



Baltimores on the Missouri?

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At a recent conference on municipal policy, I had the opportunity to reflect on Baltimore, Maryland. Certainly Charm City has had its challenges in recent years. But there is a lot Missouri policymakers can learn from Baltimore. Specifically, what not to do.

Baltimore's population has been steadily declining in the past few years. It stands at about 610,000 today—down from 620,000 in 2010 and 650,000 in 2000—and its height of 950,000 people in 1950. Like Kansas City and St. Louis, it has struggled with a [high homicide rates](#) , coming in second behind St. Louis in 2017 and ahead of fifth-ranked Kansas City. Like Kansas City's moniker '[Killa City](#) ,' Baltimore's homicide rate earned it the nickname '[Bodymore, Murderland](#) .' Baltimore students are some of the [worst served in the country](#) .

No one can accuse Baltimore of doing nothing to reverse its fortunes. In fact, Baltimore seems to have done everything that developers and urban planners recommend. Consider the following amenities paid for in part with city and state subsidies:

- [Power Plant Live! entertainment district](#) (developed by Baltimore-based The Cordish Companies, developers of Kansas City Power & Light District and St. Louis Ballpark Village)
- Rail transit such as the [Baltimore Metro](#) and [LightRail Link](#)
- A downtown baseball stadium, Oriole Park at Camden Yards
- The National Aquarium
- The Baltimore Convention Center, first renovated in 1996 and now considering another

renovation and expansion; the convention center is connected by rail to . . .

- Baltimore Washington International Airport (BWI), including recent renovations and new concourses
- Baltimore even has a [waterfront development](#) !

These are developments that would make any recent Kansas City or St. Louis mayor salivate. And yet none would want to turn their cities into Baltimore. Why?

Maybe it is because we all understand—whether we admit it or not—that cities need to get the basics right. Cities should prioritize basic infrastructure, public safety, and tax policy done well before they splurge on [expensive baubles](#) . Kansas City and St. Louis do not yet have the basics right, and nothing should distract us from fixing it.

About the Author



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[2] <https://www.thetrace.org/2018/04/highest-murder-rates-us-cities-list/>

[3] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hua5beVebY8>

[4] <https://www.city-journal.org/html/can-mayor-o%E2%80%99malley-save-ailing-baltimore-12122.html>

[5] <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/k-12/bs-md-nations-report-card-20180409-story.html>

[6] <https://www.powerplantlive.com/>

[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltimore_Metro_SubwayLink

[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baltimore_Light_RailLink

[9] <https://www.harborpointbaltimore.info/>

[10] <https://www.kansascity.com/opinion/readers-opinion/guest-commentary/article223419165.html>

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