**Crime**

According to Police Major Kevin Davis, the number of criminal incidents in Langley Park has declined in recent months. Good work, Major! However, that clearly does not mean that the area is crime-free! And concern about safety remains fairly high.

More than a decade ago, Langley Park was the scene of many murders and other serious crimes. Then the crime numbers dropped. Might the numbers be increasing now as the economy struggles and anti-immigrant actions and language increase? And if so, what can Action Langley Park do to help? What can the police department do? And the residents? These are some of the questions that arose during the May meeting of the Board of Action Langley Park. And the Board’s goal is to understand the situation better and then to work with the police and others towards improvement.

**News item:** “John Reape Montoya was killed ... in the Langley Park area; he was shot execution-style against a wall bearing graffiti markings of MS-13.”

**News item:** “Erlli Amillcar Fuentes was found on the 8000 block of Riggs Road with stab wounds to the upper body. He was taken to a hospital, where he died a short time later.”

**News item:** “Isais Lopez-Vall was found in the 1300 block of Merrimac Drive with blunt-force trauma to the upper body. He was pronounced dead on the scene.”

**News item:** “The body of an unidentified man was found on a sidewalk behind a Langley Park liquor store. A preliminary investigation indicated he died of head trauma. The case is being treated as a possible homicide.”

**News item:** “Eduardo Escobar Martinez, 18, was found guilty for the fatal stabbing of a Silver Spring teenager and the attempted murder of a Langley Park man.”

**News item:** “Police say a man waiting at a bus stop in Langley Park was shot to death Saturday evening.”

**On-line comment:** “Man none of u all know what is like to live in LP. I live on 14 Ave, the center of LP, and I’ve seen more stabbings than u see on Youtube. Gangs own LP.”

Yes, alas, there are homicides and other serious crimes in Langley Park—and in Prince George’s County. Is this because there are many immigrants in Langley Park? Probably not; research indicates that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than their non-immigrant ethnic equivalents. Maybe Latinos in general are crime-prone? This is somewhat the case if one is very careful about the use of “prone”: Latino criminality is greater than that of Whites, although less than blacks. The rates of crime are imperfectly reflected in incarcerations.

“Crime” continued on page 4

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**STAY IN SCHOOL → LIVE LONGER**

A major study, just released, reveals that more education leads to a longer life.* From the report: “The inequalities in all [causes of death] between Americans with less than high school education and college graduates increased rapidly from 1993 to 2001 due to both significant decreases in mortality from all causes, heart disease, cancer, stroke, and other conditions in the most educated and lack of change or increases among the least educated.” The authors conclude: “Socioeconomic inequalities in mortality are increasing rapidly due to continued progress by educated white and black men and white women, and stable or worsening trends among the least educated.” This result holds for European-Americans and African-Americans of both genders. Latinos were not studied, however it is likely that the same pattern exists.

There are many explanations for the difference. For instance, higher education heightens people’s ability to seek out information. Higher education is correlated with higher income, and in the USA money buys better health care. One researcher said, “The trend is best explained by tobacco, obesity, and high blood pressure.” That calls to mind the high fat and sodium diet of many overweight local residents. We must more strongly advocate good nutrition! As a Post headline (18 May) put it: “Obesity Threatens a Generation”; the sub-headline was “Earlier Deaths, Higher Health Costs.”

*www.plosone.org

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**CALENDAR**

- **Wednesday, June 4, 3-7 p.m.** The weekly Crossroads farmers’ market reopens on Holton Lane across from the post office and car wash.
- **Thursday, June 12, 7-8:40 p.m.**, Action Langley Park meets at the Langley Park Community Center. A main agenda item is crime.
- **Thursday, August 21, 7-8:40 p.m.**, Action Langley Park meets at the Langley Park Community Center.
- **Sunday, September 21, noon to 6 p.m.**, the county’s Hispanic Festival is at Lane Manor Park (7601 West Park Drive at University Boulevard).
- **Thursday, October 9, 7-8:40 p.m.**, Action Langley Park meets at the Langley Park Community Center.
- **Tuesday, November 4, all day**, the national election to select the country’s new president. If you’re eligible to vote, then **vote!**
- **Sunday, November 9, “Health Check” (a major health fair) takes place from noon to 4 p.m.** at the Langley Park Community Center.
- **Thursday, December 11, 7-8:40 p.m.**, Action Langley Park meets at the Langley Park Community Center.

For ALP information, email actionlangleypark@yahoo.com or call 301 405-4005. For Hispanic Festival information, call 301 445-4500 (English) or 301 445-4509 (Spanish).
The fence is going up, although some observers think that it slows immigrants down rather than prevents them from crossing the border. Of course, lots of undocumented immigrants are detained and eventually deported—often after spending some time in a “constraining” facility.
ECON SLUMP HITS LATINOS HARD

The economic expansion over the past decade created many opportunities for Latinos and others. As but one example, the construction industry soared. Alas, that industry has dramatically slowed, and the result is joblessness for many people. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment in less than two years has gone from under 5% to about 7% (that’s 40% more than all workers) - and of course the figures for Latinos do not represent the degree of underemployment or a defeated withdrawal from the job market (and in some cases withdrawal from the county). The downturn is impacting Langley Park. Some housing foreclosures are linked to the downturn, some rent payments are in arrears, and some families are doubling or tripling up.

