authority and the governor to whom it answered were insufficient for outright opponents of new stadium construction in the General Assembly, who feared that creating such an organization would presuppose that a new stadium would be built for hundreds of millions of dollars. The Senate had better quit "playing games" grumbled Mayor Schaefer, as "time is of the essence" for a new stadium. "This is not the year to debate the pros and cons of a new stadium," the *Sun* editorialized. The authority should be created with all haste and the General Assembly could then decide in 1987 whether to allocate funds for a new stadium or not. Nevertheless, by threatening a filibuster in the closing days of the legislative session stadium opponents were able to secure several concessions from pro-stadium forces on the powers of the proposed authority. Governor Hughes had obtained the Maryland Stadium Authority that he had asked for, but the question remained how much he could accomplish with it before his time in office expired.<sup>98</sup>

The Maryland General Assembly had managed to create Governor Hughes' stadium authority before the clock ran out on the 1986 legislative session, but the same

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<sup>98</sup> Ann LoLordo, "Sports Authority Bill Approved by Senate after Amendments," *Baltimore Sun*, April 3, 1986; "Why a Stadium Authority?," *Baltimore Sun*, April 3, 1986; C. Fraser Smith, "Senate Filibuster Averted on Sports Authority Bill," *Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 1986.

could not be said for an attempt to revitalize the state's schools, including those deteriorating from neglect inside Baltimore. Speaker of the House of Delegates Ben Cardin brought legislation to the floor that would have provided the public schools with \$247 million in additional funding over six years, but it was not enacted. The *Sun* postulated that the General Assembly was worn-out from dealing with the savings and loan crisis and the stadium authority bill. If true, this put the priorities of Maryland's elite in stark relief. Politicians and the newspapers had been willing to expend political capital and column inches salvaging banks and sating the desires of sports owners, but not to assist the state's schoolchildren. Stephen Sachs planned to use the "crisis in public education" as a campaign issue with which to bludgeon William Donald Schaefer. The attorney general wanted new taxes to fund the schools, while the mayor claimed that there was plenty of money in Annapolis for the schools already, better management was all that was needed.<sup>99</sup>

Meanwhile, the priorities of Maryland's pro-growth elite stretched all the way to Washington, where President Reagan's new tax bill would indeed lesson the amount of federal money available to state programs and projects. This did not, however, prevent Maryland's bipartisan Senate team of Paul Sarbanes and Charles Mathias from obtaining specific exemptions in the legislation for tax-exempt bonds for a new Baltimore sports stadium, as well as tax carve-outs for Baltimore Gas and Electric and two Rouse Company projects, the Gallery at Harborplace and the Owings Mills Mall. President Reagan, it seemed, was welcome to cut social spending in order to lower taxes on the

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<sup>99</sup> C. Fraser Smith, "The Legacy of the General Assembly: Host of Crises Shut Out Bill for Education," *Baltimore Sun*, April 13, 1986.

wealthy and corporations, but Maryland's senators would fight to make sure that the state's private interests still got their share of federal funds.<sup>100</sup>

In early September 1986 with the Democratic primary election only days away, Governor Hughes announced the members he was appointing to the Maryland Stadium Authority. The authority would be chaired by Herbert Belgrad, a Baltimore lawyer, who would be joined by Raymond "Chip" Mason, president of Legg Mason, Joshua Smith, president of the MAXIMA Corporation, John McDonough, a lawyer who represented the Capitol Centre arena in Largo, and Janice Piccinini, the former president of the Maryland State Teachers Association.<sup>101</sup>

Hughes' decision infuriated William Donald Schaefer to no end, primarily because the governor had not consulted Schaefer on his picks. The Baltimore mayor was going to be elected governor, everybody knew that, Schaefer fumed, and Hughes "didn't even ask me. He didn't tell me anything about what he was doing." Schaefer further speculated that Hughes had probably told Attorney General Sachs who the MSA members would be ahead of time. The governor's press secretary pointed out that Hughes had made his picks in consultation with House Speaker Ben Cardin and Senate President Mickey Steinberg, the latter of whom was Schaefer's running mate, so if the mayor should be upset with anyone, it ought to be his legislative allies. Schaefer was actually largely satisfied with the businessman-heavy composition of the stadium authority. The only member he really objected to was Piccinini, Sachs' education policy advisor, who

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<sup>100</sup> Stephen E. Nordlinger, "Senate Tax Bill Includes Break for Area Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, June 11, 1986.

<sup>101</sup> Richard H. P. Sia, "Hughes Appoints Belgrad, 4 Others to Stadium Panel," *Baltimore Sun*, September 7, 1986.

had secured the state teachers union's endorsement of the attorney general's candidacy. Whether his anger was warranted or not, Schaefer would have to wait only a few days to get his revenge on Hughes, Sachs, and the hated teachers alike.<sup>102</sup>

On September 9, 1986, William Donald Schaefer defeated Stephen Sachs in the Democratic primary by better than a 3:2 margin, winning Baltimore City and every Maryland county apart from Montgomery and Prince George's near the District of Columbia. Schaefer successfully painted the populist Sachs as antibusiness and attacked the attorney general's proposal for a one percent increase in the state sales tax to support education. Sachs, who had consistently polled behind Schaefer except in the Washington suburbs since the Baltimore mayor entered the race, fumed that the *Sunpapers* had worked to sabotage him. Schaefer had indeed received an endorsement from the *Sun's* editors, who championed the mayor's downtown renaissance, touted his economic and business acumen, and disparaged Sachs' regulatory zeal and perceived "social engineering." The Sachs campaign found it suspicious that his running mate, Parren Mitchell, a former congressman and civil rights pioneer, did not have his name printed in polls conducted by the newspaper – implying that Sachs was not receiving all the support he might have from Baltimore's black population. Blair Lee IV, manager of the Sachs campaign, grumbled that the *Sunpapers* had undercut Sachs just like they had his father.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> John W. Frece, "Schaefer Criticizes Governor: Says He Wasn't Asked about Picking Members of Stadium Authority," *Baltimore Sun*, September 8, 1986.

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 256-258; "Schaefer as Governor," *Baltimore Sun*, August 24, 1986. Earlier in his life, Parren Mitchell was instrumental in desegregating the University of Maryland and was one of the first black students to attend the College Park campus.

As if the primary election could not get any better for Mayor Schaefer, Harry Hughes failed in his bid to fill Maryland's vacant senate seat, losing to Baltimore Congresswoman Barbara Mikulski. November's general election was nothing but a formality for most of Maryland's Democrats and Mayor Schaefer was one of them, he crushed his hapless Republican opponent in the gubernatorial election with a record 82 percent of the vote. There was no longer any doubt where a new stadium would be built. "The principle of checks and balances has been suspended in state government," declared *Sun* political columnist Daniel Berger. "William Donald Schaefer won election as governor by so much, he spread his coattails so wide, and his reputation for demolishing obstructions is so awesome that he will move on Annapolis with more initial power than any governor in history save Douglas MacArthur in Tokyo." It would be the new governor, not any authority or report, who would determine where the General Assembly directed money for a stadium. "If Mr. Schaefer wishes to build a stadium in Idaho," mused Berger, "they will appropriate it."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 261-262; Daniel Berger, "On Top," *Baltimore Sun*, November 8, 1986.

