



Monday, September 21, 2020

To Washington County stakeholders,

While I have not had the opportunity to analyze the economic and fiscal implications of the Earles Building project, the proposed development fits neatly with my conceptions of downtown Hagerstown's optimal future. As I have said publicly on many occasions during speeches delivered in Hagerstown, downtown has an opportunity to emerge as a vibrant live/work/play hub. The architecture, its scale, location, as well as critical institutions such as a major concert venue and school for the arts render Hagerstown a potentially major Mid-Atlantic cultural center. Some of downtown's potential has already been actualized, but there remains significant room for further business, residential, and tax base growth. Some may point out that there is a critical need for affordable housing. Agreed. While the Earles Building won't solve that issue, to the extent that Hagerstown and Washington County can expand their respective tax bases, there will be greater resources available to help families afford safe and appealing housing. But downtown also needs injections of spending power to support local businesses, including the burgeoning number of restaurants located there already. The Earles Building will further expand spending power and vitality downtown, and will move the heart of Hagerstown one step closer to realizing its potential in the process.

Anirban Basu, Economist, Sage Policy Group, Inc. &  
Chair, Maryland Economic Development Commission.