Greetings!

This month EDAB e-news features a workforce readiness theme, sharing how plans for higher education in the County will keep our workforce fresh and ready for new opportunities. Building on the area’s successful magnet school programs, HEAT Center R&D and community college offerings, our task force is evaluating programs for new grads through experienced workers. Our feature article shows you how the transformation is beginning.

In the Business Spotlight, we pay tribute to a local firm celebrating 20 years - ADW-Architectural Design Works, Inc. Read more about how this firm conquered the recession and emerged as a premiere architectural team playing a major role in local BRAC-related building design.

For more information on EDAB and its role in advocating for positive economic growth in the County, or to become involved in EDAB, visit www.harfordbusiness.org.

Best Regards,

Eric McLauchlin
Chairman
EDAB

Business Spotlight
ADW - Architectural Design Works, Inc.

Twenty years ago, W. Paul Thompson, Jr. acquired Plitt & Associates, Inc., an architectural firm owned by his late mentor, August V. Plitt. With it came a single client, W.R. Grace, three employees and a looming recession. Through many challenges, ADW-Architectural Design Works, Inc. has emerged to be a thriving firm with eight employees, two local offices in Bel Air and Towson and an ample supply of buildings that have become household names.

With a passion for design, Thompson steered the company into community architecture, with one of its first developments being The Shops at Annapolis at Rts. 543 and 25 in Bel Air. According to Thompson, part of the firm’s success is due to controlled growth. “We grew carefully, adding strategic new talent to diversify the firm. Our boutique firm is like a family and this was very important to longevity.”

As they celebrate their 20th anniversary, the business philosophy is to think more like developers, bankers and brokers. The staff works as a team with clients, investing in their projects to keep them moving. ADW-Architectural Design Works’ local projects include Slavie Federal Savings Bank’s Corporate Headquarters, The Atwood Professional Center, Freedom Federal Credit Union’s Headquarters, and The Crackpot Restaurant (now Bellisimos). ADW-Architectural Design Works, Inc. is currently designing a number of BRAC-related projects, including Corporate Office Properties Trust’s North Gate Retail Center, Water’s Edge Conference Center & Service Engineering’s Corporate Headquarters, and The Comer at Beard’s Hill Retail Center.

Thompson and his colleagues also believe strongly in giving back to the community. They donated their professional services for Harford County’s first hospice facility, “The Senator Bob Hooper Hospice House.” In addition, the firm takes on annual pro bono projects. ADW-Architectural Design Works, Inc. boasts numerous awards, including the Town of Bel Air’s Archiblue Award for design Excellence and Business of the Year, HBAM’s (Home Builders Association of Maryland) SMC (Sales and Marketing Council) Award of Excellence, as well as numerous awards for commercial projects.

Visit their website at www.adwashdesignworks.com

Workforce Readiness: A Transformation

Eric McLauchlin

A recent Forbes Magazine article named the Baltimore-Towson area the third best city in the nation for fourth quarter employment outlook. According to a survey by staffing company Manpower Group, Baltimore-Towson has a net employment outlook of 13 percent, based on hiring plans of local companies.

If that same study were conducted in Harford County, the result would have little to do with the halo effect of being a neighbor to the north of Baltimore-Towson. The outlook would be even brighter, thanks to the presence of high technology companies, defense contractors and BRAC opportunities. These companies know they have access to a qualified workforce in Harford County. From new graduates through middle managers, we are educating potential employees and looking for ways to increase access locally to higher education.

Our youth develop skills for high technology jobs through magnet programs at six County schools, including disciplines in science and biomedical science, math, global studies, finance, Homeland Security and technical studies. Up to 400 eleventh graders at these schools are also invited to Futures 11, an annual conference-type event that provides access to technology-based jobs and higher education opportunities.

Managers and mid-level executives already in the workforce can take advantage of the HEAT Center, which has a workforce training center, instructional meeting spaces, interactive technologies and computer labs. Six area colleges partner with the Center for classes and several technology firms have research and development labs in the space.
We have the fundamental platform for workforce readiness, but if we are to become a premiere technology business region, we must begin a transformation. We must create a vibrant and rich education community, enabling an educated workforce across the spectrum. The Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) has embraced this concept and the concept of House Bill 1156, which calls for the establishment of a task force "to study the creation of a Regional Higher Education Center in Northeastern Maryland...to study and make recommendations regarding the higher education needs of the Northeastern Maryland region." EDAB is working closely with this task force to identify needs and foster the growth of higher education in the County and the region.

Spurred by the requirements of BRAC companies, the task force has recognized the need to optimize the existing higher education and training center and provide opportunities for four-year degrees, two-plus-two programs with community colleges and major universities, and the need for Masters, Doctorate and certification programs that will help sustain commercial growth in the County. It is looking at ways to leverage all the needs of government, business and education. To do that, the task force must get feedback from businesses about what they need for their workers now and in the future.

In addition, BRAC has necessitated extensive requirements for research and development. We would be missing a stellar opportunity if we failed to address doctorate, post doctorate and special studies by creating a world class University Research Park. The Park will provide high research content programs, with on-site university professors reaching back to their home campuses for resources as the building blocks of a successful University Research Park.

In today's fiscal climate, we know there is not an immediate brick and mortar solution for any of these programs. But there may be a technology solution. By using the collaborative technology that is already available like file sharing, video conferencing, and distance learning, we can provide remote access to top level institutions not only regionally, but nationally while offering the workforce a flexible learning schedule that is compatible with work and family life.

A plan that supports the full spectrum of technology employees also supports businesses that service these employees -- like legal, communications, banking, etc. Businesses that have long supported Aberdeen Proving Ground have already augmented federal programs with universities for biological and chemical studies. New BRAC-related opportunities require skills in information management, human languages, information assurance and artificial intelligence, to name a few. Now we need to build on that strategy to augment local programs that support the C4ISR relocated in the BRAC process to APG, as well as mathematics and other disciplines. These will ensure Harford County has the workforce of the future.

**Fast Facts: Education & Workforce Readiness**

- Six County schools offer magnet programs in technology related fields: Science and Math Academy at Aberdeen High School, Biomedical Sciences Program at Bel Air High School, Global Studies and International Baccalaureate Program at Edgewood High School, Academy of Finance at Edgewood High School, and a variety of technical programs at Harford Technical High School.
- Up to 400 students from the magnet programs are invited to Futures 11, an annual event for 11th graders to give them a head start on higher education and career opportunities.
- In information-related fields, Harford County is projected to see a 22 percent rise in job growth between 2000 and 2015.
- In the Manpower Group survey that named Baltimore-Towson third in the nation for job outlook, 20 percent of the area's hiring managers surveyed had a positive outlook for fourth quarter 2011. Seventy-one percent anticipate no change and seven percent expect a negative impact. Two percent were uncertain.
- Other regions tied with Baltimore-Towson for a 13 percent employment outlook in the Manpower Group survey were Greensboro-High Point, NC, St. Louis, MO and Tulsa, OK.
- Harford County's HEAT Center offers access to these colleges and universities: College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, Morgan State University, Towson University, University of Maryland at College Park, University of Phoenix and Harford Community College.
- The HEAT Center's 152-acre campus houses offices for nine technology companies, including a $200 million R&D facility for Battelle. It houses over 200 scientists and technicians and includes 16 chemistry and biology labs.

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David R. Craig, Harford County Executive

The Economic Development Advisory Board consists of a number of subcommittees - including technology, workforce development, finance, tourism and land use - dedicated to the positive growth and economic development of Harford County.