



# Streetlights

The Newsletter of the Maryland Downtown Development Association

*Promoting the Vitality of Maryland's Downtowns and Traditional Business Districts*

August 2005

## ***MDDA to Host Two Informational Workshops***

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In the coming weeks, MDDA will be hosting two ninety-minute informational workshops at Bowie City Hall. These programs will focus on giving you new ideas to spruce up the look of your downtown and to help promote it online.

On Friday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, Jim Blakeslee of the Bethesda-based firm of Geocentric, Inc. will make a presentation on “**Interactive Guides and Maps for Your Downtown**”. Jim will discuss new specialty software and online services that can assist cities, counties, and non-profits affordably self-manage and self-publish guides and maps online.

On Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, Brian Vavrina of the Dunkirk-based firm of Victor Stanley, Inc., will talk about “**Furnishing the Downtown Streetscape**”. Brian will be showing new ways to use innovative design and quality site furnishings to make your main streets a more welcoming place for locals and visitors alike.

These programs will be a great chance to ask questions, get answers, and meet some of your fellow MDDA members. Bowie City Hall is located at 2614 Kenhill Drive in Bowie. Admission is free to members and \$10 for non-members. If you plan on attending, please RSVP by e-mail at [marylanddowntown@earthlink.net](mailto:marylanddowntown@earthlink.net).

## ***Brookings Institution Releases Report on Downtown Revitalization***

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Recently the Brookings Institution released a report entitled “Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization.” It is a fascinating survey of what steps successful cities have taken to redevelop and reinvent their downtowns. Although the report is focused on larger cities, it offers a variety of lessons for those working to revitalize smaller downtowns and main streets.

The report concentrates on the notion that all successful downtowns have a sense of “walkable urbanity”; that they are places where retail, residential, and entertainment uses seamlessly mix, and where “a new experience can be had nearly every time you take to the streets.” There is no easy way to create this “walkable urbanity”. It is an art, not a science. But the report offers interesting ideas – some obvious, some more novel – about how a downtown can be revitalized.

For example, the report states that in the early stages of creating a revitalization plan, appealing to “the sense of memory and emotion that the downtown unleashes” in the local community is of great importance. The report says that the generations that still remember the vibrant downtowns of the 40’s, 50’s, and 60’s are the community leaders and town elders of today. They are the bank presidents, opinion

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## ***Brookings Report***

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makers, and philanthropists that will be essential to any revitalization. Appealing to their memories of a downtown “where all the lights were bright, where first dates occurred, where parents worked and parades were held” can spur on a revitalization plan.

The report also mentions how scrapping old zoning and building codes can streamline the revitalization process. It calls for simplified, “form-based” codes that reinforce the development of walkable urbanity. One particular example of this is the new code for Downtown Albuquerque, which is made up of twenty-one “guiding principles.” Once a developer demonstrates that these principles are being followed, they are issued a building permit in three weeks administratively.

Finally, the report also looks at the importance of developing a local-serving retail strategy for downtown. The chances for creating such a healthy retail mix are better than they have been in a long time. The report mentions that grocery stores in downtown locations are seeing higher profit margins due to needing less shelf space for low-profit paper goods - like diapers - and having more space for high-profit take-out food that caters to young professionals and empty-nesters. Also, the limitation on land that can be assembled in and near downtown can be a selling point for smaller local and national retailers: Wal-Mart, Target, and other “big box” competitors are unable to build their huge stores anywhere near them.

If you would like to read the entire report, you can view it online at [http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20050307\\_12steps.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20050307_12steps.htm)

## ***MDDA Exhibits at MEDA Conference***

In June MDDA was one of a dozen exhibitors at the Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) Annual Conference at Rocky Gap. The gathering, which included two days of informative seminars on the current and future state of economic development across the state, was the largest ever for MEDA.

Executive Director Richard Chambers manned the MDDA table and got a chance to meet and talk to policy makers, government officials, and economic development professionals from around Maryland. MDDA’s appearance at the conference was a great success and helped to further our organization’s role as THE advocate for Maryland’s downtowns.

## ***Ocean City Receives Community Legacy Award***

On June 28<sup>th</sup> Ocean City received a Community Legacy Award from Governor Ehrlich and DHCD Secretary Hoskins. These state funds will go towards the Ocean City Development Corporation’s façade program, which is designed to work in collaboration with the efforts of property and business owners in order to renovate some of the area’s oldest buildings.

