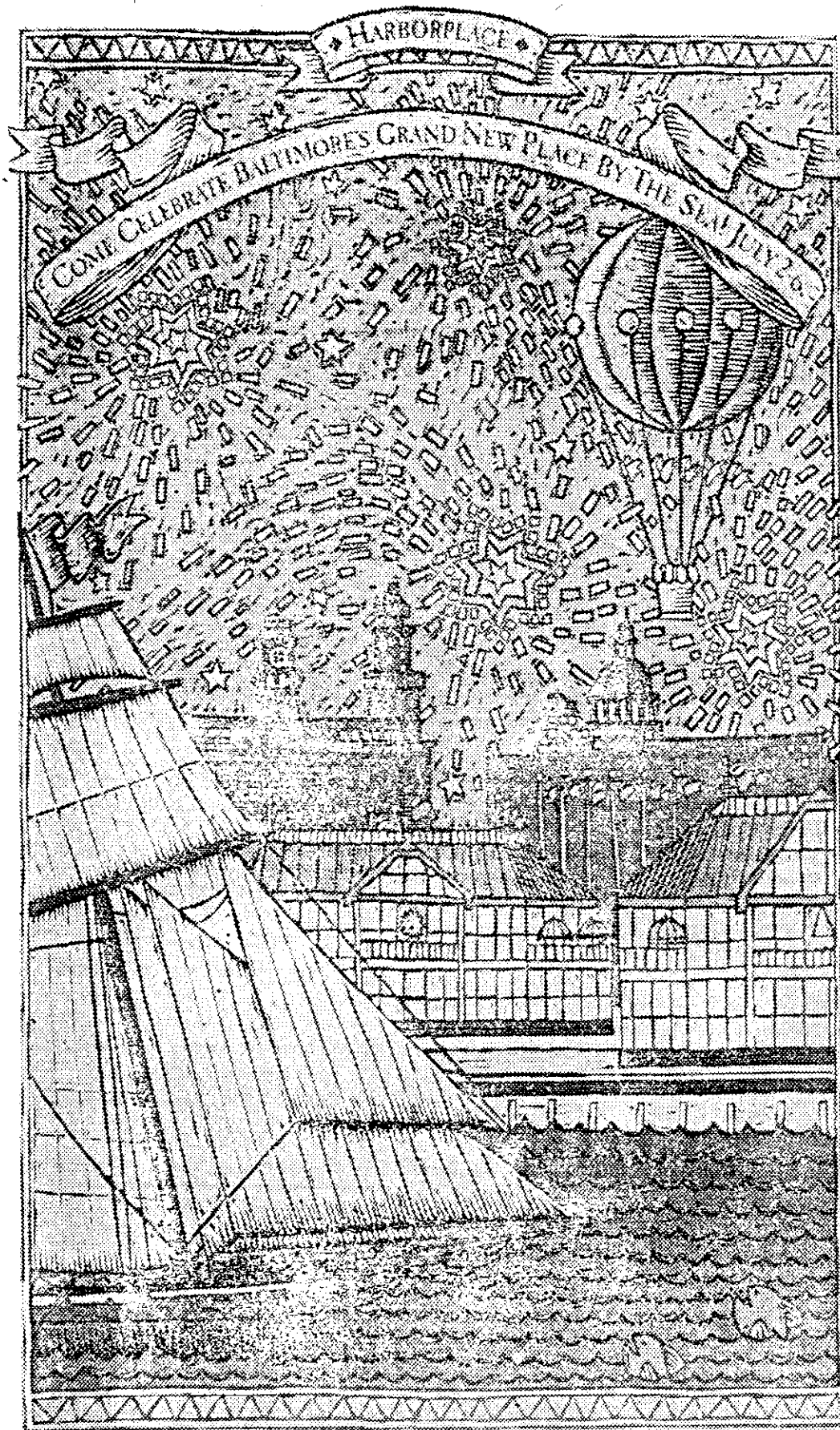


'CRITICAL MASS'



By Martin L. Millspaugh

WHEN HARBORPLACE opens tomorrow, it seems sure to be celebrated with real feeling and enthusiasm that surpasses any other event in the rebirth of the Inner Harbor. Its appeal reaches deep into the spiritual sources of Baltimoreana, but what may be just as important in the long run: it is expected to lift the whole amalgam of other attractions around the shoreline to form a critical mass (to use the planners' term), where the total appeal is greater than the sum of the parts.

There may be people who still consider Harborplace to be a crass, commercial crea-

tion, or destructive of the peaceful contemplation of the water. We all hope such doubts will be dispelled after tomorrow, but in any case it cannot be denied that the largest missing ingredient in the Inner Harbor has been the capacity for large numbers of people to eat and drink, or go shopping for fun — both in the daytime and at night, in winter and summer.

