



BWIB Memberandum

Week of December 12, 2008

- **National Unemployment Numbers Spike in November 2008**

Data released by the U.S. Department of Labor last week indicated that employers nationwide slashed 533,000 jobs in November, the most in 34 years. This decline has resulted in a corresponding boost to the overall unemployment rate to 6.7 percent, dramatic proof the country is careening deeper into recession. As companies have made reductions in hiring, the unemployment rate bolted from 6.5 percent in October to 6.7 percent last month, representing a 15-year high. One recent Baltimore-based example of this dynamic is financial services firm Legg Mason, Inc., which announced an 8 percent cut (99 employees) to its overall workforce.

The national unemployment rate would have moved even higher, had it not been for the exodus of 422,000 people from the work force. Economists believe that many of these individuals probably abandoned their job searches out of sheer frustration. In November 2007, the jobless rate was at 4.7 percent.

More broadly, a panel of economic experts has indicated that data shows that the U.S. economy has been in a recession since December of last year. Since the start of this recession, the economy has lost 1.9 million jobs, the number of unemployed people increased by 2.7 million, and the jobless rate has risen by 1.7 percentage points.

- **Mayor Dixon Unveils City Sustainability Plan**

On December 3rd, Mayor Sheila Dixon was joined by elected officials, residents, and community leaders to introduce the draft recommendations of the Baltimore Sustainability Plan. The plan was prepared by the Baltimore Commission on Sustainability, which was created in August of 2007. This Commission is made up of members representing community organizations, local non-profits, labor, private industry, local institutions and city government.

The City's Sustainability Plan is designed to help Baltimore as a community think, plan, and act more in a more sustainable manner. It articulates the collective vision of a Sustainable Baltimore, lays out priority goals to move us toward this vision, and sets ambitious targets that will measure our progress toward these goals. Seven theme chapters have been identified based on the priorities articulated by the community: *Cleanliness, Pollution Prevention, Resource Conservation, Greening, Transportation, Education & Awareness, and Green Economy*. The Green Economy section focuses on steps that could be taken to promote the creation of green or environmentally-driven employment opportunities.

- **Recent Contract Will Add Jobs at the Port of Baltimore**

A new, 10-year contract between the Port of Baltimore and Finnish paper manufacturer UPM will bring at least 320,000 tons of products through the harbor annually. The UPM contract will result in 120 jobs and \$2.7 million in tax revenue, according to state officials familiar with its terms.

The 16,000-employee port is Maryland's largest provider of blue-collar jobs. This deal will clearly facilitate the port's efforts to maintain jobs, in the face of the present economic downturn. Last week's contract-signing took place in a \$32 million port-side warehouse built for UPM by the state about three years ago. The paper company has been shipping product through Baltimore since the early 1990s.

- **Dates of Interest**

Tuesday, Dec. 15th (12:30 pm) – BWIB Public Policy Committee Meeting
Tuesday, Jan. 13th (11:00 am) – BWIB Mature Worker Task Force Meeting
Wednesday, Jan. 14th – Opening Day of 2009 Maryland General Assembly Session
Wednesday, Jan. 21st (8:30 am) – BWIB Workforce System Effectiveness Committee Meeting
Thursday, Feb. 5th (8:00 am) – BWIB Training & Postsecondary Education Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 3rd (7:30 am) – BWIB Full Board Meeting
Thursday, March 5th (7:45 am) – BWIB Youth Council Meeting
Monday, April 13th – Last Day of 2009 Maryland General Assembly Session

****If you would like additional information regarding any of the issues or events discussed throughout this publication, please feel free to contact Jeff Smith.****