

# National Harbor: This Place Changes Everything

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Rising from the banks of the Potomac just south of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge in Prince Georges' Country, the National Harbor is a \$2 billion, 300-acre, mixed-use development complex that is producing substantial jobs, contracting and investment opportunities for area residents and businesses. Expert economists and urban planners say this premier destination is unlike anything this generation of Washington Area residents has ever seen.

Over the next 10 years, National Harbor will progressively emerge as an exciting, sprawling community that includes fine restaurants, unparalleled shopping, stunning office space and lavish residences. There's also Gaylord National, planned to be the largest hotel in the Washington, D.C. area and the largest non-gaming combined hotel and convention center on the entire east coast.

National Harbor, developed by Fairfax developer Milton V. Peterson, brings together recreation, work, living and entertainment in a way that's never been done before in the nation's wealthiest majority-Black-population county. How this major economic generator affect the area's African American population; what's happening behind-the-scenes that impacts area African Americans and who's on the ground floor building and buying National Harbor's hotels, shops and restaurants is the social and business responsibility of African Americans involved directly at high levels with the project.

Ron Adolph, an MIT graduate and a civil engineer, who has lived in Prince George's County two

decades, is symbolic of the high concentration of professionals residing in Prince George's Country. Adolph met Peterson in 1999 when the developer was still pursuing the old Port America Project. From this, and subsequent meetings, Adolph and the Peterson Companies have worked to achieve equitable minority participation in what has become one of the nation's largest building and construction projects.

As head of The TAC Companies, LLC, Adolph is a knowledgeable of the industry and a key outreach organizer and planner of the Peterson Companies' and Gaylord National's Local and Minority Business Utilization and Local Participation Program.

"We are fully committed to maximizing utilization of Local Business Enterprises (LBEs) and Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs) on the National Harbor Project," said Adolph. His 12-person TAC office staff works to identify, certify and increase the capacities and growth development of local, small and minority-owned businesses and their associations with the National Harbor Project.

"Having Prince George's County people involved in the project is a priority," said Adolph. "We also seek to communicate with and utilize minority business enterprises throughout the region." The agreement Adolph helped National Harbor companies negotiate with the County assures "best efforts" to ensure that 30 percent or more of all new hiring for construction employees will be county residents. The agreement involves potential participation levels up to \$250 million, and also dictates "best efforts" to "cause 30 percent (or more)" of total costs of construction to go to



▲ Ron Adolph's company is helping to ensure minority participation in the development of the National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Md.

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LBEs/MBEs.

Adolph said the agreements encompass goals for LBEs/MBEs to get operation and maintenance contracts and are subject to the direction and consultation of an oversight committee. The TAC Companies have been active in meeting with area minority contractor groups and often participates in forms to illustrate and outline upcoming bid opportunities.

"We invite people and companies with services and products to offer in this project," stated Adolph.

As the Washington area's most dominate hospitality venue, in coming years the National Harbor Project is anticipated to have full retail dining, entertainment, residential, commercial office and hospitality uses. Adolph said the Peterson Companies and Gaylord National have incentive programs to attract and create ongoing

opportunities for LBE/MBE franchise, tenants or service companies with regard to their management and operation.

In addition to minority business and investment ventures The TAC companies are pursuing, practical and current applications are already underway across the county. With the opening of National Harbor, Prince George's County's hospitality is expected to grow by 50 percent. With the Gaylord complex and five more hotel and timeshare chains coming to National Harbor, the number of hospitality jobs is expected to grow to 2,800.

Using a \$1 million contribution from Gaylord Hotels, Prince George's Community College plans to launch a Hospitality Institute where local students can be trained and build a career pipeline for National Harbor. The institute will offer two-year associate degree pro-

grams in lodging, culinary arts and food service, and meetings and convention planning. The program will use the kitchens of local high schools for training.

As it moves forward and the skyline grows, Adolph points out that National Harbor is "changing everything south of Washington."

A Prince George's Community College report forecasts 13,417 new construction jobs in the county by 2010. While Adolph points out that workers on the project are from all areas of the region; last year, construction workers in Prince George's County earned an average of \$1,009 per week, according to data from the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

*(Next week a profile of African Americans involved in building and buying into the National Harbor Project.)*