

# A Brighter, More Balanced Future for West Baltimore

4MLK – BALTIMORE, MD

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AIA, LEED AP BDC,  
Senior Architect at ZGF Architects



The west side of Baltimore had been previously known as an underdeveloped community with challenges that included poverty, crime, and economic disparities. However, the community is on the rise. In fact, a recent investment in the area has brought along new housing developments, vital community centers, and local business that are beginning to thrive.

One of those investments includes 4MLK, an eight-story, 250,000 square-foot multi-tenant laboratory and office building in the BioPark at the University of Maryland. The building includes cutting-edge lab spaces,

“flexible, scale-in-place lab and innovation infrastructure,” and a civic lounge and assembly space to encourage community gathering and networking. Outside of the building, 4MLK enhances the surrounding public plaza with retail and dining options on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Serving as one of the new faces for West Baltimore, the building needed to make a good first impression. ZGF relied on top-notch materials to achieve this, including twelve narrow stile stainless steel custom balanced doors from Ellison Bronze.

### Engineered for Excellence

The specification of high-performance narrow stile balanced doors allowed for maximum glass use that contributed to an open atmosphere. The doors were installed at multiple different entrances across the first floor, including the main entryway to the building.

“With the size of the door that we needed, we were striving to show as much glass as possible with low sightlines while still maintaining durability,” said Eric Tan, AIA, LEED AP BDC, senior architect at ZGF Architects. “Our goal was to minimize visible framework, achieving a sleek aesthetic that could withstand the wear and tear of daily use.”

Ellison balanced doors proved to be the ideal solution, selected for their durability and aesthetics. Ellison doors are designed to last a lifetime and backed by an industry-best 10-year warranty. For added assurance, Ellison provides detailed record keeping on each door they manufacture, leading to easy maintenance in case the need for replacement parts arises.

“We have used Ellison doors in the past and were always pleased with the quality, performance, and look of the doors,” said Tan. “Ellison has the ability to take something very complex and make it look very simple because a lot of the balanced hardware is hidden, which creates a much cleaner look than alternative entry options.”

The architects commended Ellison doors for their ease of installation and compatibility with commonly used curtain wall systems. Specifying them helped the design team achieve the exact look they were aiming for: sleek lines with lots of glass, allowing for plenty of natural light to enter the interior.





Balanced doors also offer a unique advantage due to their distinctive design that leads to smooth operation. The pivot point, located at two-thirds of the door's width, creates a more balanced fulcrum point for distributing the door's weight, allowing for larger and heavier doors to be opened with ease. This design also results in a reduced door swing area, making them ideal for spaces with a tighter footprint, or municipalities that have strict sidewalk projection codes.

Additionally, Ellison doors are highly customizable, with a wide range of materials, finishes, and hardware options to choose from, allowing for seamless integration with any architectural style.

### **LEEDing the Charge**

4MLK represents a strategic effort to cultivate innovation and drive economic development in West Baltimore. In fact, when 4MLK was completed, it doubled the BioPark's available commercial space. After the ribbon cutting in early 2025, the space was first occupied by the University of Maryland School of Medicine and Wexford Science & Technology's (the project's developer) global headquarters.

4MLK is the first building in West Baltimore to pursue LEED Gold Certification. Construction began in 2022 and was completed in September of 2024.

In addition to Ellison Bronze, Wexford, and ZGF Architects, the project team included general contractor Whiting-Turner and engineers and consultants Bowman Consulting Group Ltd., STV Inc., Mahan Rykiel Associates, and Hope Furrer Associates.

*Ellison*

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