The Community Legacy funds will also be utilized for streetscape improvements on South 1<sup>st</sup> Street and to preserve the Tarry-A-While Guest House. The Ocean City CDC is contributing \$92,500; Ocean City businesses are leveraging \$285,000; and the Town of Ocean City is leveraging \$910,000. Combined with the state funds, Ocean City will be receiving nearly \$1.5 million for its revitalization efforts.

## *Downtown Notes*

### ***Main Street Training Will Focus on Market Analysis***

On September 12th, there will be a workshop on the components and uses of market analysis, data sources, data analysis, and the application of market data to your organization's activities. The workshop will take place at DHCD headquarters in Crownsville. Contact Yvette Wilson at 410-209-5800 for more information.

### ***Frederick Wins Great American Main Street Award***

At the National Main Street Conference in May, Frederick was awarded a 2005 Great American Main Street Award for its efforts in revitalizing its downtown through historic preservation. Frederick is the first city in Maryland to receive this honor.

### ***Catholic Relief Services to Stay Downtown***

Catholic Relief Services has decided to keep its headquarters on the west side of downtown Baltimore. The organization recently signed a lease agreement with the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation to move into the historic Stewart's department store building located at Howard and Lexington Streets. The Stewart's building, one of the most prominent historic landmarks in downtown, had been empty for years until a recent renovation returned it to its former glory. Other former department store buildings in Baltimore – such as the Hecht Company building – have recently been brought back to life for apartment and office use.

## *Website of the Month*

*The "New Rules Project" of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance*

[www.newrules.org](http://www.newrules.org)

The New Rules Project is a program of the Minneapolis-based Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR). The Institute proposes a "New Localist" approach to development that focuses on creating "human-scaled, environmentally healthy, politically active, and economically robust communities". The website contains a variety of policy tools and tips for creating more self-reliant downtowns. In particular, the "Retail" section of the website covers new ideas that communities are using to foster local ownership of retail and more intimate links between commerce and place. Among other things, it contains an interesting article on "50 Ideas to Strengthen Independent Businesses in Your Community".

### ***Join MDDA!***

Become a part of a growing organization of people dedicated to making Maryland's downtowns the best in the nation.

**Individual Member: \$75**

**Limited Corporate/Organizational Member: \$125** (*Full MDDA membership for two members of your organization*)

**Corporate/Organizational Member: \$200** (*Full MDDA membership for three or more members of your business or organization*)

**Please send membership requests to:  
MDDA  
P.O. Box 512  
Crownsville, MD. 21032- 0512**

## ***MDDA Current Membership List***

The following is a list of the organizations, businesses, and governmental entities that are members of MDDA as of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005

City of Annapolis  
City of Bowie Dept. of Planning & Economic Development  
City of College Park  
City of Frederick Office of Economic Development  
City of Gaithersburg  
City of Hagerstown Department of Planning  
City of Laurel  
City of Rockville  
City of Salisbury  
City of Westminster  
David H. Gleason Associates  
Dean R. Camlin & Associates  
Elkton Alliance, Inc.  
Frederick Ward Associates  
The Hellman Company, Inc.  
Maryland Economic Development Association  
Maryland Rural Council  
Montgomery County Dept. of Housing & Community Affairs  
Ocean City Development Corporation  
St. Mary's County Community Development Corporation  
Salisbury/Wicomico Dept. of Planning, Zoning & Community Development  
Sanders Designs, Inc.  
Silver Spring Regional Center  
Takoma/Langley Crossroads Development Authority

### ***MDDA Looking for Board Members***

MDDA is looking for current members who would like to sit on our Board of Directors. If you are interested in being an active part of our organization, please contact us at 410-889-6241 or at [marylanddowntown@earthlink.net](mailto:marylanddowntown@earthlink.net)

Town of Berlin  
Town of Hampstead  
Town of Kensington  
Town of Leonardtown  
Town of North East  
Town of Oakland  
Town of Pocomoke City  
Town of Rising Sun  
Town of Sykesville  
Worcester County Office of Economic Development

### **Maryland Downtown Development Association**

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#### **Contact MDDA:**

P.O. Box 512  
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