NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

National Night Out 2008, on August 5, was the 25th annual celebration of this nationwide event. The goal is to strengthen relationships between police personnel and an area's residents and businesspeople. Organizers urge that neighbors to use the day to declare that criminal activity will not be tolerated, that local people will look out for each other, and that suspicious activity will be reported to the police.

There are skeptics who doubt that anti-crime cooperation is enhanced by NNO, but at the very least this was an effort to move in the right direction with an event that offers information about various organizations (e.g., Langley Park Community Center, BPSOS, the bi-county sector planning team, several health organizations) and provides fun for young people (e.g., the soccer game organized by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, and the pedestrian safety guessing game created by Laurie Kelly).

Lots of key people showed up at the event, including Acting Police Chief Roberto Hylton, Police Major Kevin Davis, and at least a half-dozen other officers, plus firemen with their trucks, and a mounted officer. The participation list included Delegate Victor Ramirez, the Community Legal Services team led by Karin Dalichow, the Action Langley Park team led by Bill Hanna, and many more. The crowd clearly numbered in the hundreds.

Perhaps the only missing elements were food and live music, but fund limits were clearly factors.

The main NNO organizational effort was led by C-SAFE, the tri-jurisdictional anti-crime organization staffed by Gretchen Hilburger, Mary Kendall, and new Prince George's County neighborhood staffer Diana Rutstein. Modesto Ulerio created the candlelight vigil. Of course, lots of people were needed to create the success. Well done, everyone!

*Serious evaluations of NNO appear not yet to have taken place.

Will County Officials

Let Langley Park Survive?
An Immigrant Neighborhood Is Threatened

Neighborhoods change. The Langley Park neighborhood, founded in the early 1950s, was once dominated by European-Americans (“Whites”). In the 1970s, the majority of residents were African-Americans. And by the mid-1980s, immigrant Central Americans and other Spanish-speakere became the majority. Throughout its history, most of Langley Park's residents were working class, with some members of the middle-class in the housing on the northern side of the area. Change of individuals, families, neighborhoods, and even nations is a constant.

The question arises: what's next for Langley Park? One possibility is that the neighborhood will continue to be a haven for working class immigrants and their families who have fled from terror or poverty in Central America as well as Africa and Asia. And of course some of the immigrants will work their way up the socioeconomic ladder, perhaps then moving to middle class neighborhoods in such areas as Silver Spring and Laurel, just as earlier immigrations have done.

It appears, however, that at least some government officials and area businesspeople prefer another outcome of change. It is to redevelop Langley Park into a middle class neighborhood filled with people who can pay more taxes and spend more at local businesses. That is, these officials and businesspeople would like to gentrify the area, or as one official put it, make the neighborhood more “beautiful.”

A “sector plan” for Langley Park as well as adjacent areas in Lewisdale, Takoma Park, and Silver Spring is being developed by planners from the two counties of suburban Maryland. Will the planners adhere to the preferences of some officials and businesspeople? After all, planners often (too often?) see their responsibility as carrying out the will of officials and businesspeople. Some planners are not familiar with the norm of seeing vulnerable populations as the key stakeholders in any planning effort.

Of course, displacement is not rare. Gentrification forced...
CRIME

Congratulations to the Prince George's police department. From the first seven months of 2007 to the same period this year, homicides declined from 81 to 75 (alas, 28% Latinos), robberies from 1,416 to 1,259, and assaults from 2,225 to 2,048. The only upticks are forcible rapes from 85 to 102 and car-jackings from 189 to 206. Rape data are always suspect because of the uncertainty that a crime will be reported. Let's hope that the new (perhaps temporary) leader of the county's police, Roberto Hylton, will do an even better job of making the county safe. (No more illegal entries in Berwyn Heights!) Good luck, Roberto!

Note: Data from police records via the Washington Post (1 August 2008).

Langley Park update: Based on a map of crime over the past few months, the most dangerous areas are (1) along University Blvd. from 15th Ave. to Riggs Rd. continuing northward along Riggs to Jasmine Ter., and (2) 15th Avenue from Kanawha St. to the mansion. Especially beware after dark!

IMMIGRATION AND THE BORDER

"STALIN" WANTS OUR LAPTOPS! "Customs and Border Patrol at the Department of Homeland Security was just given the green light to search and seize laptops at the border, without probable cause, by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. They can deny entry to anyone who refuses to give up their laptops and password. This is an affront to our progressive values of privacy and protection from unwarranted search and seizure." (From the Center for American Progress) Well, this is not as bad as Immigration's occasional practice (reported by a senior employee of that agency) of entering people's bedrooms to see who is sleeping with whom!