Until now, people probably haven't been on or near the shoreline in sufficient numbers to pay the rent on such a place. But now they are coming: there are 29 other attractions already in operation or under construction. Tomorrow there will be 30, and what an attraction it will be! To realize that Harborplace can be to Baltimore, think of what Tivoli has been to Copenhagen, Ghirardelli Square to San Francisco, Faneuil Hall to Boston, or the French Quarter to New Orleans.

This is not completely unexpected; it has been part of the Inner Harbor strategy since the redevelopment plans were first put down on paper in the master plan prepared by Wallace, McHarg Associates and Morton Hoffman and Company in 1964. That plan called not only for office and residential towers standing in green strips of parks, but also for restaurants, night clubs, coffee shops, retail and service establishments, bazaars, theaters, a marina, an aquarium, tour boats, a science center and an outdoor maritime museum.

The objectives were (and still are) "to convert the Harbor Basin into the major downtown open space . . . to use public investment to change the environment and stimulate the maximum private investment; to provide for unique regional activities appropriate to the Inner Harbor area; to increase intensity of use to achieve as nearly as possible the financial goal of having the new uses support all city costs . . ."

The sleek wood and plastic model that was prepared to illustrate the master plan in 1964 showed a semi-circle of public park area around the Inner Harbor basin, occupied by buildings containing the shops, restaurants, theaters, nightclubs and maritime museum: an inviting adult playground extending from Pier 3, on Pratt Street, around the northern, western and southern sides of the shoreline to the overlook on Federal Hill. This is essentially the way the plan remains today.

The image of the future that was unveiled in model form on September 22, 1964 so captivated the citizens of Baltimore that six weeks later they passed a bond issue providing \$2 million to start making a reality of the dream of generations of Baltimoreans. So powerful was the community acceptance of the original plan that it is still guiding development 16

The story of the Inner Harbor and Harborplace as recalled by an official who played a key role in the 'day when Baltimore passes over an invisible line into a new era'

years later (albeit with some interesting additions).

With the master plan in place, the next step was to provide a "delivery system" — an organization of development personnel who would make it all happen. For this, the late Mayor Theodore R. McKeldin and the Urban Renewal Agency turned to the small cadre of executives who were then coaxing Charles Center into reality out of the depressed nadir of the Central Business District. Headed by J. Jefferson Miller and the author, this group agreed to form a non-profit corporation which would direct and coordinate the 30-year Inner Harbor program. On September 1, 1965, a contract was signed with the agency that is now the city Department of Housing and Community Development. We were off and running.

Even then, there were public buildings ready to be committed: the World Trade Center was in the master plan, and by the end of October, the Science Center and the Christ Church complex had been announced. However, there were some big mountains to climb before private investment could be lured into the decaying backwater that the Inner Harbor had become.

There was \$30 million in working capital to be raised, and legal obstacles to be probed and dissolved (more than 20 governmental agencies — federal, state and local — claimed some sort of jurisdiction in the Inner Harbor area); plus 1,000 commercial properties to be acquired and their occupants relocated without stripping the city of its backbone of small business enterprise.

To begin, the huge, 240-acre master plan was broken down into a series of manageable renewal projects, or phases. The first of these, called simply Inner Harbor Project I, included the basin itself and reached one block outward from the streets that circled the water. The shoreline lying between the semi-circle of streets and the water's edge was to be the scene of the regional playground envisioned in the master plan. If the metamorphosis could be achieved here, the surrounding area was sure to revive, and to attract the private investors who were so badly needed in 1965.

After a seemingly interminable series of engineering and marketing studies, legal drafting and other technical and administrative work behind the scenes (the submerged part of the iceberg in any redevelopment project), a detailed development plan was placed before the voters and they approved a \$12 million city bond issue for Project I in 1966. The federal government allocated another \$18 million (later increased in stages to \$40 million), and the City Council enacted the first Renewal Plan and Condemnation Ordinance for the Inner Harbor on June 15, 1967. Shepherding the ordinance through the council was the floor leader and chairman of the Judiciary Committee, a councilman named William Donald Schaefer.

Once again — in the bond issue referendum and in the City Council's passage of the condemnation law — the citizens had provided a mandate for the master plan, including the retail marketplace in the mix of leisure-oriented activities around the shoreline.

With the legal authority provided by the renewal plan, and the working capital in hand from city and federal sources, those of us who were responsible for delivering the

Inner Harbor renaissance suddenly found ourselves in a very humbling position; it was up to us to see that it was designed and built the way the people of Baltimore wanted. There were probably as many different private images of how the pieces should go together as there were voters to visualize them, but still we had to find the concept that was best for Baltimore. There was only one Inner Harbor; if we muffed this one there wouldn't be another chance.

