INNER HARBOR AT 43

It’s hard to believe the Inner Harbor is now over 40 years old. In 1973, the Inner Harbor public promenade was completed, setting the framework for development to follow. Heralded as a model of urban waterfront redevelopment, the Inner Harbor has fueled economic development, creating a regional tourism and hospitality industry that employs tens of thousands of residents, funneling taxes to the city and state governments to fund services and additional investments, and generating a sense of pride in Baltimore.

Forty years later, we’re proud to still welcome tens of millions of visitors annually. According to HRA, Associates in 2012, the Harbor saw over 14 Million visitors, with six out of every ten visiting the Inner Harbor, our region’s icon and “crown jewel”.

However, great destinations like Baltimore’s Inner Harbor only remain great destinations for 40+ years with dedicated attention to care and management. Since 2005, Waterfront Partnership has been proud to serve as the primary steward of the Inner Harbor, proud to protect Baltimore’s most precious asset. At the heart of our mission is our commitment to attracting local residents in addition to out of town visitors, by keeping the Harbor and public promenade clean, safe, active and attractive. We’ve worked tirelessly for over 10 years to provide a welcoming face and watchful eye for all visitors, ensuring the Harbor’s public spaces are always clean, and managing fun events and popular programs to create reasons to attract local residents and visitors to enjoy the Harbor.

If we have a special niche it is building special spaces for people, usually green and mostly with the intention of inviting play and fun. Pierce’s Park, Walter Sondheim Fountain, West Shore Park. And now, Rash Field.
INNER HARBOR 2.0

In 2012, recognizing that some of the Inner Harbor infrastructure had outlived its useful life, the City completed a “State of Good Repair” Study, while Waterfront Partnership, along with GBC and the City, initiated an updated Master Plan process, with the aim of building on the strong foundation forged over 40 years ago and expanding the use of the Harbor by our local residents. We also sought to meet the open space and recreational demand created by the dramatic growth along waterfront neighborhoods in the number of Millennials and young families buying homes and committing to raise their children in the city.

To meet the needs of more locals, the Plan calls for the addition of free amenities and attractions at the Harbor, increased greenery, shade and Park space and cleaner water through the Healthy Harbor Initiative.

The resulting Inner Harbor 2.0 Plan provides a road map for a more sustainable, attractive and active Inner Harbor.
EXISTING CONDITIONS

For too many decades Rash Field has been an unsightly and underutilized space. As the last remaining essentially vacant space in the Harbor, Rash Field has been a largely overlooked park space and is the primary reason why the south shore is the least pedestrian-traveled section of the entire Inner Harbor promenade, to the detriment to the Maryland Science Center. Rash Field can and should become a unique and engaging attraction at the Inner Harbor.

First built and used on July 4, 1976 as football fields for Southern High School, Rash Field lost its purpose several years later when Southern High built its own fields. Since then Rash Field has served little purpose until Baltimore Beach set up “Ad Hoc” volleyball nets and began attracting a growing number of young professionals, Federal Hill neighbors and families to play beach volleyball.

The popularity of the beach volleyball, increased number of special events and citywide demand for youth soccer fields encouraged us to cite the redevelopment of Rash Field into Rash Field “Park” as the #1 priority of Inner Harbor 2.0.
THE CASE

Baltimore’s Inner Harbor has long served as the region’s primary tourism destination and draw for conventions in the city. The most recent economic impact study of the Harbor cited over 14 million out-of-town visitors.

Whether it’s ringing in the New Year, cheering over the Ravens Super Bowl win, visiting dozens of Tall Ships lining the Harbor for Sailing Week, or being spellbound by Light City, the Inner Harbor is where we come together as a collection of citizens with common interests and aspirations for our city and ourselves.

In addition to serving tourists, Baltimore’s Inner Harbor can and should serve our own residents, and do so throughout the year, not just for special events.

We see this interest from the over 300 Waterfront Partnership sponsored Waterfront Wellness participants attending on a Saturday, sailing from all over the city and some even from surrounding counties. We see this interest from the East Baltimore residents that we bring to the Harbor for a boat ride following their “Healthy Harbor” neighborhood clean-up day, and we see it in the children we’ve attracted to the Harbor from West Baltimore for “Waterfront Play” sessions.

Just as school groups coming or going from the National Aquarium play or picnic in the grassy area to the west of the Aquarium, the Maryland Science Center will become an even stronger educational destination with adjacent play space at Rash Field Park.

And, Waterfront neighborhoods are undergoing a population boom with the number of Millennials exploding and young families with children choosing to stay and raise their families in the city.

IN THE LAST TEN YEARS IN WATERFRONT NEIGHBORHOODS:

- Ages 18-24 increased 50%
- Ages 25-34 increased 56%

NEIGHBORHOODS INCLUDING FEDERAL HILL AND LOCUST POINT SAW DOUBLE DIGIT PERCENTAGE GROWTH IN YOUTH AGES 5-11

A CITYWIDE OPINION POLL CONDUCTED IN 2015 SHOWED, IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION

“WHAT AMENITIES WOULD BRING YOU TO THE INNER HARBOR MORE OFTEN?”

- 62% Free activities for children
- 57% More shade in the summer
- 56% Outdoor cafes
- 42% Outdoor fitness equipment and games like ping pong and bocce

Most of the pieces required to move forward to build Rash Field Park are within sight, however to build the park as designed and to build it at one time requires additional financial support.
NATURE PARK

Key Features

[Images of natural play areas and structures, including wooden play structures, climbing walls, and natural play spaces with rocks and vegetation.]
NATURE PARK

Key Features

PROPOSED RE-DESIGN

Public Meeting #3 // June 15, 2017
SKATE PARK

Key Features
OVERLOOK + PAVILION

Key Features