"STALIN" LIKES DEPORTATION: Having legal permanent residence and/or a green card is no guarantee to the immigrant that s/he will be able to stay in the USA. The Washington Post (2 August 2008) reports that there has been a significant increase in the number of legal residents who have been deported because in their past they have committed a minor crime. For instance, a middle-aged man who has spent most of his life in the USA is fighting a deportation order resulting from the man's theft of a pen (said to be worth 30¢) many years ago. Such a deportation policy has many negative consequences. For instance, it breaks up stable families and it discourages immigrants from traveling outside the country or cooperating with local or national authorities.

DECLINE IN THE "ILLEGAL"? The friendly folks at the anti-immigrant organization, Center for Immigration Studies, conclude on the basis of census data that the number of undocumented immigrants in the USA has declined. "Monthly data collected ... [show] a significant decline in the number of less-educated, young Hispanic immigrants in the country. The evidence indicates that the illegal immigrant population may have declined by over one million in the last year. There are strong indications immigration enforcement is responsible for at least part of the decline. The economy also is likely playing a role." Less educated and young must equal "illegal"? The research methods of CIS have been challenged by researchers at the Pew Center and The Urban Institute. Of course, lots of people wouldn't want to live in a country that breaks up families, spies domestically without warrants, uses waterboarding, and more. (See also, BLP page 4.)

JOBS DATA BASE: "Many on Capitol Hill are eyeing favorably bills that create a massive electronic employment database. While proponents of the Shuler-Tancredo "SAVE Act" (HR 4088) and the Johnson "New Employee Verification Act of 2008" (HR 5515) talk tough about cracking down on undocumented immigrants, the truth is their bills' nationwide mandatory electronic employment verification system requires all American workers, foreign- and native-born alike, to seek the government's permission to work. If the government database isn't accurate, Americans will be denied employment and paychecks, at least temporarily, while they attempt to resolve the problem with the government agencies." Alas, as the authors point out, there is a 4.1% error rate in the data base, and the overload of perhaps 50 million queries a year might lead to system breakdown. (From the Immigration Policy Center.)

IMMIGRATION POLICY FAILURE: In 2007, Microsoft opened a software development center in Vancouver, Canada, in part to have access to highly skilled workers who are presently prohibited from residing in the United States. Microsoft's recent Canadian venture highlights a growing trend of U.S. companies seeking available talented workers in offshore countries and keeping them there. Much of this in-place outsourcing has to do with Washington's failure to provide sufficient work permits to fill the pressing domestic need for skilled immigrant professionals. Making matters worse, many of the immigrants who are unable to receive U.S. work permits have been educated at American universities. This month, a well-educated engineer living in Langley Park is heading for Canada because permanent residence is very problematic. In many ways, the USA immigration policy is flawed. Broken!

THE SADNESS OF PREJUDICE: "We do the work faster and cheaper, but no one wants us now. I haven't sent any money home to my family since December, and I can barely pay to sleep in my friend's apartment." "Now I am too scared to go back and return my license plates, I left my job, my apartment, my daughters left their school. Now, here we are in Maryland, starting over again. We don't know anyone, but it's safer for the moment. Tomorrow, it might be a different story." These are two quotations from a Washington Post article published last spring. The intensity of prejudice is probably worse today. And to think: the families of many of the people who display prejudice entered the country without documents.

LATINA TEEN PREGNANCIES

Having children is usually a positive, but teenagers having children may create challenges—especially when the mother becomes a single parent and has to drop out of school to provide child care. Fully 51% of Latina teens get pregnant at least once before age 20—nearly twice the national average. Latinas have had the highest teen birth rate of any major ethnic/racial group in the country since 1995. Latina teen birth rates have declined about half as fast as non-Hispanic white and non-Hispanic black teens. Teen birth rates have actually increased in 16 states and the District of Columbia. (Source: http://www.teenpregnancy.org)

EDUCATION

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE IN DISREPAIR: A study by a consulting firm, reported in the Washington Post (10 May 2008 - sorry for the delay!), revealed that "the Prince George's County school system requires $2.1 billion to fix its aging buildings, according to a study that found many schools running on antiquated equipment and deteriorating inside and out. The study ... found that, although they were generally well kept and clean, many were using equipment long past its prime. Many mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems are out of date and inefficient, the study found. 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..."