## Chapter 7: One New Stadium . . . or Two?, 1986-1987

The election of William Donald Schaefer as Maryland's next governor in November 1986 brought his trademark frantic sense of urgency to resolving the stadium debate. Schaefer wanted the General Assembly to enact legislation authorizing the construction of a new ballpark at Camden Yards as soon as the upcoming 1987 legislative session. The incoming governor would be aided in this endeavor by the recently empaneled Maryland Stadium Authority, which quickly issued its first reports affirming Schaefer's favored Camden Yards stadium site and recommended the construction of two separate ballparks, one each for the Orioles and an as-yet-nonexistent football team. With the decisive legislative session underway, Baltimore's pro-growth elite threw their weight behind the twin-stadium plan, but continued resistance to public stadium funding among Marylanders in general left its support by the legislature uncertain.

Governor-elect Schaefer may have stormed about the composition of the Maryland Stadium Authority when Harry Hughes staffed the organization in September (and indeed, the vindictive Schaefer would quickly act to remove Janice Piccinini of the state teachers' union from the authority), but he could hardly be unhappy with the speed or results of their work. Less than a month after Schaefer's election, the MSA returned with their first report, vindicating the incoming governor by recommending Camden Yards as the location for stadium construction. Since the beginning of the stadium debate, all the way back to the 1970s, proponents of a new sports facility had envisioned something like Memorial Stadium that could be configured to host both baseball and

football games, with their dissimilar playing surfaces. It came as a shock then when the MSA recommended not one new stadium at Camden Yards, but two.<sup>105</sup>

The Maryland Stadium Authority's report began with a systematic review of Baltimore's three recent stadium studies and found something to fault with all of them. Lansdowne, the site rated highest by the Manekin commission created by Governor Hughes, was criticized for its lack of existing infrastructure and the high cost of building roads and interchanges to service stadium traffic there. A renovated Memorial Stadium, the solution favored by Councilman Gallagher's Stadium Modernization Committee, was dismissed primarily because neither Edward Bennett Williams nor the NFL wanted to play there anymore. The Stadium Authority acknowledged it was possible to renovate Memorial Stadium satisfactorily to modern standards, particularly as a football-only facility, but that this was not recommended because no NFL team would ever return there.<sup>106</sup>

The MSA agreed with Governor-elect Schaefer and Hank Butta's Corporate Stadium Task Force that Camden Yards was the best location for a stadium, but they dismissed its single multi-use stadium concept as "acceptable, but not optimal." The report instead endorsed a plan to build one new stadium for the Orioles and another if the NFL returned to the city. The Stadium Authority worried that building a multi-use stadium would be a waste if Baltimore never recovered an NFL franchise, and they also

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<sup>105</sup> Richard H. P. Sia, "Schaefer Forcing Piccinini to Leave Stadium Authority," *Baltimore Sun*, February 7, 1987; Sandy Banisky, "Two Stadiums Urged for Camden Yards," *Baltimore Sun*, December 5, 1986.

<sup>106</sup> Maryland Stadium Authority, *Report on Phase 1: Evaluation of Stadium Site and Design Alternatives*, by Peat Marwick, URS Corporation, and American Sports Associates ([December 4], 1986).



voiced such compelling arguments against shared sports facilities as: team owners do not always get along, “[b]aseball teams object to the grass being marked with a football gridiron,” and “[f]ootball teams don’t like having to play . . . on infield dirt.” Strangely absent in this analysis was what the ticket-buying public thought of Baltimore’s present stadium situation, but clearly taxpayers needed to replace Memorial Stadium posthaste with two new sports facilities, lest the city endure any longer the horror of baseball players having to look at football yard lines or football players ruining their clean pants with baseball dirt.<sup>107</sup>

The main strength of the Camden Yards site in the eyes of the Stadium Authority, as opposed to other locations in the city, was the existence of nearby parking facilities in the redeveloped Inner Harbor area. Not as many parking spaces needed to be installed on site as they might otherwise need to be. Yet, this seemed to be an implicit acknowledgement that sports would largely borrow from Baltimore’s existing entertainment-tourism figures, rather than drawing attendees from a separate pool. In theory, if sports fans and Inner Harbor tourists were wholly or largely separate groups, then those parking facilities would not be useful to the Camden stadiums, because they would already be full of Inner Harbor tourists.<sup>108</sup>

Having dropped the surprise recommendation of two new stadiums onto the general public, the Stadium Authority declined to estimate how much the project would cost. The MSA promised a follow-up report in February with the full tabulations. Authority head Herbert Belgrad predicted a cost of \$100 million for the stadiums, plus

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

another \$75 million for land acquisition and admitted that it was talks with baseball and football executives more than anything else that convinced the MSA that “no amount of renovation or modernization could ever make Memorial Stadium acceptable to major sports teams as a multi-use stadium.” The *Sun* immediately endorsed the twin-stadiums concept and asked the General Assembly to act on it in 1987. Hank Butta, of Schaefer’s Corporate Stadium Task Force, admitted that his group had looked into the separate stadium concept as well and had found it financially unfeasible. Now, however, Butta loved the idea.<sup>109</sup>

Meanwhile, the *Sun* investigated the situation in Kansas City, the only other location at the time with a twin-stadium complex, which had commenced under similar circumstances to Baltimore, after the relocation of the Athletics baseball team to California. Now the football Chiefs and baseball Royals occupied their own individual stadiums in the middle of a shared parking lot, but “[t]he facilities are underutilized,” admitted David Smith, managing director of Arrowhead Stadium. “If you look at a facility like a profit center, you’d never build it.” The architect of Kansas City’s complex also had a sobering warning for Marylanders. “Those predicting you can build two [stadiums] for \$100 million are either ill-informed or deceptive,” he concluded.<sup>110</sup>

Confirmation that Governor-elect Schafer’s longstanding dream of building a new stadium (now stadiums) at Camden Yards was coming closer to fruition engendered intense opposition from neighborhood groups near the proposed site. A spokesperson for

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<sup>109</sup> Banisky, "Two Stadiums Urged for Camden Yards"; "Schaefer's Kind of Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, December 5, 1986; Sandy Banisky, "State Panel Expected to Recommend Camden Yards as New Stadium Site," *Baltimore Sun*, December 4, 1986.

<sup>110</sup> Bill Glauber, "Officials Doubt Their Feat Could Be Repeated Now," *Baltimore Sun*, December 16, 1986.

the Ridgely's Delight neighborhood complained that residents would soon have "nothing but Russell Street between our houses and this stadium." Diggs-Johnson Junior High School sat in the middle of what is now the Orioles' parking lot and putting the school in the crosshairs of demolition crews enraged the Southwest Community Council, which had won a fight with the city just two years prior to keep it open. The council had even received written assurance that Diggs-Johnson would stay open through at least 1990. The incoming governor also generated political backlash when he supported restoring some of the Stadium Authority's powers that his legislative allies had stripped from the organization when Governor Hughes proposed it, including the power to condemn, to raise money through lotteries, to act without review from the General Assembly or the Board of Public Works, and to reduce the public comment period. "Effectively what they're doing is ramrodding the legislature and taking away the ability of the legislature to say no," complained Baltimore County Senator John Coolahan. MSA Chairman Belgrad countered that the powers were "essential" to convince the Orioles and the NFL that the Stadium Authority could deliver stadiums without delay.<sup>111</sup>

