

## **NAACP objects to plans for downtown hotel**

### **Group 'strongly recommends' city find private investor to pay for project**

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The Baltimore City branch of the NAACP added its name yesterday to the growing list of people and organizations with objections to the city's convention center hotel plan.

The group's officers called a news conference to say that they could support a hotel - but only if city officials change significant aspects of the project, including how they plan to pay for it.

The City Council is considering a plan to build a \$305 million hotel with revenue bonds. The city would develop and own the 752-room Hilton, which the Baltimore Development Corp. says will salvage business at the downtown Convention Center.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People opposes using entirely public money and "strongly recommends" the city find a private investor to pay for most of it.

NAACP officials, saying the group has been shut out of the process, also want to help search for such a developer.

The NAACP's list of what it wants the city to do before approving a hotel includes: Create a panel, with an NAACP representative on it, to search for a developer who will build the hotel with mostly private money.

Get in writing that 80 percent of the hotel's employees would be city residents and then monitor the hotel annually to ensure compliance.

Use the hotel's occupancy tax for education, housing and economic development in neighborhoods outside of the Inner Harbor.

The demands echo protests by Baltimore's Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and BUILD, a faith-based nonprofit organization. The groups say that if the city gets into the hotel business, it should increase its efforts to clear blight from Baltimore's depressed neighborhoods.

The Job Opportunities Task Force has also pressed city officials for a commitment that the hotel's jobs will go to Baltimore residents.

The City Council will hold a work session tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. to discuss the hotel.

- Jill Rosen

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