We retained the best consultants we could find, and we studied waterfront plans and existing installations everywhere that we could manage to reach in our vacations or professional travels. We visited dozens of other cities with inner harbors and cities with waterfront playgrounds or commercial marketplaces. We combed books and magazines, slide collections, movies and picked and brains of other travelers. When we had pooled all of the knowledge we could assemble, the firm of Wallace, McHarg, Roberts and Todd was commissioned to shape it into the Urban Design Concept for Project I, with primary emphasis on the shoreline as the catalyst that would change the prevailing image of Baltimore as an industrial no-man's land blocking the route between Washington and New York.

The unheralded work of land acquisition, relocation and negotiations with developers went on a piece; then the tip of the iceberg — the Urban Design Concept — emerged in 1969. It was the same design that has been substantially built today, based on a few simple principles that had been analyzed for engineering feasibility and cost, reviewed for aesthetic appeal by our Architectural Review Board and by our own observations, and tested for marketability by the evidence collected at home and abroad. In summary, the principles were these:

1. The water's edge should be restored to the use and enjoyment of the public.
2. The edge should be outlined by a hard, permanent bulkhead capable of handling the heaviest shipping that could navigate the Inner Harbor's 22-foot depth; against this heavy-duty edge, many variations of floating and lighter-scale structures could be installed for varying lengths of time, or changed from time to time as the public's wishes and tastes might dictate.
3. Except for a few tall buildings placed at strategic locations around the rim of the harbor, the large buildings facing onto the surrounding streets should be horizontal in shape, to provide a "frame" around the perfect proportions of the harbor basin itself.
4. Within the inner circle formed by the streets — the shoreline proper — structures would be low and free standing, with public pedestrian access as nearly as possible on all sides, and with roofs and facades generally sloping or stepped back from the water.
5. The shoreline structures should not cover more than 15 percent of the open land, with the remainder to be landscaped for park use, and designed to be versatile enough to provide a stage for ethnic festivals one day and passive enjoyment of water and green space the next.
6. A 35-to 40-foot-wide promenade would encircle the edge of the water, designed to have architectural quality and constructed of brick to reflect the historic building material of the city itself.

The placement of the various attractions around the water's edge was another challenge involving analysis, synthesis and intuition: a shopping list of more than 270 possible features and uses was drawn up; then the list was screened, studied and distilled and eventually reduced to ten or fifteen basic categories. Each of these was assigned its place around the shoreline. Even then we didn't trust our own judgment and experience; we

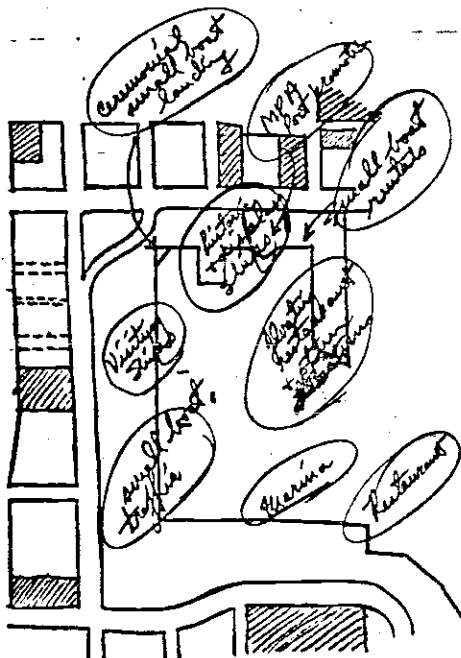
called in the consultants who created the immensely successful Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco. They made a few changes in the details of our plans, but pronounced as a general conclusion:

"Of all the exciting projects with which we have been and currently are involved, Baltimore's . . . is certainly the most imaginative and considerate of the needs of the people."

