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PORT3 Coalition Decries Sagamore's Affordable Housing Offer, Calls on Company To Do More Than the Bare Minimum

Coalition of Community Groups Release Open Letter On Why They Cannot Accept Sagamore's Affordable Housing Offer

Baltimore-- Today the PORT3 coalition of community groups released an open letter to Marc Weller, President of the Sagamore Development company, on why they are unable to accept the company's bottom-line offer for affordable housing. In the letter, the PORT3 organizations lay out what they are asking from Sagamore for the Port Covington project in the areas of affordable housing, good paying jobs, profit sharing, and education. The full letter is attached below.

"Our coalition didn't walk away from the table, Sagamore overturned the table," said Charly Carter, executive director of Maryland Working Families and a co-chair of People Organized for Responsible Transformation, Tax Subsidies and TIFs (PORT3). "The community came together in an unprecedented way to negotiate with Sagamore Development. The 167 members of the PORT³ and BuildUp coalitions we were willing to negotiate to try to close what we perceived to be a shrinking gap. We felt that thru negotiation over the past 2 weeks we had become partners in trying to solve the financing issues that Sagamore outlined, while providing for the needs of Baltimore residents. Unfortunately, Sagamore felt they had enough to claim victory without giving meaningful consideration to remaining issues such as: a good jobs guarantee; inclusionary housing; sharing an estimated \$1 billion profits with the taxpayers; or the possibility of City Schools losing millions of dollars in state funding."

"The term 'unprecedented' has been used a lot over the past few months to describe Port Covington and their request for a half billion dollar public investment," **added Robyn Dorsey of the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition and PORT3 co-chair.** What was truly unprecedented, was the coming together of BRIDGE, CHOICE, the AFL-CIO, HON, and dozens of individual community organizations to declare an end to business-as-usual development in Baltimore. Our cooperations represents a new beginning and a new direction for Baltimore and underscores the commitment we all have to doing more for it's residents."

Barbara Samuels of the ACLU of Maryland added, "The massive Port Covington investment by Baltimore taxpayers must embody a new approach to development, which at the very least must mean that they are fully in compliance with the City's Inclusionary Housing law. Low-income working families deserve investment too, and need to gain opportunities for good affordable housing if the city makes investments in market rate and luxury housing developments."

"As a coalition, we were happy that we were able to push Sagamore to concede to marginal concessions in the MOU with the city, but sadly the systemic deficiencies remain", said **Rev. Bryan Murray, co-chair of BRIDGE-Maryland and member of Build Up Baltimore.** "Our coalition is committed to building up Baltimore City residents with good jobs, family sustaining wages, and fair and equitable housing."

Father Ty Hullinger of Maryland Interfaith Justice for workers said, "The U.S. Catholic Bishops said in their pastoral letter on the Economy: 'Decisions must be judged in light of what they do *for* the poor, what they do *to* the poor and what they enable the poor to do *for themselves*. The fundamental moral criterion for all economic decisions, policies, and institutions is this: They must be at the service of *all people, especially the poor.*' (Economic Justice for All, #24). It is becoming clear to us that Sagamore Development has no

intention of providing truly affordable housing for the neediest of Baltimore's working families within its Port Covington development. This is unacceptable by any reasonable moral calculation. Developments which receive substantial public subsidies (like over half a billion dollars in TIF financing) must provide really affordable housing for working families who are struggling to stay housed with dignity in this city. It is a scandal that Sagamore refuses to agree."

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