

Tax Credit Workgroup

Meeting Minutes

Date: March 25, 2025

Agenda: A discussion with Brian Kenner, Former Deputy Mayor of Economic Development in Washington, D.C.

Takeaways

1. Growth Requires a Clear Vision and Consistent Leadership

- DC's economic growth over the last two decades was driven by a consistent pro-growth philosophy across multiple mayoral administrations.
- Investments in schools, libraries, parks, and public safety were essential signals that the city was serious about improving quality of life and attracting residents.
- Success came not from one silver bullet, but from staying the course—despite pushback—and making big, visible public investments.

2. Site Selectors Prioritize Predictability

- Financial incentives matter, but so does reliable permitting, streamlined processes, and a clear point of contact.
- Cities should market themselves as being "known" for something—e.g., a talent hub, sector strength, or development efficiency.

3. Tax Incentives Must Be Strategic

- DC often relied on bespoke incentive deals (TIFs, PILOTs) rather than by-right policies.
- Inclusionary zoning and affordability requirements were often unpopular with developers unless paired with compensatory incentives.
- Tax policy reform should be tied to broader economic development goals, not just cutting rates.

4. Growth and Equity Must Be Balanced

- Residents want better amenities but also want to stay in place—growth must feel inclusive and intentional.
- Investments should target both immediate quality-of-life upgrades and long-term stability.
- Unpopular but necessary decisions (e.g., housing facilities in every ward) require strong leadership and clear communication.

5. Baltimore's Strengths Should Be Marketed

- Walkability, a diverse cultural fabric, available industrial space, and a maturing waterfront are real assets.
- The city feels like it's "on the upswing"—that energy is attractive to companies and residents.

6. Moving Forward

- Focus on what's feasible now (e.g., process improvements, early investments) while laying groundwork for future incentives.
- Consider subgroups to dig deeper into specific tax credit strategies or incentive models.

Next Meeting - Tuesday, April 22, 2025