IMMIGRANT ADAPTATION

A major Manhattan Institute study concludes that immigrants of the past quarter-century have been assimilating in the United States at a notably faster rate than did several previous generations, but less rapidly than did the immigrants of the great wave in the late 1890s. Assimilation varies by nationality; for instance, the Mexican and Salvadoran rates are slower than that for the people from Cuba or the Philippines. Presumably, legal status of entry, numbers of immigrants from a country (therefore immigrants can form ethnic enclaves that persist for many years), language, and social class (or at least money) are among the differentiating factors.

Alas, the adaptation of non-immigrant oldtimers has been uneven. In Frederick, Maryland, paranoia appears to have taken hold, and punitive steps have been taken against immigrants. Perhaps the disease spread from Prince William County in Virginia. Sad.

SCHOOL/EDUCATION NEWS

BUILDING DETERIORATION: A study by Parsons 3D/International found that many county school buildings were using equipment long past its prime. “Many mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are out of date and inefficient. ... Food-service equipment is largely in poor condition, with 65% of it beyond its normal life expectancy. Most buildings do not comply with federal guidelines for accessibility. And the buildings themselves—most are 30 to 50 years old—are showing signs of water damage and wear and tear.” The report is in accord with reports to this publication by teachers in several of the schools serving the children of Langley Park.

MIDDLE GRADES: According to a Washington Post article (8 May 2008), “A wave of change is sweeping the middle grades, prompted by concern that they were not teaching with the same rigor or yielding the same results as elementary or high schools. The most noticeable change is a dramatic increase in students taking accelerated math classes in the middle years, an initiative that seems to have spread to every school system in the region.” One Prince George’s County middle school ranks in the top 50 suburban schools for percent of students scoring “advanced”: Robert Goddard French Immersion School. Counties’ percentages: Howard, 42%; Montgomery, 37%; Frederick, 33%; Anne Arundel, 31%; Calvert, 31%, St. Mary’s, 29%, Charles23%, Prince George’s, 13%.

ADULT EDUCATION: An opinion article in the Washington Post (18 May 2007) also applies to Prince George’s County: “Unfortunately, many children will continue to struggle in school until the city makes a similarly bold investment in adult education. Adult education — including basic adult literacy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), GED preparation and family literacy — provides adults with the skills needed to succeed in their own lives. But, perhaps even more important, studies have consistently demonstrated a crucial link between adult education and children’s success at school. In a city where it is estimated that over a third of our adult residents have literacy skills at what the U.S. Department of Education considers “below basic,” a strong adult education system is the next critical component that must be addressed if we are to succeed in our efforts to raise school achievement. Policymakers sometimes describe investments in early-childhood education as “stopping illiteracy at the source,” but this approach ignores the central role that parents play in the transfer of literacy from one generation to the next.”

DETAINEE MISTREATMENT

The Washington Post has published a series of articles about the treatment of detainees. The May 17 editorial’s headline was: “Immigrant detainees suffer and die from poor care in a system where many shouldn’t be in the first place.” Ugh. On 11 May 2008, an article has the subtitle, “As tighter immigration policies strain federal agencies, the detainees in their care often pay a heavy cost.” For instance, detainees in need of medical care may not get it! On the 14th, the headline was “Some detainees are drugged for deportation: Immigrants sedated without medical reason.” The article begins, “The U.S. government has injected hundreds of foreigners it has deported with dangerous psychotropic drugs against their will....” These reports are about the USA! A related view of ICE and detention is in the film The Visitor.

YOU TUBE

Langley Park Day 2007 was captured on a YouTube video, and it has just come to our attention. LP Day is gaining some fame! Check the video out at http://youtube.com/watch?v=zigoyCg6SwM. If there are other good videos about Langley Park, let us know. Note: YouTube has more than 100 videos about a Langley Park, but most of them are about the Langley Park in England.

FOOD VENDOR BATTLES

The food vendors in Langley Park have been prevented from engaging in their micro-businesses for more than half a year. The impacted businesspeople are trying to have the county support licenses that will enable them to earn a living. That outcome is very uncertain. But Langley Park is not unique in having different stakeholders contest the use of public streets and sidewalks. Here’s the opening of a May 3 article in the New York Times about Los Angeles: “A new county ordinance restricting taco trucks has outraged ... construction workers, residents of East Los Angeles accustomed to plopping down in a folding chair, taco in one hand, nonalcoholic sangria in the other, as well as members of the taco-loving public willing to drive 15 miles for the best carnitas.”

EARN $500 AND LEARN!