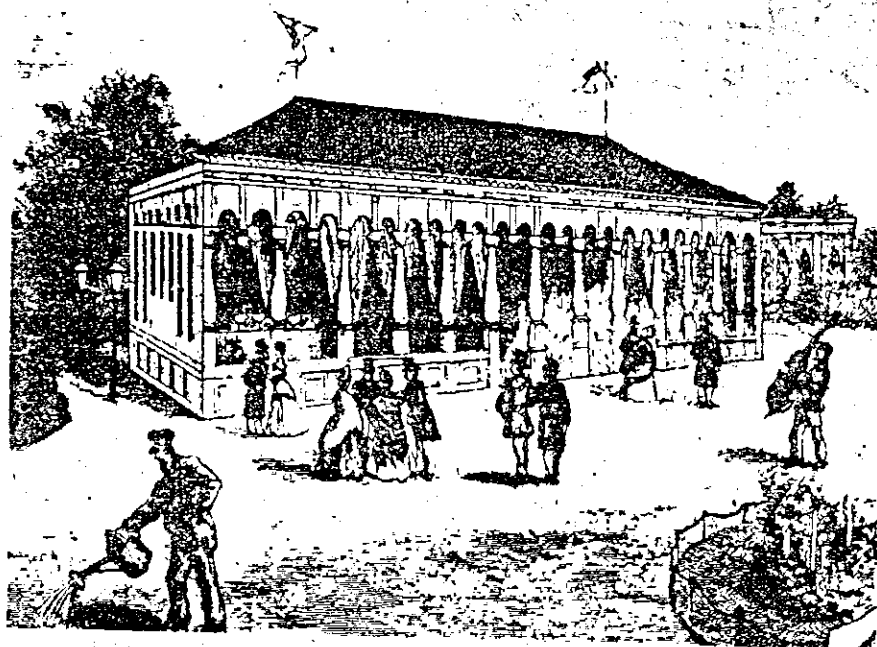
Among those needs was the need for food and drink. This, plus the pleasure of shopping for unusual and exotic merchandise, imported and otherwise, was the use indicated for three plots of land along the western shoreline, which were reserved for private development.

It is a truism in the world of commercial development that activities such as these, which are essentially retail in nature, cannot succeed until or unless there is sufficient drawing power in the location to bring people there. As a result, the commercial sites were not offered in the private development marketplace in the early years. They remained on the drawing boards, uncommitted, while other, more specialized or cultural attractions were developed: the Science Center, Constellation Pier, sailboat rentals, the excursion boat Port Welcome and the tour boats Patriot and Defender; the skipjack Minnie V, the marina, Charthouse restaurant in a recycled warehouse, original sculpture commissioned by the city, an observation deck at the top of the World Trade Center, finger piers for small visiting ships and charter vessels. In 1974 the Convention Center was proposed, and in 1975 the Aquarium was added to the original shoreline plan, placing a powerful terminus at the end of the semi-circle around the basin.

One key attraction was hardly noticed at first: the Public Wharf was actually a section of the bulkhead equipped with the deepest water and the utilities necessary to dock the large ships that would be visiting from time to time on good-will or public-relations missions.



PAPER IDEAS: Way back in 1970 Martin Millspaugh scribbled some suggestions for waterfront uses on a crude map of the Inner Harbor. Many of them have become reality.



1843 'HARBORPLACE'—a pavilion in Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens.

In 1976, the year of the nation's Bicentennial, the Tall Ships docked at the Public Wharf for ten days in July. The city and its residents were electrified by their towering sails and rigging; hundreds of thousands of spectators came to the Inner Harbor to visit and go on board the Tall Ships — including many suburbanites who had been in the habit of bragging that they hadn't been downtown for years. The future of the Inner Harbor as a regional complex of attractions was assured.

The Tall Ships had another far-reaching influence on the Inner Harbor: they inspired us to ask the top executives of the Rouse Company, who had just opened their amazingly successful Faneuil Hall Market Place project in Boston, to look at the Inner Harbor.

The Mayor (former Councilman Schaefer) and the commissioners of Housing and Community Development — First Robert C. Embry and then M. Jay Brodie — agreed with the Inner Harbor management team (which, by this time, included Walter Sondheim, Jr.) that the time had come to add the commercial element that had slumbered on paper for so long. The success of the Boston project proved that the Rouse Company — perhaps alone among private development groups — could make a success of this most expensive and unpredictable of undertakings.

The rest is history: how the Rouse proposal was advertised and no other developers appeared to challenge it; how many citizens had grown fond of the temporary lawn that covered the planned commercial sites and were opposed to any form of development; and how a compromise was reached, reducing the size of the commercial sites and consolidating them around the corner of Pratt and Light streets — leaving a long, eight-acre "Baltimore Common" stretching from Harborplace to the Science Center: permanent open space that is protected by the City Charter from any development in the future.

Now at last Harborplace is with us, and for one who has waited and planned for it for 15

years, then worried lest it get too big and too crowded, and finally seen the completed structures, with the hoped-for combination of popular appeal with restrained elegance emerge from the designs we approved on paper, it will be a day when Baltimore truly passes over an invisible line into a new era — not merely because Harborplace itself is so exciting, but because the total package — Harborplace plus the rest of the miracles achieved by the citizens of Baltimore — has created a truly new face and new heart for this fine old city. The good old days are now.

Mr. Millsbaugh, who first became interested in urban development as a reporter on The Evening Sun, was later assistant commissioner of the federal Urban Renewal Administration then came back to Baltimore where he has been president of Charles Center-Inner Harbor Management, Inc. since its inception.