The public at large was similarly discomfited by the haste with which the MSA and Governor-elect Schafer seemed to be rushing to conclude the stadium debate – as soon as the imminent legislative session. Paul R. Schlitz, Jr. of Western Run was upset that the city was talking about building stadiums while simultaneously closing five branches of the Enoch Pratt Free Library. He argued that the "cult of sport" could not exist without a literate population intelligent enough to understand statistical concepts

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<sup>111</sup> Banisky, "State Panel Expected to Recommend Camden Yards"; Richard H. P. Sia, "Bid to Push Stadium Expected: Schaefer Plans Draw Legislative Hostility," *Baltimore Sun*, December 12, 1986.

and a “reduction in branch libraries could only further serve to dwindle our median mentality to that of an average Yankee baseball fan.” Baltimore resident William J. Harris specifically blamed Edward Bennett Williams for his “delusions of grandeur” that he deserved a taxpayer-funded luxury box from which to watch his Orioles and “look down in a royal and condescending fashion” on his subjects, the citizens of Maryland. Harris also attacked the *Sunpapers* for aiding Williams in his stadium quest and similarly hoped fellow Baltimoreans did not miss the libraries when they realized they had been closed to build a ballpark instead.<sup>112</sup>

William D. Gallagher of Glencoe was astounded that politicians would spend hundreds of millions of dollars on private enterprise, calling it “a dereliction of fiduciary responsibility,” especially as the state was losing jobs at Esskay Meats, the Goodyear tire plant in Cumberland, and Western Electric. He suggested if the legislature was so desperate to spend this amount of money, it should go to public education, which would be “returned many times over by the improved education of our future generations.” Even *Sun* sports writer Mike Littwin allowed that the government needed to determine *exactly* what the cost would be to secure an NFL team and keep the Orioles in town before it spent hundreds of millions of dollars on stadiums that might never be used. The public also deserved to have the opportunity to decide whether or not the cost was acceptable to them.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Paul R. Schlitz, Jr., Letters to the Editor, December 12, 1986; William J. Harris, Sports Letters, *Baltimore Sun*, December 14, 1986.

<sup>113</sup> William D. Gallagher, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, December 17, 1986; Mike Littwin, "Stadium Queries Need Answers, and Very Quickly," *Baltimore Sun*, December 14, 1986.

The Stadium Authority provided its answer to the question of cost in February 1987 when it produced phase two of its initial stadium study. The MSA report estimated the total cost of the twin-stadium complex to be \$201 million, including the stadiums themselves as well as the cost of land acquisition and preparation. As if to obfuscate the fact that the state would be the one laying out the money for the stadiums, the report placed a particular emphasis on evaluating “alternative financing mechanisms.” Primarily, the Stadium Authority could issue bonds to finance the stadium project, but only so much of this could be done tax-free due to the Reagan tax reform (although it would still receive some federal assistance). The State of Maryland could lower interest rates on these bond sales, but only by backing the bonds with its full faith and credit, or a less-binding “moral obligation” (and thereby putting taxpayers on the hook). There were other complicated financial mechanisms that could be implemented, but at the end of the day, to service the debt on bond sales, the state must either raise taxes, issue a lottery, or pray for private investment. Excepting a sudden change of heart from Edward Bennett Williams or a white-knight billionaire with civic goodwill to spare, Maryland’s citizens would be footing the bill for the stadiums, one way or another.<sup>114</sup>

Despite his extensive political capital and apparent overwhelming mandate from the voters, when Governor Schaefer took up his office in January 1987 he encountered great difficulty in getting the General Assembly to quickly enact legislation authorizing the Stadium Authority’s \$201 million plan. Part of the problem came from no one

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<sup>114</sup> Maryland Stadium Authority, *Report on Phase 2: Vol. 1, Evaluation of Stadium Design Concepts and Cost Estimates, Review of Alternative Financing Mechanisms, and Recommendation of Design Concept and Financing Package*, by Peat Marwick, American Sports Associates, and URS Corporation (February 2, 1987).

wanting to have to be responsible for coming up with the funding mechanism for the stadiums, both the MSA and the legislature deferred to Schaefer to take the lead. The governor was told that one year of a one percent sales tax increase could fully fund the project, but perhaps even Schaefer was not so bald-faced in his pro-growth beliefs as to take Stephen Sachs' scheme for funding public education and repurpose it for stadium construction. Instead, Schaefer proposed increased local taxes on alcohol and restaurants, as well as two new lottery games, but legislators needed to confront the continuing lack of public support for the stadium project before they could lend it their votes.<sup>115</sup>

A poll conducted by the *Evening Sun* found that 53.7 percent of respondents were against using any public money to construct new stadiums, with only 40.7 percent in favor. Furthermore, 74.1 percent said they favored a single sports facility compared to the 18.5 percent who agreed with the Sports Authority's recommendation for two new stadiums. Schaefer claimed that people who responded negatively to the poll did not understand the economic boon the stadiums would be to the entire region, and, when pressed, dismissed the poll results as entirely the product of people who "like museums . . . [or] like the ballet." Sports are needed "in order to be a first-class state," argued the governor, whether people personally liked them or not.<sup>116</sup>

Sports writer John Steadman, now with the *Evening Sun* after the *News American's* demise, returned from a closed-door audience with Schaefer echoing the

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<sup>115</sup> Richard H. P. Sia, "Panel Ducks Funding for 2 Stadiums: Tax-Boost Decision Left up to Schaefer," *Baltimore Sun*, February 4, 1987; Richard H. P. Sia, "Schaefer Asks Stadium Taxes and Lotteries: Plan Would Put Burden on Baltimore Area," *Baltimore Sun*, February 6, 1987.

<sup>116</sup> Michael J. Himowitz, "Solid Majority of Marylanders Against Any Use of Public Money," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, February 12, 1987; Thomas W. Waldron, "Public Debate Still Goes On," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, February 12, 1987.

governor's assertion that building new stadiums would be as important to Maryland workers as state efforts to save a Goodyear tire plant in Cumberland or to renovate the Toyota terminal at the Port of Baltimore. Steadman denied an accusation from a television reporter that Schaefer was recruiting journalists to "shill" for the new stadiums – probably truthfully considering Steadman's sterling personal record of stadium boosterism. For their part, the *Evening Sun's* editors dismissed their own poll results, arguing that the "real issue" was not public funding but whether new stadiums were needed to keep the Orioles and obtain a new NFL franchise and agreeing with the governor that the answer was yes. Still, Baltimore's newspapers, Governor Schaefer, and the rest of the city's pro-growth elite might be in agreement that new stadiums were needed, but whether they could convince the state legislature, much less the public at large, remained to be seen.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> John Steadman, "Schaefer Says He's Encouraged by Events Concerning Stadium," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, February 13, 1987; "The Stadium Poll," *Baltimore Evening Sun*, February 13, 1987.

## Chapter 8: Convincing the Legislature, 1987

William Donald Schaefer had come to the Governor's Mansion in Annapolis with a deserved reputation as a builder in Baltimore and a seemingly indomitable mandate to construct a new ballpark at Camden Yards. Consistent polling, however, indicated that Maryland's voters did not necessarily equate their support for Schaefer with support for his stadium designs. Opposition to the Camden Yards stadium complex intensified in early 1987 once the messy details of building and funding stadiums in downtown Baltimore became concrete through legislation up for debate in the General Assembly. At first it appeared that public resistance to the stadiums would sour Maryland's legislators against the project, but by the end of the legislative session Governor Schaefer achieved the great victory he and the rest of the local pro-growth elite had long desired. Camden Yards would have its new stadiums.