Maryland Multicultural Youth Centers are offering a six week (June 23 – August 1) how-to-blog program for people 16 to 24 years old who live in the 20783 zip code area. Participants get a $500 stipend! For information: call 301 431-3121, x23.
Researchers have found, as Julie Phillips (Social Problems, August 2002) puts it, “The racial homicide differential in the United States is extraordinarily large, with minorities exhibiting much higher homicide rates than non-Latino whites.” Here are some crime-enhancing factors that Phillips and other contemporary researchers point to: social pressures such as unemployment, poverty, income inequality, substandard housing, and inferior education. Furthermore, sociocultural isolation may be a factor in the development of a subculture that is dysfunctional.

A recent study by Bisciglia (2008) supports the view that segregation—is positively associated with homicide.

For Latinos, it appears clear that homicide rates “could be reduced by improving socioeconomic conditions for both minority populations. This conclusion provides some promising policy options. For example, improving levels of education, lowering levels of poverty, and reducing the extent of male unemployment among minority populations might well have an impact on levels of violence....

The police alone cannot contain homicide and other serious crime on its own. First, it takes a great deal of cooperation between police officers and area residents. Key police and neighborhood leaders should push harder to achieve this. But second, perhaps a significant reduction in crime can only be accomplished with better schools, more after-school programs, better employment opportunities, improved housing, maybe less violence in the media that leads to copycat behavior, and a better economy. Change is more than a campaign word. It also takes massive human resources, money, and more. Let’s push harder towards this end.

The June 12 meeting of Action Langley Park will begin to explore the needs, the options, and the steps that can be taken to improve the crime situation—and therefore the quality of life—in and around Langley Park.

COUNTY HEALTH HELP? NOT SOON!

Representatives of Action Langley Park, CASA de Maryland, and other organizations met with the head of the county’s Department of Health, Dr. Donald Shell, in early June to express the need for more county health services in critical areas such as the Langley Park area. Alas, health help is almost certainly not coming soon. For one, the county does have a very tight budget. Second, Dr. Shell points to facilities in Cheverly (which are, alas, not close!). Additionally, the impression was left that a reallocation of current resources, e.g., to establish basic health clinics in several parts of the country, is not an option now. The fact that the Health Department has space in the 1401 University Blvd. building did not seem to make an impression. Dr. Shell says there will be health needs assessments. (Of course, the needs are fairly well known already.) And there will be more talk. But actions that will make a difference? That seems unlikely for years.

WONDERFUL RESOURCES
Locating in Langley Park Area

Not too long ago, there were few non-profit organizations serving the residents of Langley Park and its nearby neighborhoods. That has dramatically changed. Joining CASA de Maryland, Catholic Charities, Centro Catolico, and a few other old-timers is Mary’s Center. And not long ago, the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center and CentroNia arrived. And there are more. Below is some core information.

MARY’S CENTER

Mary’s Center for Maternal and Child Care, which has delivered health-care, education and social services to immigrants in the Adams-Morgan area, has expanded to the International Corridor—specifically to the Long Branch neighborhood at 8709 Flower Avenue just west of Piney Branch Road. Its partner is Washington Adventist Hospital. The Washington Post reports: “Mary’s Center in Silver Spring will offer a full range of health-care services to residents in Montgomery and Prince George’s, regardless of their ability to pay or whether they have insurance.” This new facility is potentially a very important addition to the area.

AND...

Mary’s Multicultural Youth Center has, as its target population, area young people—perhaps especially those facing difficult personal challenges. “MMYC seeks to help youth become successful and happy young adults by providing a comprehensive set of programs to meet them and their families where they are and help them build the skills they need for future success.” The area office is in the building across University Boulevard from Langley Park at 7411 Riggs Road, suite 418, telephone 301 431 3121. MMYC is a key partner in the Center for Educational Partnership at 6200 Sheridan Avenue in Riverdale. (The ideal location for the center, the east wing of the Langley Park Community Center, was not made available by MNCPPC.)

CentroNia, begun as the Calvary Bilingual Multicultural Learning Center, has the goal of providing “quality affordable and accessible early childhood education to the children and families in its community.” It has opened a local facility at 1345 E. University Blvd. in Takoma Park across the street from Langley Park. The facility is made possible in cooperation with CASA de Maryland and a grant from the Freddie Mac Foundation. For information: info@centronia.org.

Action Langley Park is a non-profit organization working with many partners to improve the quality of life for the residents of Langley Park and its nearby neighborhoods by means of information sharing, advocacy, and events offering health and other services. Its monthly meetings are open to residents and others. To contact ALP, send an email to actionlangleypark@yahoo.com.

Barrio de Langley Park is a publication of Action Langley Park with support from the Langley Park Project of the University of Maryland. It is published approximately 20 times a year. Suggestions and contributions welcome. Contact address: actionlangleypark@yahoo.com.

Footnotes:
1. Bisciglia, Michael G., Cause Of Hispanic Homicides in Major Metropolitan Areas, 2002