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# A moment for Baltimore | GUEST COMMENTARY



Jerry Jackson/Baltimore Sun

Sunrise lights up the city skyline on Baltimore's Inner Harbor.



By **MARYANNE GILMARTIN**

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Baltimore is having a moment. The positive headlines have been everywhere the past few months, brimming with superlatives. Just last week, The New York Times placed Baltimore among its top 15 places to visit in 2024 and said the city is having an “enormous year.” Baltimore has one of the fastest-growing economies in the country. We just saw the largest drop in homicides ever. The region has been designated a federal tech hub, and the area is increasingly becoming a destination for visitors from far and wide – with CFG Bank Arena ranking as one of the highest-grossing venues globally last year.

As a result – or maybe it’s the cause – companies and institutions, private and public, are investing here again. The Ravens and the Orioles both made big commitments over the past few months (and won a lot of games), and CFG Bank Arena’s investments have helped attract the best acts in the country. Planning for the new Red Line is underway, Bloomberg Philanthropies is helping to tackle our vacant homes challenge with Mayor Scott, and our port has millions of dollars coming from the Department of Transportation down the road in D.C.

But as a newcomer to Charm City, I’ve also noticed that we’ve been conditioned to always expect the other shoe to drop. The good news about the city’s economic growth was immediately followed by a headline (in another publication) about how the growth is probably not sustainable. Give us at least a day to be inspired and optimistic about where things are headed.

When a foolish comedian took cheap shots at Baltimore last year, it was beautiful to see so many people rally together to stand up for the city, but the truth is that we're too used to just grinning and bearing it, too tired of pushing back. As someone who spends much of her time pitching companies around the country on Baltimore as a potential home, I get it. But I also know that there's too much good happening here to let negativity prevail. It's time that we stand together to tell our story and finally change the narrative about the city we love.

Where do we start? Last year, the city's economy grew to more than \$50 billion. With nearly 6% growth, Baltimore beat out nearly every other similarly sized major city nationwide. Citywide, we're seeing robust, rapid economic growth and a low unemployment rate of just 4.3%. Coupled with inspiring progress on the tragic homicide crisis, Baltimore is signaling that it's on the brink of real change.

This was far from inevitable. Just look down I-95 to D.C., where hybrid work hollowed out the downtown and sent crime spiraling. Our sports teams are investing; theirs are planning to leave.

Leaders who care about Baltimore in Annapolis and Washington have helped a lot, too, and that is an important part of our story moving forward. In addition to DOT's massive commitment to the Port of Baltimore, the new federal designation as a "tech hub" has made Baltimore a finalist for billions of dollars in economic development funding, while Johns Hopkins aims to make the city an epicenter for AI research. Our new governor has made Baltimore a top priority, and our mayor has partnered with faith and business leaders to announce a \$3 billion plan to invest in 35,700 vacant homes. This monumental effort will bring funding to

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The last piece, and the one I'm most focused on, is attracting new businesses (and office leases) back to Baltimore. There too we are seeing very promising progress. Along the Inner Harbor, the new Harborplace development proposal is a major investment in downtown. To its east, Harbor Point is seeing a [slew of new tenants and businesses](#) setting up shop. Across the city, we're all working towards the same goal: a stronger Baltimore.

And at Baltimore Peninsula, we closed the year by announcing 15 new office and retail leases totaling over 65,000 square feet, building on CFG Bank's historic flagship lease signed to support its expansion last year. They'll be right across from the new [Under Armour HQ](#), and when that campus opens later this year, it will be a milestone that all of Baltimore should celebrate.

It's not just large corporations; all across the city, we're seeing small businesses open in droves and trendy retailers from across the country set up shop. Hip chains like renowned restaurateur [Pinky Cole's Slutty Vegan](#), regional favorites like Clyde's and large national retailers are no longer skipping Baltimore as they expand up the Northeast corridor. If you follow the money, it's clear that Baltimore's comeback is well underway.

We need to recognize the greatness of Baltimore and the success that we're seeing each and every day. The city has so much going for it — incredible people, a thriving culture, a location that can't be beat, and a relentless attitude of resilience and determination. With a robust and diverse economy, high-paying jobs and the support of state and local lawmakers, Baltimore is poised to enter a new era of innovation and growth now more than ever.

This is the next chapter in Baltimore's story, and it's time for everyone to celebrate our wins and continue building toward a

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