S t r e e t l i g h t s

The Newsletter of the Maryland Downtown Development Association

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

December 2005

MDDA Annual Membership Meeting Held in Annapolis

On November 18th MDDA held its annual membership meeting at the Governor Calvert House of the Historic Inns of Annapolis. Over 30 members got the opportunity to dine on good food and discuss the issues facing their respective downtown areas.

At the meeting the membership voted on and approved a new Board of Directors. This included three brand new MDDA members: Jacquelyn Schingeck, Vice President of Century Engineering; Brynne Hayes, Executive Director of Urban Salisbury, Inc.; and Michael Day, Main Street Coordinator for Pocomoke City and Berlin.

The keynote speaker for the event was Maryland's Secretary of Business and Economic Development, Aris Melissaratos. His hour-long speech concentrated on the present and future state of retail development in Maryland. He noted the importance of organizations like MDDA and the need for coordinated efforts between non-profits, local governments and the State to bring a retail renaissance to our historic downtowns. The Secretary also discussed his views on the lively debate over the pros and cons of chain store development,

Continued on page 2

The Economic Virtues of Downtown

As America shifts from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy, what do our downtowns have to offer? Quite a lot, according to one of America's foremost urbanism experts. In a presentation to the Delaware Valley Smart Growth Alliance in November, Amy Liu, Deputy Director of the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, made the argument that areas with high population and employment densities are a perfect fit for businesses on the cutting edge of the new economy.

Today it is ideas, creativity, and innovation that drives the economy. This means that successful businesses are dependant upon high concentrations of workers with advanced skills and a college education. In her presentation, Ms. Liu focused on the fact that these well-educated "knowledge workers" are the sort of people looking to live and work in vibrant, densely populated areas with plentiful public amenities, and a tolerant culture. In other words, they want to be downtown. Indeed, cities such as Seattle, Chicago, Baltimore, as well as a variety of smaller cities and towns have seen marked population increases in their downtown areas due to their ability to attract these young, urban professionals.

Continued on page 2

MDDA Meeting

Continued from page 1

calling for a "healthy diversity" of chains and locally owned stores in our downtowns.

If you could not make it to the meeting, please come to MDDA's next Free Friday Workshop on January 27th at 10AM at Bowie City Hall. Tom McGilloway of the firm of Mahan Rykiel will be discussing how to develop a master plan for your downtown. If you can attend please RSVP by sending an e-mail to ***marylanddowntown@earthlink.net*** or by calling 410-889-6241.

DBED Secretary Aris Melissaratos was the keynote speaker at this year's MDDA Membership Meeting

The Economics of High-Density Development

Continued from page 1

According to Ms. Liu, as downtown areas attract "knowledge workers" they become hotbeds of technological innovation. This should come as no surprise. Despite what some might still think, economic growth has always been generated by face to face interactions among educated and experienced people. Vibrant downtowns are the perfect place for this to happen. There is already a proven correlation between high density areas and increased innovation. A 2001 study showed that for every doubling of employment density, the number of patents per capita increase, on average, by 30 percent.

Downtowns are also attractive to the leaders of the knowledge economy for a very simple reason - greater productivity. Ms. Liu noted recent statistics showing that a doubling of employment density increases average employee productivity by at least 6 percent. Also, workers in the ten states with the highest employment densities produced 25% more annual output value than those in the ten states with the lowest employment densities.

As downtowns have a great deal to offer knowledge economy workers, those workers have a lot to offer downtowns. In a recent study, it was shown that for every 1 percentage point increase in the college educated population, the wages of everyone else in the metropolitan area also increases by 1 percent. In other words, attracting educated people downtown is good for everyone.

If you would like to read more about Ms. Liu's presentation, "The Benefits of High Density Development", please go to *http://www.brookings.edu/metro/speeches/20051117_liu.htm*

Downtown Notes

Milestone for Neighborhood BusinessWorks Program

In November the Caribbean Kitchen, located at 353 North Calvert Street in Baltimore, was named the 200th loan recipient of the Department of Housing and Community Development's Neighborhood BusinessWorks program.