As February turned to March, stadium proponents scrambled to win over reluctant legislators as the stadium legislation seemed headed for defeat, with "stiff opposition" in the General Assembly over the proposed tax increases. Governor Schaefer abruptly removed the taxes from the financing part of the plan, claiming that new lotteries alone would cover the cost of financing a bond sale and that the scratch-offs would be marketed to affluent sports fans, and not the poor who typically make up the overwhelming majority of lottery participants.<sup>118</sup>

The governor also tried to get Orioles owner Edward Bennett Williams to testify before the legislature about the need for a new stadium. This was a delicate dance for the

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<sup>118</sup> John W. Frece, "Schaefer Insists Williams Asked for a New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, February 20, 1987; Richard H. P. Sia, "On Using Lottery Revenue for Stadium, Steinberg Has Done an About-Face," *Baltimore Sun*, March 5, 1987.



two men. Crucial to Schaefer's argument for replacing Memorial Stadium was that without one, Williams would move the Orioles to Washington, but Williams, who viewed himself as every bit the gentleman that Bob Irsay was not, had never done more than obliquely hint that he might move his baseball team and had never publically asked for a new stadium. Williams desperately wanted to see the Camden Yards project succeed, but it was absolutely crucial for Governor Schaefer that the Orioles owner commit the personal indignity of coming to Annapolis and begging for a stadium. "Baltimore has *not* been a better place to live since the Colts left town," insisted *Sun* political columnist Barry Rascovar. "The team's departure has had a detrimental effect on the quality of life here and has hurt area businesses. Losing the Orioles would be a shattering psychological blow to this city and would almost certainly relegate Baltimore to second-class status in the eyes of much of the country."<sup>119</sup>

With the success of the Camden Yards legislation truly in dire straits, Governor Schaefer finally convinced Edward Bennett Williams in March to fly up from spring training in Florida and testify before the state legislature. Williams remained too proud to beg for a new stadium, but he struck a moral compromise, claiming that while he personally was committed to Baltimore, the Orioles could not remain profitable at Memorial Stadium and whoever bought the team next (Williams was dying of cancer) would not want to remain there. Having effectively deflected blame for a relocation threat onto his successor, Williams moved to a bit of courtroom theatrics honed from his many years of practicing law. The Orioles owner brandished a copy of *Sports Illustrated* that he

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<sup>119</sup> Frece, "Schaefer Insists Williams Asked for Stadium"; Barry Rascovar, "Myths That Could Block a New Stadium," *Baltimore Sun*, March 8, 1987.

had his driver pick up at a newsstand. On the cover were the first family of Baltimore baseball: Orioles shortstop Cal Ripken, Jr., second baseman Billy Ripken, and manager Cal Ripken, Sr. “This,” declared Williams, waving the magazine for all to see, “is why the stadium is important to Maryland. It isn’t the immediate dollars. All across this country, this city and this state stand tall with publicity they couldn’t buy. It may not look economically to be a big thing to have a football team . . . but the visibility is so much more dramatic than the economic impact that it’s indescribable.”<sup>120</sup>

Just as Edward Bennett Williams was making an image-based intangible benefits argument for new stadium construction, the Maryland Stadium Authority chimed-in with a report detailing all the fantastic financial benefits the state would reap from building new sports stadiums, particularly the indirect benefits that would supposedly ripple through the economy. The report included an illustrative story to simplify this economic concept to its readers. If a \$100,000 boiler for one of the stadiums was purchased from a Maryland boilermaker, it would directly result in a new permanent hire at the boiler shop at \$25,000 annually. The employee would then buy food, which would ripple out and benefit the grocers and farmers of Maryland. The boilermaker might also purchase rivets from a state manufacturer, which would create similar ripples. This story, of course, presupposes that the boiler was purchased from a Maryland manufacturer and not one in, say, New Jersey, or China. It likewise leaps from the one-off purchase of a single boiler to the creation of a permanent new job. The story also seems to imply that either this newly employed worker moved to Maryland for this job, or else he was not eating and

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<sup>120</sup> Sandy Banisky, "Orioles Owner Ties New Stadium to Profitability," *Baltimore Sun*, March 5, 1987; Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 283-287.

buying groceries before now. The spurious nature of its logic aside, the Maryland Stadium Authority was doing its very best to convince the state's legislators that spending hundreds of millions of dollars on stadium construction would have lasting positive benefits for the economy.<sup>121</sup>

The Department of Fiscal Services, meanwhile, prepared a brief report titled *the Stadium Issue*, which distilled the crux of the issue for legislators without the obfuscating talk of economics and city image. The Maryland Stadium Authority was created with the twin objectives of securing a long-term lease with the Orioles and obtaining an NFL expansion franchise. "Many Marylanders believe that a renovated Memorial Stadium will meet these objectives," the report allowed, but this was wrong because Edward Bennett Williams testified that he will not sign a long-term lease at the existing stadium and "long-standing prejudices and perceptions about Memorial Stadium" in the NFL would prevent a return there. Essentially, Maryland needed new sports stadiums only because owners demanded that it be so. It was up to legislators to decide whether to call the owners' bluff and, if not, how far they were willing to go to satisfy them.<sup>122</sup>

Throughout the 1987 legislative session, the *Sun* issued editorial after editorial promoting the stadiums. It exhorted the governor and legislature to use "creative financing" if necessary to make the stadium bills palatable to legislators because the

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<sup>121</sup> Maryland Stadium Authority, *Report on the Economic and Tax Impacts of the Camden Yards Stadium Development: An Analysis of the Impact of the Proposed Dual-Stadium Complex at Camden Yards on the Economies and the Tax Revenues of the State, the City of Baltimore and the Five-County Metro Region Consisting of Baltimore, Howard, Carroll, Harford and Anne Arundel Counties*, by Peat Marwick and the Regional Science Research Institute (New York, March 24, 1987).

<sup>122</sup> Maryland Department of Fiscal Services, *The Stadium Issue: 1987 General Assembly Session* (Annapolis, March 17, 1987).

Orioles are worth “tens of millions of dollars to the region,” but also because “[p]sychologically, this city cannot afford the loss of its baseball team. . . . [It] helps unite the state.” When support for the project was flagging, the *Sun* urged Edward Bennett Williams to testify before the legislature about the need for a new baseball stadium, which he did to great effect. The *Sun* reversed its own longstanding opposition to lotteries as a means of finance when they became the only palatable way for lawmakers to vote for the stadium project. “This newspaper has long opposed lotteries as a means of raising state revenues because they lure into gambling many poor citizens who can least afford it. It is a regressive form of taxation,” admitted the *Sun*. But it acceded to Schaefer’s argument that the proposed new scratch-offs would “appeal to baseball and football fans who voluntarily want to support the construction of new ballparks,” and not the state’s poor.<sup>123</sup>

In the end, the General Assembly decided not to test the wanderlust of Edward Bennett Williams or his eventual successor and passed the three bills authorizing the Stadium Authority to begin the Camden Yards project. The Orioles owner’s appearance before the legislature proved to be especially compelling in changing hearts and minds. It took a good deal of legislative horse-trading first, including a promise to relocate the junior high school that lay within the boundaries of the proposed stadium complex and a grudging agreement by Governor Schaefer to return some of the windfall from the Reagan administration’s federal tax overhaul to the state’s taxpayers, but what just weeks before had seemed to be a close vote favoring stadium opponents turned into a lopsided

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<sup>123</sup> “‘Tough Sell’ Stadiums,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 10, 1987; “Saving the Camden Stadiums,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 2, 1987; New Life for Stadium Plans,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 10, 1987.

victory for stadium supporters. Almost overnight, the mass of Marylanders opposing new stadium construction went from believing that they had put a rare stop to Governor Schaefer's habit of erecting new edifices in downtown Baltimore to wondering if it was too late to do anything about it. The arguments of the city's pro-stadium elite, and not the people, seemed to have won the day.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Sandy Banisky, "New City School to Emerge from Stadium Dealings," *Baltimore Sun*, March 27, 1987; Richard H. P. Sia, "Stadium Plan Backed in Senate: 2 Panels Give OK; Filibuster Threatened," *Baltimore Sun*, March 27, 1987; Sandy Banisky, "Legislature Gives Final OK to 2 Stadiums: O's Could Be Playing in Their New Park by Opening Day '90," *Baltimore Sun*, April 4, 1987.

