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## BDC rebuffed in effort to take West Covington property for redevelopment

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Daniel J. Sernovitz](#) Staff

Baltimore City planners have shot down a proposal that would have let the city's economic development agency take 40 acres of land in West Covington for a redevelopment plan that could include a new corporate campus for growing sportswear maker **Under Armour Inc.**

In the 7-1 decision Thursday, the city's planning commission voted against the **Baltimore Development Corp.**'s proposal, which authorized the BDC the right to condemn the land of seven homeowners and three established businesses.

The BDC would then have sought to seek private development proposals, including one from Under Armour, to redevelop the waterfront site.

Some of the planners agreed with BDC President M.J. "Jay" Brodie's contention the land could better be set aside as a mixed-use development, but the members also said the BDC failed to justify its plan to take the land by condemnation or gain any support from any of the property owners.

"This is not abandoned; it's producing huge jobs and taxes," said City Councilwoman Rochelle "Rikki" Spector, the city council's representative to the commission. "I can't figure out why we're doing it, because it's already producing big revenue and it's never been abandoned."

Baltimore City Council legislation introduced in December 2007 would have given the BDC the power to condemn and acquire the 40 acres of waterfront land, located between Hanover Street and the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River. In addition to the row of seven homes, major land owners in the area also include **Schuster Concrete Co.**, Allied Waste Services and Atlantic Forest Products.

Brodie said the city set its sights on West Covington as part of a larger analysis of the Middle Branch's waterfront properties. He said Baltimore is shedding its industrial heritage, and properties like West Covington cannot simply be written off from an economic development standpoint because industry is still there.

"Our responsibility at BDC is not to sit back and say, 'That's inevitable, there's nothing we can do about it,'" Brodie said.

During a meeting that lasted until about 8:30 p.m. Thursday, residents and business owners

pled with the commission to either stop the BDC's plan or exclude them from it. Several accused the BDC of acting not in the interest of economic development but rather with the goal of retaining fast-growing Under Armour. The company, which has its headquarters at Tide Point in South Baltimore, is quickly outgrowing its office space there and has spoken with Brodie about establishing a corporate campus at West Covington.

Brodie said Under Armour is interested in the property, but it is just one of several companies looking at the site. He said Under Armour would still need to submit a development proposal for the property, and that proposal would be weighed against other possible uses.

In the end, however, commission Chairman Peter Auchincloss pled with Brodie to give the city's planning commission a better reason to approve the project.

"Help me," he asked Brodie.

"Well, I don't know that I can help you," Brodie responded. "Life is full of difficult decisions. This is clearly one."

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