"Short Takes" continued on page 3
30 to 50 years old—are showing signs of water damage and wear and tear.” There sure is a priority issue here, and high priorities such as the safety of school infrastructure appear to be slipping. What about it, John Deasy? Members of the board? Can something be done?

AN IDEA = COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: “Afterschool/Out-of-School Time (OST) programs provide extended learning opportunities to help youth succeed academically and develop important social, personal, civic, and employability skills. Using a comprehensive holistic approach, OST programs offer a safe environment to supplement an academic curriculum while also addressing individual needs outside of school. Although the popularity of afterschool/OST programming has increased at the federal, state, and local levels in recent years, and the number of existing programs has exploded, many afterschool programs struggle to maintain high quality standards in their practices due to capacity issues. … Improving and enhancing capacity should result in more high quality OST programs, with more qualified and knowledgeable staff, improved processes, sustainability, and dynamic curricula.” (From the American Youth Policy Forum, July 2008 Bulletin) What about it, John Deasy? Members of the board? Can something be done?

AN IDEA = TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL: “The successful transition for students from the middle grades to high school is a critical component of their likelihood to graduate. However, this is precisely the time when many students fall through the cracks.” (From the American Youth Policy Forum, July 2008 Bulletin) ALP’s dropout data support this crucial time; most dropping out takes place between grades 8 and 9, and especially between 9 and 10. Too often, dropouts are tempted to join gangs. So the message surely is that additional attention—read “resources”—must be directed to the teenagers during the key dropout times. Perhaps extra counseling and mentoring for 9th graders is called for. What about it, John Deasy? Members of the board? Can something be done?

BUSINESSES

FOOD VENDORS: Residents in and around Langley Park are still deprived of the good and affordable food that vendors provided before they were forced to leave. But in DC, the government apparently knows better. And here’s a recommendation from the Washington City Paper (25 July 2008): “If you want some tasty street food, check out L Street Vending aka the ‘Little Yellow Cart’ on the southeast corner of 14th and L Streets NW. It sells the Korean barbecue known as bulgogi, a rare dish in the District. The mother-and-son team behind L Street Vending serves marinated rib-eye and chicken on rice, with a small salad and kimchi.” Langley Park’s vendors weep.

TICK TOCK SURVIVES! In July, Langley Park’s Tick Tock liquor store was granted a license but with conditions that included better lighting, more plastic rather than glass beer bottles (to reduce using a broken bottle as a weapon), and more police presence. These conditions are probably beneficial. There were some odd aspects to the origin of the changes: a group of people who don’t live in Langley Park were active in demanding change, but apparently no resident or ally of Langley Park was invited to participate. (Perhaps that’s what happens when some residents of other neighborhoods have nothing better to do than scout the area for ways to make demands, sometimes for the better and sometimes not.) And where was the hearing called in March to discuss the license renewal? In Riverdale Park, several miles away from residents who might have wanted to participate. There is no question that many incidents of crime take place near the University Blvd – Riggs Rd. crossroads, where Tick Tock is located. There are also many incidents of crime at the University Blvd. – New Hampshire Ave. crossroads; we wonder what demands will be placed upon the owners of the four strip malls there.

NOTE: To adhere to the norms of transparency, we must state that people associated with Barrio de Langley Park have purchased liquor at Tick Tock.

REMITTANCES

The Inter-American Development Bank reports that more than half of Mexican remittance senders in the United States were not regularly employed before departing to “El Norte,” and those who had jobs earned little. After arriving in the U.S., more than half became employed within a month at an average monthly income of $900. “No one should celebrate that Mexico is the largest remittances market in the world. It means that the domestic economy is simply not generating enough jobs. Still, … it is clear that remittances provide much needed income to millions of Mexicans, alleviate poverty, and constitute an important source of savings and investment.” The IADB report is entitled Investment of Migrant Resources (2008). So the Mexican immigrants and presumably those from Central America and elsewhere are making two contributions: to the economy of their new country and the economy of the country of origin. Harsh policies in the USA therefore harm both economies.