## Chapter 9: A “Foul, Offside Referendum,” 1987

The overwhelming consensus in Annapolis favoring two new stadiums at Camden Yards did not reflect the views of Marylanders at large. In March, opponents of the project had packed a community hearing where business groups like the Greater Baltimore Committee, the Baltimore Economic Development Corporation, and the Baltimore Convention Bureau declared their support. “Schools Not Stadiums,” read the signs of some protestors, while Mary Benns of Reservoir Hill spoke of how the city’s poor and black residents had been left out of the Baltimore Renaissance going on downtown. Business owners in the Camden Yards area believed the amount of money they were being offered to relocate was insufficient, and even some legislators questioned the governor’s statements regarding who would buy the new lottery tickets, whether revenue from the lotteries would be sufficient to service annual debt on the bond measure, and if taxpayers would not ultimately have to pay when costs inevitably overran estimates but construction had already begun and could not easily be abandoned.<sup>125</sup>

Stadium opponents could take heart from the fact that this was hardly the first time grassroots coalitions had organized to defeat a redevelopment project in the city. The attempt under Governor Mandel to build a new domed stadium ended instead with a City Charter amendment preserving Memorial Stadium as the only publicly-funded professional ballpark in Baltimore. Similarly, Barbara Mikulski and her allies had defeated the proposed east-west interstate highway. But the governor had a much stronger recent track record when it came to defending his city’s renaissance projects. In

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<sup>125</sup> Jane A. Smith, "Opponents of Camden Yards Stadium Pack Hearing," *Baltimore Sun*, March 10, 1987; Robert L. Millhauser and Richard Millhauser, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, March 25, 1987; John C. Coolahan, Letters to the Editor, *Baltimore Sun*, March 28, 1987.

1979 when Mayor Schaefer proposed constructing Harborplace, “a scheme he cooked up with developer James Rouse to build a retail and restaurant complex along the edge of the Inner Harbor,” the project “met fierce resistance from Baltimoreans who had only recently become accustomed to open vistas and green space along a harbor once dominated by dilapidated piers. It had become a place of fairs and civic gatherings.” Residents of Little Italy and Federal Hill petitioned to put funding for the project on referendum at the November elections. For most of the year, Harborplace opponents seemed to have the momentum, but the Greater Baltimore Committee poured \$85,000 into the campaign, targeting black opinion-makers and ministers who were persuaded to tell their parishioners, “[w]e want you to vote for this project, but more importantly, God wants you to do it.” Harborplace would be built, just as Schaefer and Rouse (and possibly God) wanted it.<sup>126</sup>

In 1987, stadium opposition found its most cogent voice in the form of Marylanders for Sports Sanity (MASS), which began the petition drive to force the stadium issue onto a referendum. Far more Maryland voters than necessary signed the group’s petitions, and the *Sun*’s own polling found that 81 percent of Marylanders favored putting the question to a vote and that stadium opponents would likely prevail in such a contest. The newspaper’s editors attacked what they deemed a “Foul, Offside Referendum,” reasserting the economic necessity of the stadium project and the pro-business image it would bestow upon Baltimore and attacking “elitist” legislators, Republicans, Camden Yards residents, and anyone else bent on relegating Baltimore to “minor-league status.” But speculation about the referendum’s result and its potential

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<sup>126</sup> Dresser, “Schaefer Dies”; Smith, *William Donald Schaefer*, 176-180.

ramifications came to naught in September when the Maryland Court of Appeals, the state's supreme judicial body, ruled 6-1 that legislative provision for a lottery was an appropriation for the necessary functioning of the state government and that Maryland voters therefore had no right to petition for a referendum.<sup>127</sup>

In the end, it mattered little that William Donald Schaefer, Baltimore's business community, and the city's newspapers were unable to convince a majority of Marylanders to agree with their arguments regarding the economic value of professional sports and the importance of a "major league" image. They had convinced each other, one group of elites to another. A majority of the state's politicians agreed with the elite consensus around stadium construction and its importance to Baltimore's downtown renaissance, and it was these elites, and not the voters, who made the final decision. When it was all said and done, and construction ended on Oriole Park at Camden Yards in 1992 and Ravens Stadium in 1998, all it cost was half a billion dollars in public funding.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> "Stadium Foes Vow Petition Drive," *Baltimore Sun*, April 10, 1987; John W. Frece, "State Is Given Petitions for Stadium Vote: Opponents Bring in More than Double Required Amount," *Baltimore Sun*, May 28, 1987; Sandy Banisky, "Poll Shows Stadium Plan Losing on Ballot," *Baltimore Sun*, June 21, 1987; "Foul, Offside Referendum," *Baltimore Sun*, April 26, 1987; McCord, "Appeals Court Bars Stadium Referendum."

<sup>128</sup> Chapin, "Sports Facilities as Urban Redevelopment Catalysts," 196.



## Chapter 10: Overtime: Baltimore Gets a Football Team, 1987-1998

Every group and report studying Baltimore's stadium situation in the 1980s (with the notable exception of Councilman Gallagher's Stadium Modernization Committee) had concluded it would be futile to renovate Memorial Stadium because the NFL would not want to return there. This seemingly irrefutable logic helped persuade Maryland's General Assembly in 1987 to authorize construction of a football-only stadium at Camden Yards, just south of the Orioles' new ballpark. Now, however, with the Stadium Authority waiting only for an NFL owner to sign on the bottom line to begin construction, it seemed that the NFL had no desire to return to Baltimore, new stadium or not.

