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## opinion

# All aboard

Originally published March 27, 2006

In proposing a redevelopment of the state office complex on Howard Street, the Ehrlich administration has correctly sized up the problem and potential of the 25-acre site. Its mass creates a visual and physical barrier, blocking access to nearby neighborhoods and isolating 3,500 state workers on an island of concrete and asphalt.

With the announcement last week that the state has selected a development team for the site, the process to break down the barriers, real and perceived, can begin. A redesign of the state office complex holds great potential to spur development around Maryland General Hospital and to integrate the renovated west side with Baltimore's cultural arts district. Its access to mass transit is enviable.

The right mix of residences, offices and stores would enliven an area that basically shuts down once state workers head home. It doesn't have to be that way: Imagine the Gallery at **Harborplace**, but with residents.

The investment of \$800 million will be well worth the public expense if the project creates a hub of activity that then radiates from **Bolton Hill** down through Seton Hill and across to Mount Vernon. The decision to retain the McCulloh Homes means longtime public housing residents have been heard, and it underscores the need for communities to stay involved as the development process moves ahead.

The state has chosen the team it wants to develop the

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site - a partnership that includes Baltimore's Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse - and the stakeholders have the coming year to determine the look of the new complex, with construction possibly starting in the summer of 2008. The state's commitment to mixed-income housing on the site is important to connect the residential component with its neighbors.

This is a massive project that could reinvigorate a crossroads of inner-city Baltimore. To the development team, we say, be bold.

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