Another IADB report states: “Average costs of remittances from the United States to Latin America and the Caribbean have dropped by nearly two-thirds over the past six years, saving migrants and their families billions of dollars. … However, the research also shows that a majority of Latin American migrants and their families in their countries of origin are still unbanked, and therefore excluded from services and opportunities available to better-off clients of formal financial institutions.” (Source: International Flows of Remittances, 2006.) The message here is that ALP and other organizations should work hard to get immigrants to open bank accounts. An important side benefit of that is a reduction in crime because money will no longer be carried or kept in the residence.

many residents out of Adams-Morgan in the 1960s and 1970s, out of Mount Pleasant in the 1980s and 1990s, Columbia Heights and Petworth in the 1990s and into the new century. DC’s southwest area was redeveloped, forcing many thousands of poor African-American residents out of their homes. Internationally, a million people were displaced in China to build a dam, and hundreds of thousands of other Chinese were forced out of their homes as new-century cities such as Singapore and Beijing expanded and modernized.

So maybe Langley Park is next? After all, the ethnic cultural core, the food vendors, was demolished many months ago in accordance with the wishes of some officials and businesspeople. And bulldozers are available! Or are there other alternatives to the current thrust of the sector planners, such as making sure that all economically vulnerable residents have affordable housing to move to—within the neighborhood so as not to break up social networks—if their current facility is bulldozed? The outcome of the current sector plan will be fascinating to watch and perhaps painful to experience.
LATINO/A 6TH GRADERS

MAKING PROGRESS

From 2006 to 2008, most 6th grade Latino and Latina students in the four elementary schools serving the Langley Park area made progress—at least as measured by standardized state tests. As the graphic (below) shows, two of the four schools, Cool Spring ES and Langley Park McCormick ES, registered continuous improvements in mathematics and reading; the improvements approximately doubled the number of students performing at or above the proficient level.

The other two elementary schools also improved over the two-year period, although the progress was uneven.

Scores for the students who are classified as “limited English proficiency” (LEP) had similar patterns.

The challenge of moving children rapidly forward is significant when the context of learning at home is less than ideal because of language-use, little formal education, overcrowding, and long work hours. Clearly, the school must not be an island; rather, school and community must be linked in the critical effort to move children into the American mainstream. That imperative is recognized by some of our local school leaders.

Congratulations to the principles, teachers, parent liaisons, and others who have made these significant gains possible.

LATINO/A MATH & READING
6th Grade, 2006-2008

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HE HATES ‘EM ALL!

“So as the politicians argue about border fences and amnesty, they are missing the bigger picture: the harmful impact of large-scale settlement of all kinds of immigrants, whether legal or illegal, skilled or unskilled, temporary or permanent, European or Latin or Asian or African. Modern America has simply outgrown immigration, and we must end it before it cripples us.” From The New Case Against Immigration, Both Legal and Illegal (2008) by Mark Krikorian (Krikorian heads the Center for Immigration Studies, an organization well-known for its opposition to immigration and immigrants.) With no more immigrants, our economy will probably go into free-fall, and our population will age as has happened in Japan.

Action Langley Park is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life in and around the Langley Park neighborhood by enhancing information exchange and cooperation, advocacy, and organizing “Health Check” in the fall and “Langley Park Day” in the spring.

Barrio de Langley Park is a bi-monthly newsletter published by Action Langley Park. For both ALP and BLP, write actionlangleypark@yahoo.com.

Volunteers: All activities of Action Langley Park, writings in Barrio de Langley Park, and health care professionals involved with the two health events are volunteers. Of course, the more volunteers the better—in Langley Park and in the nation.

Calendar

- The local Farmers’ Market continues on Wednesdays from 3 to 7 p.m.
- Tuesday, August 26, 7-8:40 p.m. Action Langley Park meets at the Langley Park Community Center. Why not July? Too many people are away. Why Tuesday? Because the Center is closed on the 21st and the 28th is too close to a long weekend. So mark your calendar now for the 26th! Sector planning and other items of importance are on the agenda.
- Sunday, September 14, 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.: Takoma Park Folks Festival at the Takoma Park Middle School (7611 Piney Branch Rd. near Rt. 410). This annual event fills many stakes with folk music from the USA and around the world.
- 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). Shuttle buses will be available from the Langley Park Community Center and elsewhere.
- Thursday, October 9, 7-8:40 p.m., Action Langley Park meets at the Langley Park Community Center. It’s the regular second Thursday.
- Tuesday, November 4, all day, the national election to select the country’s new president. If you’re eligible to vote, then vote! Who becomes the next President will make a difference. Think Supreme Court; think Middle East! Think health care!
- Sunday, November 9, “Health Check” (a major free 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. It’s ALP’s regular second Thursday.

For ALP information, email actionlangleypark@yahoo.com or call 301 405-4005. For the Hispanic Festival, call 301 445-4500 (English) or 301 445-4509 (Spanish).