Looking back, it was easy to see that Baltimore had an unrequited love affair with the NFL and affection from the football league would never be reciprocated to the market it viewed as too small and too close to Philadelphia and Washington. Caught up in the injustice of the theft of the Colts, Baltimore allowed itself to believe it was owed restitution from the NFL in the form of a replacement franchise, which would arrive just as soon as Memorial Stadium was replaced. Empty niceties about the city from commissioner Pete Rozelle were misinterpreted as the promise of a new Baltimore football team. In fact, the same league that declined to lift a finger when Bob Irsay absconded with the Colts to Indianapolis in March 1984, claiming it was powerless in the face of the NFL's legal battles with the Los Angeles Raiders, went to court only months later and prevented the owner of the Philadelphia Eagles from moving that team to

Arizona. The NFL was aware of the apparent hypocrisy, but the league simply shrugged its shoulders, claiming “the circumstances were different.”<sup>129</sup>

Hoping to stay in the good graces of the NFL and retain the moral high ground, Governor Schaefer instructed the Maryland Stadium Authority not to pursue negotiations with existing NFL franchise owners who did not have the league’s express permission to move and whose current markets were making good-faith efforts to keep their football teams. This white-hat relocation policy led Baltimore to decline overtures from the New Orleans Saints, Houston Oilers, and Atlanta Falcons, none of which the NFL wished to move. Baltimore seemed close to luring the St. Louis football Cardinals in 1988, a team that had lost the support of its current city, but the team’s owner settled on a move to Phoenix instead. The MSA was also allegedly close to striking a relocation deal with the New England Patriots in 1991, but league opposition, specifically from Washington owner Jack Kent Cooke (who viewed all of Maryland as the rightful territory of his Redskins), kept the Patriots in Massachusetts.<sup>130</sup>

Rather than obtaining a football team through relocation, Baltimoreans had always preferred the idea of getting a new team through league expansion. Pete Rozelle had insisted relocation victims Baltimore and Oakland would get strong consideration from the league whenever it next expanded, but by the time the NFL finally got around to adding teams in 1991-92, there was a new commissioner in charge. Paul Tagliabue never seriously considered Baltimore as an expansion candidate, he and the majority of the NFL owners were interested in “growth markets,” particularly those in the sunbelt. The

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<sup>129</sup> "NFL Sues over Eagles; Mayor Is Optimistic," *Baltimore Sun*, December 15, 1984.

<sup>130</sup> Morgan, *Glory for Sale*, 156-158, 164.

country's sports leagues were in the middle of a southern strategy for expansion – the NBA had just added teams in Miami and Orlando, Florida, and Charlotte, North Carolina, and the NHL was working on expanding to Tampa Bay and Miami, Florida, and San Jose and Anaheim, California – and Baltimore was the type of older northern industrial city that was out of vogue. The NFL's first choice for its two expansion markets was Charlotte and when second choice St. Louis failed to get all its ducks in a row, Paul Tagliabue personally persuaded Jacksonville, Florida, to resubmit its rescinded application rather than have to expand to Baltimore for lack of other options.<sup>131</sup>

Baltimore's wished-for expansion team (tentatively named the Bombers) never got off the ground. The NFL instead introduced the world to the Carolina Panthers and Jacksonville Jaguars in 1995. When it came to the possibility of an NFL franchise ever returning to Baltimore, the league, like Edgar Allen Poe's Raven, seemed to be saying, "Nevermore."

Then a funny thing happened. Like practically every other major sports league in the 1990s, the Canadian Football League began pursuing a southern expansion strategy in 1993, but in this case, the entire continental United States counted as "the South" for Canada. In 1994 a CFL franchise moved into Memorial Stadium, which had sat empty since the Orioles moved to Camden Yards two years before. The new football team cheekily chose the colors blue and white and called itself the Baltimore CFL Colts until the NFL threatened legal action, and it settled on the nickname Stallions instead. The Stallions fixed up the old ballpark on 33rd Street and packed in crowds of football-starved Baltimoreans. The Stallions went all the way to the CFL's championship game,

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 165-198.

the Grey Cup, in their first season, and they became the only American team to win the trophy the next year in 1995. The Stallions proved that football in Baltimore, and particularly at Memorial Stadium, was still a profitable proposition.<sup>132</sup>

The crowds of Baltimoreans willing to pay to see Canadian football at the spruced-up Memorial Stadium caught the attention of Cleveland Browns owner Art Modell. In a roundabout way, Modell had already been adversely affected by Baltimore's decision to construct new stadiums at Camden Yards. Oriole Park at Camden Yards, opened in 1992, was the first ballpark designed in the postmodern style that inspired the "retro ballpark" craze. Everything about Camden Yards – its asymmetrical dimensions, the façade of the old B&O warehouse looming over right field, the stadium logo that recalled the nineteenth-century Orioles, and its location near Babe Ruth's birthplace (by some reports, George Sr. owned a tavern near center field) – invoked a sense of history that belied the stadium's modern amenities. Faux-retro ballpark designs like Camden Yards would be imitated countless times throughout the country, and the first team to join the Orioles in this endeavor was the Cleveland Indians.<sup>133</sup>

Art Modell operated Cleveland's Municipal Stadium, which until 1993 was the home of both the Browns and the Indians. The NFL Browns were first in the hearts of Cleveland sports fans but strangely last in getting stadium attention from the city or the State of Ohio behind the NBA Cavaliers and the laughingstock Indians, the latter of whom had unerringly finished at or near the bottom of the American League East since

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<sup>132</sup> Capital News Service, *Baltimore's Forgotten Champions: An Oral History* (College Park: University of Maryland, Philip Merrill College of Journalism, 2014), accessed December 5, 2017, <http://cnsmaryland.org/interactives/baltimore-stallions-oral-history/>.

<sup>133</sup> Friedman, Andrews, and Silk, "Sport and the Façade of Redevelopment," 125-129.

divisional baseball began in 1969. When Richard Jacobs purchased the Indians in 1986 he aggressively began threatening to move the team unless he received a new baseball-only stadium. The city and Cuyahoga County acquiesced by opening a twin-stadium complex for the Indians and Cavaliers in 1994. Now without his cotenant in old Municipal Stadium, Art Modell continued to wait his turn expectantly, believing the strength of his local reputation would deliver a new stadium for his Browns before long.<sup>134</sup>

By 1995, Modell began to despair of ever receiving his longed-for new stadium and believed he could not get out from under his debt if the Browns remained where they were. So, after a lifetime spent building his reputation as a civic leader and philanthropist in Cleveland as well as the ideological leader of the NFL's anti-relocation old guard owners, Modell decided to throw it all away and chase the promise of taxpayer money and luxury boxes to Baltimore. Modell's decision-making was assisted by Maryland's new governor, Parris Glendening, and its new Stadium Authority chairman, John Moag, who together pressured Modell to either accept Baltimore's offer of a free new stadium or miss out to another NFL owner. Glendening, a former University of Maryland professor, ascended the tiers of Prince George's County politics until he was in the position to replace term-limited William Donald Schaefer as governor in 1995. Glendening's new cutthroat franchise acquisition policy was in marked contrast to Schaefer's, and Glendening was quick to slight his predecessor, whom he disliked, and bragged about

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<sup>134</sup> Morgan, *Glory for Sale*, 199-202.

bringing the Browns to Baltimore at Cleveland's expense, leading the Baltimore press to dub him "Governor Gloat-dening."<sup>135</sup>

Glendening cleared the biggest obstacle to NFL football in Baltimore when he smoothed the way for Jack Kent Cooke to move the Washington Redskins to Prince George's County. Cooke had been trying to move out of the city and RFK Stadium for years; he had once hoped to build a suburban sports center at the Laurel Park horse racetrack, but the plan was opposed by Maryland lawmakers who understood having the Redskins move so close to Baltimore would forever end the proposition of a replacement for the Colts. Glendening believed the state was big enough for two NFL teams, properly spaced. All it took was the promise of millions in state money to keep the Redskins inside the Washington Beltway at Landover, Maryland, and to keep Cooke from vetoing Art Modell taking the Browns to Baltimore for the state's standing offer of a new rent-free stadium. "I feel for the schools. I feel for welfare," declared Modell upon accepting hundreds of millions of dollars from the State of Maryland. "But look at the positive effect of pro football on a community, the emotional investment of people at large. You can't equate that with fixing up the schools."<sup>136</sup>

Ironically, the first victim of Art Modell's move, apart from the people of Cleveland, was the Canadian Football League. Unwilling to compete with an NFL

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 1-15.

