

Schaefer leaves his mark — and name

By Edward Gunts
Sun Staff Writer

For nearly eight years, William Donald Schaefer has been known as a "Do It Now" governor impatient to leave his mark on Maryland.

As he nears the end of his second and final term in state office, Mr. Schaefer is leaving his name as well — in every corner of the state.

Visitors to Baltimore will find it at the 29-story William Donald Schaefer Tower — the new name for the old Merritt Tower at 6 St. Paul St. Or the William Donald Schaefer Life Sciences Institute. Or the William Donald Schaefer Center for Public Policy.

There's also a Schaefer Circle, Schaefer Plaza, Schaefer Promenade, Schaefer House and Schaefer Hotel, all in Baltimore. A William Donald Schaefer Hall in St. Mary's County. A Schaefer Center for Superconductivity Research in College Park.

And soon to come: the Gov. William Donald Schaefer International Terminal at Baltimore-Washington International Airport. The William Donald Schaefer Government Services Building in Frederick. And possibly, the William Donald Schaefer Bridge over the Severn River in Annapolis.

For months, groups around Maryland have been lining up to honor Mr. Schaefer before he leaves office by naming a building, park or project after him.

As a result, with less than six months left in office, Maryland's 58th governor appears destined to end up with more state landmarks named after him than anyone since the 17th-century Calverts.

He seems touched by all the attention.

"I don't know if you know it, but I am so pleased if you name a matchstick after me," Mr. Schaefer told a crowd earlier this month in Frederick, where construction began on a \$5.3 million municipal office building that will bear his name.

"I am beside myself with joy. . . . How can you not feel good when people want to honor you?"

Lainy LeBow-Sachs, the governor's public relations director, said: "The outpouring is phenomenal. Everyone wants to pay tribute to him before he leaves office."

And these are not token gestures, she said. "Every one is a worthy project that the governor was instrumental in bringing about during his tenure."

Not everyone is impressed.

"The only thing left to change is the state's name," quipped Sen. Julian Lapidus, a Baltimore Democrat and frequent critic of Mr. Schaefer. "Instead of Maryland, it'll be Schaeferland."

"Everyone from the bureaucrats on down is scrambling to get on the bandwagon before it rolls to a stop," Mr. Lapidus said. "I think they're overwhelmed with Schaeferitis."

According to state officials, nearly a dozen buildings, public spaces or programs have already been named in honor of the governor — in each case at the suggestion of others.

Some of the decisions were approved by Maryland's Board of Public Works, a three-member panel on which Mr. Schaefer sits. But the governor is not necessarily involved.

For example, the board voted to rename the state office tower at 6 St. Paul St. in honor of Mr. Schaefer last month, while he was traveling in Europe. The General Assembly passed a bill to name the airport's new International Terminal after him on the last day of its session this spring. The name of the Frederick office building, which will be owned by the city and leased by the state, was suggested by public officials there.

Over the years, many Maryland governors have had buildings or other public works named after them.

Gov. Ritchie Highway is named for Alfred C. Ritchie, who served from 1920-1935. The state office complex in Baltimore bears the name of Herbert R. O'Connor (1939-1947). The Chesapeake Bay Bridge commemorates William Preston Lane Jr. (1947-1951).

But none comes close to Mr. Schaefer's tally.

State archivist Edward Papenfuse said he isn't surprised. He attributes the recent wave of dedications to a confluence of factors, including Mr. Schaefer's long history of public service and an increase in the volume of state construction projects in recent years.

"There's a long precedent for naming structures that the state has paid for," Dr. Papenfuse said. "But today we're building a lot more than we built in the days of Emerson Harrington [1916-1920] or Governor

Ritchie. My guess is that by virtue of the outpouring of decisions by people to say thanks to Governor Schaefer, more buildings will be named after him than any other governor" in state history.

Dr. Papenfuse also noted that the dedications are consistent with Mr. Schaefer's political style, which he likens to that of former New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

Mr. Schaefer "has focused the attention of his administration on dealing with many issues that require structures to be built," such as the light rail system, the Convention Center expansion and the Camden Yards ballpark, Dr. Papenfuse said.

"He has been an extraordinarily dynamic and forceful administrator with a clear vision for Maryland. In that context, when he leaves office, he leaves behind a tremendous amount of achievements which fall into the category of built structures."

"That's not to take away from the accomplishments of any of his predecessors. It's just his style of service to the people of Maryland."

Mr. Schaefer has been in public office since 1955, when he was first elected to the Baltimore City Council. The practice of naming buildings and other structures after him actually dates back to the 15-year period when he served as mayor of Baltimore, from 1971 to 1987.

During that time, his visibility was enhanced by bus stop benches, construction signs and other stationary objects inscribed, "William Donald Schaefer and the citizens of Baltimore."

One of the first buildings to be named after Mr. Schaefer was the old Abbey Hotel in the Mount Vernon neighborhood of Baltimore. The proprietor of the low-budget inn renamed it the Schaefer Hotel in the early 1980s, long before Mr. Schaefer reached the governor's office.