The Neighborhood BusinessWorks Program (formerly known as the Neighborhood Business Development Program) provides flexible financing in the form of below-market interest rate loans to small businesses and nonprofit organizations locating or expanding in locally designated neighborhood revitalization areas. Financing ranges from $25,000 to $500,000 for up to 50 percent of a project's total cost. To date the program has invested $41,699,721 statewide and generated $160,438,541 in total project development costs, and created or retained more than 4,000 full-time jobs.

The Caribbean Kitchen, which is run by Michael and Shirley Lewis, will use the award to refinance the restaurant and renovate two second floor apartments.

To learn more about the program, please visit http://www.dhcd.state.md.us/Website/programs/nbdp/nbdp.aspx

Maryland Ranks Third in Overall Wealth

Maryland is the third-richest state in the nation and home to two of its richest counties, a U.S. Census Bureau report showed in November. This is in part because of a high number of double-income families and the many well-paying service sector jobs in the D.C. area.

The report, based on 2003 surveys and local tax records, listed Howard as the nation's eighth-richest county, with a median income of $79,455, and Montgomery County 11th, with a median income of $76,546.

The median household income in Maryland was $54,302, behind Connecticut at $56,409 and New Jersey at $56,356.

California City Says No to Wal-Mart

The City Council of Santa Maria, California, voted unanimously to deny Wal-Mart's request to rezone land for a supercenter. The vote took place in November before an overflow crowd of more than 200 citizens. Nearly forty people spoke at the hearing. Santa Maria is a city of about 75,000 people, located just north of Santa Barbara.

The 55-acre site Wal-Mart wanted for a store is currently zoned light industrial and is situated on the edge of town. In voting against the rezoning, City Council members pointed to the new "Downtown Specific Plan", which calls for revitalizing the downtown area and states that, in order to do so, the city must limit retail sprawl on the outskirts.

The city has recently approved some shopping expansions near the local mall, but concluded that the larger Wal-Mart project was too much. "I think we need to protect the businesses that made Santa Maria the city it is," said Councilor Alice Patino.

The council also concluded that the community would be better served by maintaining land zoned for light industry and its higher-paying jobs.

Seven tips for developing better relations with your legislators

With the legislative session about to open, we thought the following tips may be of use to you.

1. Give legislators a tour of your downtown area and its major public facilities.

2. Ask a legislator to sponsor a bill that benefits your downtown.

3. Invite legislators to address a regular meeting of your organization, or a meeting of the town council. Try to do so in May or June so the legislator can give a post-session report on what the General Assembly did for your area.

4. Invite legislators to town or organizational functions (picnics, parades, special events, etc.) and give them an opportunity to speak.

5. Telephone, e-mail or write legislators every so often to express an opinion on a relevant issue of concern.

6. Send your legislator a holiday or birthday card.

7. Always thank a legislator publicly for his or her help.

Seat Pleasant is Now Hiring

The City of Seat Pleasant is seeking to fill the following three positions: Director of Community Services, Director of Economic Development, and Director of Public Works.

If you have any questions regarding the positions, please call301-336-2600. If you are interested in applying, submit resumes on or before December 23, 2005 to City Administrator, Bryan Alston, 6301 Addison Road, Seat Pleasant, MD 20743. You can also fax resumes to 301- 336-0029.

Maryland Economic Development Association Winter Conference to be Held in January

McCormick Chairman, CEO, & President Robert Lawless will be the keynote speaker for the 2006 MEDA Winter Conference on January 5, 2006 at the Samuel Riggs Alumni Center on the campus of the University of Maryland.

The theme of the conference will be "Competing in a Flat World", a concept that has received a great deal of attention with the publication of Tom Friedman's best-selling book *The World is Flat.* If you would like to register for the conference please visit *www.medamd.com*

Contact MDDA!

Richard Chambers
Executive Director

Phone & Fax: 410-889-6241
e-mail: marylanddowntown@earthlink.net