<sup>136</sup> Dave Kindred, "Cooke May Build Laurel Dome," *Washington Post*, December 7, 1981; "The Laurel Redskins?," *Washington Post*, December 8, 1981; Keith Richburg and Jane Leavy, "2 Cities, 1 Sports Complex? A Look at the Possibilities, Improbabilities of Cooke's Idea," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1981; Morgan, *Glory for Sale*, 196-197, 291; Katherine C. Leone, "No Team, No Peace: Franchise Free Agency in the National Football League," *Columbia Law Review* 92, no. 2 (March 1997): 477.

franchise for attention, the Stallions moved to Montreal and without its strongest pillar, the CFL's American expansion experiment collapsed.<sup>137</sup>

Things were getting nasty. Clevelanders raised an almighty stink about being robbed of their football team, a situation that Baltimoreans could not help but relate to, noting the hypocrisy of their new acquisition (for his part, William Donald Schaefer blamed NFL Commissioner Tagliabue for forcing Baltimore to act, and told him so in a letter). The other NFL owners threatened to vote down Modell's relocation, while Cleveland sued the Browns, the Maryland Stadium Authority, and Parris Glendening. The MSA's John Moag threatened to countersue the NFL for illegally blocking all previous franchise shifts to Baltimore. Congress, meanwhile, was upset at everyone. The Browns were moving to Baltimore, the Houston Oilers were moving to Nashville, the Los Angeles Rams were moving to St. Louis, the Los Angeles Raiders were moving *back* to Oakland – the NFL seemed to be in a genuine crisis and the Senate convened a special subcommittee hearing so representatives could wring their hands, demand restitution for their heartbroken constituents, and threaten increased government control over the sports industry.<sup>138</sup>

Even some members of the Maryland General Assembly were unsure of the situation the state had found itself in with Art Modell and the Browns, why had the legislature not been consulted before the deal was struck? The state's attorney general released an opinion in early 1996 saying, essentially, that the Stadium Authority did not

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<sup>137</sup> Capital News Service, *Baltimore's Forgotten Champions*.

<sup>138</sup> Morgan, *Glory for Sale*, 281-286; *Antitrust Issues in Relocation of Professional Sports Franchises: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Business Rights, and Competition of the Committee on the Judiciary*, 104th Cong., 1st sess., November 29, 1995 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

require the permission of the General Assembly to sign its agreement with the Browns, sell bonds, or begin stadium construction. As long as the Board of Public Works signed off on the financing plan, it had the force of existing law. The attorney general advised that the state must assume that the Stadium Authority acted in good faith to keep construction costs below \$200 million, to maximize private investment in the project, and to secure a tenant that would not relocate from Baltimore. If it did not like what the MSA was doing, the General Assembly could always rewrite the Stadium Authority's legislation, refuse to conduct sports lotteries or allocate future funding, or allow the MSA to default on its bonds. But if the legislature did so, the Stadium Authority would be released from its obligation to build/complete a stadium and the Browns released from their obligation to play football there. The only way the General Assembly could stop the Stadium Authority from exercising its prescribed powers, in other words, would be to accept a half-built abandoned football stadium at the far end of the Orioles' parking lot.<sup>139</sup>

In the end, the NFL struck up a remarkable deal to rid itself of the legal headache Art Modell's relocation was becoming. Modell would have to leave the Cleveland Browns' name and history behind – essentially the Browns franchise was deactivated. In its place, Modell was given a new team, the Baltimore Ravens (named after Edgar Allan Poe's famous poem), which would be composed entirely of the 1995 Browns' players and staff. Modell would have to pay the league an expansion fee, he had to settle some outstanding financial claims by Cleveland, and the NFL promised the city it would

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<sup>139</sup> Maryland Attorney General, "Stadium Authority: Contracts – Budgetary Administration – General Assembly – Stadium Authority Acted Lawfully in Entering Agreement to Build Football Stadium," January 5, 1996, in *Opinions of the Attorney General* 81 (1996): 219-231.



restore the Browns by 1999, at the latest; that was, of course, if Cleveland built a new football stadium. Meanwhile, it would take Baltimore a few years to build the football stadium at Camden Yards. The Ravens would need to seek alternate accommodations in 1996 and 1997. Despite every assertion to the contrary by Baltimore elites during the city's stadium debate, the NFL was returning to Memorial Stadium.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Morgan, *Glory for Sale*, 286-292.

## Chapter 11: Whither the Baltimore Renaissance?

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s and coinciding largely with William Donald Schaefer's time as mayor (1971-1987) and governor (1987-1995), downtown Baltimore underwent a dramatic transformation. With the aid of Schaefer's fellow politicians, his allies in the business community, and a supportive press, the city redeveloped its dilapidated and largely abandoned industrial shipping core into an amusement park for tourists and corporations alike. The Inner Harbor, Harborplace, the Gallery, the National Aquarium, the Science Center, the World Trade Center, the Convention Center, hotels, restaurants, and the two stadiums at Camden Yards, all were created as part of a joint public-private strategy to make Baltimore a more attractive place in which to work, live, and play. But as the city was experiencing a renaissance downtown, its public schools crumbled, its heavy industries continued to close, and white residents fled all but the middle section of the city for the suburbs. As the U.S. Department of Justice concluded in 2016, for all of its redevelopment and transformations, there were effectively "two Baltimores": "one wealthy and largely white, the second impoverished and predominantly black."<sup>141</sup>

It was not as if the social cost of Baltimore's redevelopment projects were only understood later, with the benefit of hindsight. Opponents of the Camden Yards stadiums frequently wrote letters to the city's newspapers during the stadium debate offering suggestions for alternative uses for the millions of dollars being proposed for new ballpark construction, including the city's schools, its libraries, and its homeless population. Political scientist Charles C. Euchner argues that Baltimore suffered from a

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<sup>141</sup> Department of Justice, *Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department*, 4-5.

lack of a comprehensive social program from city and state elites, writing in 1993 that “[t]he political institutions of Maryland and Baltimore appeared powerless to address the city’s major problems. The mayor, the Board of Estimates and City Council, the bureaucracy, the schools, political parties, and philanthropies all reacted to problems rather than confronting them in any fundamental or comprehensive way.”<sup>142</sup>

I argue, however, that instead of lacking a comprehensive solution to the city’s social problems, Baltimore’s elites simply had a misguided one. Schaefer and his fellow elites very much thought that by redeveloping downtown into James Rouse’s businessman’s utopia, an economic tidal wave would wash across the renovated piers of the Inner Harbor and trickle down to residents of every Baltimore neighborhood. Instead, much as the exterior of the old B&O Warehouse outside Oriole Park at Camden Yards is merely a façade disguising modern office spaces, the “success” of the Baltimore Renaissance is largely an illusion, a collection of glittering downtown edifices gilding the rot at the heart of the city. “Rather than facing [its] underlying sociostructural problems,” contend the University of Maryland’s Michael Friedman, David Andrews, and Michael Silk, “the propensity for contemporary cities such as Baltimore seems to have been a misguided reliance on the façade of redevelopment in response to the profound challenges posed by the postindustrial condition. Thus, as it masquerades behind its spectacular edifices, OPCY [Oriole Park at Camden Yards] represents a disingenuous abdication of the city’s responsibility to its citizens.”<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Euchner, *Playing the Field*, 104.

<sup>143</sup> Friedman, Andrews, and Silk, “Sport and the Façade of Redevelopment,” 133-134.

By pivoting the focus of Baltimore's downtown economy from industry to tourism, local elites forced the city into a vicious-cycle of spending to "feed the downtown monster," as Friedman and his colleagues put it. Post-renaissance Baltimore is stuck in a perpetual state of downtown redevelopment, lest the novelty of its attractions wear off and it fall behind other cities in enticing tourists and businesspeople. During the recent administration of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, for example, the city subsidized the Baltimore Grand Prix for three years. The race turned into a financial boondoggle, and it did not create the expected out-of-town tourist boom. Instead, city officials redirected millions of dollars in federal highway funds to needlessly resurface the Inner Harbor roads that made up the race track while ignoring other city streets that were in much direr need of repair. Even as they experiment with new city attractions like the Grand Prix, Baltimore's elites also advocate for a perpetual cycle of renovation for existing downtown edifices. The Baltimore Convention Center, renovated as recently as 1997, is presently being targeted by the Greater Baltimore Committee and others for a \$900 million redevelopment plan, which includes an attached indoor sports arena. Through it all, there is no evidence that any of this neoliberal government-funded development has improved the lives of average Baltimoreans.<sup>144</sup>

Likewise, when city leaders have bothered to look beyond downtown and toward the wellbeing of city residents, their efforts have reinforced rather than torn-down the barriers between race and class. Baltimore's attempts to attract a "creative class" of resident and dispel its image as an unlivable city, argue Italian scholars Davide Ponzini

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<sup>144</sup> Michael T. Friedman, Jacob J. Bustad, and David L. Andrews, "Feeding the Downtown Monster: (Re)developing Baltimore's 'Tourist Bubble,'" *City, Culture and Society* 3, no. 3 (September 2012): 209-218.

and Ugo Rossi, “proved to be concerned more with real estate revitalization than with issues of social inclusion and life-chance provision.” Just like elite policies of urban redevelopment, this plan to attract new city residents “favored the interests of local politicians and their closer institutional partners,” while “neglecting the relevance of classic goals of socio-spatial justice.”<sup>145</sup>

It should hardly come as a surprise, then, that in 2015 the people of the poorer of the “two Baltimores” rose up in angry protest (however misdirected) against the neglect and inequities of a city and its institutions that for decades seemed primarily concerned only with the perpetual development of downtown. The Baltimore Renaissance was no such thing to the residents of the city’s east and west sides, and the events of 2015 should serve as a cautionary warning to Baltimore’s elites about the persistent inequalities fostered by their economic program. As the poet Langston Hughes queried, “What happens to a dream deferred . . . does it explode?”

### Conclusion

This paper was about the debate preceding the approval and construction of the Camden Yards stadium project in Baltimore, Maryland. I argued that a group of local elites, including members of the political, business, and media communities, supported and facilitated the construction of two publicly-funded hundred-million-dollar sports stadiums without the support and largely against the wishes of taxpayers. I further argued that the Camden Yards stadium project was undertaken to protect the city and state’s

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<sup>145</sup> Davide Ponzini and Ugo Rossi, "Becoming a Creative City: The Entrepreneurial Mayor, Network Politics and the Promise of an Urban Renaissance," *Urban Studies* 47, no. 5 (May 2010): 1037.

business-friendly “big league image,” and as an extension and defense of “the Baltimore Renaissance” – the string of public-private urban redevelopment projects designed to reorient Baltimore’s economy around the tourism industry. I believe Camden Yards represents not only the power of sports interests in Baltimore but also the preeminence of the city’s neoliberal policies of urban redevelopment, along with all that those policies entailed, both good and bad.

My goal in writing this paper has not been to denigrate those who enjoy professional sports or to posit the superiority of Memorial Stadium over the ballparks that replaced it. I am an unrepentant sports fan myself, and I can attest unequivocally (despite never having the opportunity to see games played at Memorial Stadium) that Oriole Park at Camden Yards is in every sense the superior venue for viewing a ballgame (a truth that I am sure holds true for Ravens Stadium, as well). Multi-sport venues like Memorial Stadium in Baltimore and the so-called “cookie cutters,” such as RFK Stadium in Washington, Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia, and Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh, were rightly derided by sports purists for their soulless uniformity and their suboptimal sightlines for both baseball and football alike. However, what these stadiums lacked in beauty they made up for in frugality.

Multi-sport stadiums that could be used for a myriad of sporting events, rallies, and concerts, were a much better investment for a city to make than individual stadiums tailor-made for each separate team in a given locality. Strictly speaking, the bland uniformity of the cookie cutter stadium was the concession made by football and baseball owners when they abandoned the first generation of privately-built baseball parks (think Chicago’s Wrigley Field, or Boston’s Fenway Park) for the benefit of publically-owned

stadiums. Since the 1990s and the construction of Camden Yards, however, owners in every sport are now demanding and receiving both the aesthetics of the grand sports palaces of old with the benefit of public ownership.

My agenda – and I will not be as disingenuous as to suggest I do not have one – is not with Baltimore’s stadiums themselves but rather in questioning the urban development policies of the local elites I have identified. Michel-Rolph Trouillot foresaw an era “when professional historians will have to position themselves more clearly within the present, lest politicians, magnates, or ethnic leaders alone write history for them.” I am therefore trying to take a (very modest) step in that direction without, as Trouillot admonished, “imply[ing] the ideological manipulation of empirical evidence.”<sup>146</sup>

I want to draw a parallel between Baltimore’s stadium debate and public policy decisions that continue to be made by and for the benefit of elites at the expense of the general citizen in all parts of the country and at every level of government in the present. Might Marylanders have made a different decision than their legislators about how to spend the money that went to building Camden Yards? Perhaps not, but plenty of people did take the time to write to the newspapers with their suggestions, and an overwhelming number of people polled wanted to have the opportunity to vote on a final funding decision. Similarly, might Baltimore be a more just and equitable place today if city and state leaders had invested in the city’s schools, social programs, and community infrastructure, instead of building glimmering edifices downtown? It is clearly impossible to know the answer, but just the same, it is not too late for alternatives to pro-growth

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<sup>146</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 152-153.

neoliberal government policies to be tested there and elsewhere today, as well as for people to have a more direct voice in determining public planning and development in their communities.

### Outro

I will close with a final excerpt from the coverage of Baltimore's stadium debate. Perhaps nothing better encapsulates the social cost of the urban redevelopment policies of the city's elite coalition of media, politicians, and businesses than two adjoining editorials in the April 6, 1987, issue of the *Baltimore Sun*. In the first, the editors celebrated the Orioles' Opening Day and the passage just days before of the law securing the creation of the team's new Camden Yards home. "[T]he switch to Camden Yards is a well-calculated gamble to guarantee the city's major-league status," the *Sun* triumphantly declared.

Immediately below that celebratory editorial, the editors moved to the topic of homelessness. In Baltimore that winter, the number of homeless persons had increased between thirty and forty percent from the year before. The U.S. Senate was debating a package of \$500 million for the nation's homeless, a figure the *Sun* described as "only a Band-Aid." But at least Congress was doing something, the editors continued. "The Baltimore City administration, on the other hand," they noted without even a hint of irony, "seems to be doing nothing."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> "Between Innings / Homeless Kids," *Baltimore Sun*, April 6, 1987.



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