TNI in Langley Park:
There Are Good Words! Will There Be Good Deeds?

As readers of Barrio de Langley Park know, six neighborhoods thought to need the county's help were identified by county officials. One of the neighborhoods is Langley Park. And so a team of county officials was assembled to identify the needs and act on them.

Identify the needs in several weeks? That's possible if the officials are smart, open-minded, caring, and very hard workers. At least at the early stages, the TNI team seems to have done a pretty good job. In recent years, there has been a series of studies of Langley Park, and the TNI findings significantly overlap the studies' reports. Hopefully, the team members will become familiar with the studies, and hopefully they will conduct quality interviews with a wide range of residents, activists, and others who have become familiar over a period of decades with the needs of the neighborhood. Some of the needs are implicit from the 2010 (and 2000) census. Among the 20,000+ residents (the Census count, almost certainly an undercount, was 18,755), there is a high percentage of residents who are foreign-born, non-English-speakers, young, and working class or poor.

What are some of the presenting problems facing the Langley Park area? Here we point to a few.

Note: “Langley Park” is a planning-delineated area of less than a square mile east of the county line, north of University Boulevard, and south and southwest of Northwest Branch. The “Langley Park area” includes Langley Park and its adjacent blocks to the west and south.

Education for the Young

Langley Park is a neighborhood of the young. One of four residents is under the age of 20, and the median age is 29. (For the USA, the median age is 37.2) The children who live in the Langley Park area, and especially the children living in immigrant households, are doing poorly in school. Their scores are disappointing and their dropout rate approaches 50 per cent. So there’s a need.

The TNI team identified these presenting problems: “Work is needed to address the high dropout rate”; “One-third of the students don’t complete the school year;” “School readiness is a challenge particularly after kindergarten”; “Pre-K and Headstart programs are needed”. While the second statement is ambiguous, the overall concern for youth education is on the mark.

What is to be done? Clearly, a significant program in tutoring and mentoring is called for. For secondary school students, this could be year-round, and for younger children intensive summer work is, at least, called for.

For such a program, there are many potential volunteers from the

“TNI” continued on Page 3
News and Notes...

IMMIGRATION & IMMIGRANTS

New Border Strategy
The focus will now be on repeat illegal crossers and security risks. "This whole risk-based approach is trying to figure out who are these people? What risk do they pose from a national security standpoint? The more we know, the better informed we are about identifying the threat and potential risk." Does this mean that first-time low-risk crossers will have an easier time? That might be okay with some of us, but surely not with others.

The Downward In-Migration Curve
As we know from the Pew "net zero" report, migration from Mexico has slowed significantly. Last year, the Border Patrol made 327,577 apprehensions on the Mexico-USA border, a decline of 80% from more than 1.6 million in 2000—making it the least apprehensions since 1971.

Not Nice: State’s Rights??
The House of Representatives passed an amendment to a 2013 spending bill, by a 238 to 173 vote, that prohibits the Justice Department from engaging in lawsuits against state immigration laws. So the actions of the administration to challenge the Arizona law could not be repeated. That’s not the law of the land yet, but who knows what craziness will take place.

National Immigration Integration Conference
This annual event takes place from September 22 through 25 at the Hilton Baltimore. "The National Partnership for New Americans programmed The National Immigration Integration Conference 2012 to engage bipartisan experts and organizations in the immigrant and refugee policy, advocacy, government, research and social service arena to discuss innovative and effective ways to expand and improve integration for immigrants and refugees on a local and national level." Registration: http://www.regonline.com/Register/Checkin.aspx?EventId=1080905. Note: It’s $295 (students $245) for most people. That won’t enable a lot of poor and working class people to integrate. That’s not unique, alas.

U. of Baltimore’s Immigration Rights Clinic
Headed by two lawyers, Sabrina Balgamwalla and Alice Clapman, the clinic offers a one year focus on immigration issues. It has an international element: Prof. Balgamwalla has conducted field research in Jordan on gender mainstreaming in programs for Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. Among Prof. Clapman’s publications is “Petty Offenses, Drastic Consequences: Towards a Sixth Amendment Right to Counsel for Noncitizen Defendants Facing Deportation,” 33 Cardozo L. Rev. 535 (2011). Clients in the Immigrant Rights Clinic come from all over the world. The clinic’s caseload touches on many areas of immigration practice, including asylum law, protection for victims of human trafficking, protection for battered immigrants, protection for victims of certain types of crimes, cancellation of removal, and family reunification.

Luis Alberto Urrea
Mexican-American writer Urrea was featured on a Bill Moyers interview show, and he is fascinating. Among his books are Into the Beautiful North: A Novel (2009) and By the Lake of Sleeping Children (1996). Check the video out at http://billmoyers.com/episode/full-show-between-two-worlds-life-on-the-border/

Immigrants Start Businesses
According to CNN, immigrants created 28% of all new firms last year. They were also twice as likely to start a new business when compared to those born in the United States. It’s a notable shift. CNN offers an example: Maribel Lieberman left Honduras for the United States as a teenager in 1980. “Her mother pleaded for the girl to drop her dreams of architecture school and train as a bilingual secretary instead. After several jobs, she started MarieBelle New York and now employs 23 people at her own factory, selling gourmet chocolates in lower Manhattan.” Please send us a sample!

Want to Be in the USA? Bring Money!
That’s the implication of a report that hundred officials associated with immigration are thought to have engaged in corrupt acts. ICE has a backlog of 750 cases of corruption and/or misconduct. Officers at the border checkpoints, for instance, can certainly make a lot of money by allowing unauthorized immigrants through their lanes. Alex Nowrasteh writes in the Huff Post Latino Politics blog: “The solution is not more crackdowns, police, or tougher laws like ... restrictionists propose. The answer is liberalization.... The immigration black market only exists because the government has made the legal market so small and restricted. For example, if an Indian waiting for an employment-based green card (EB-3) applied in 2002, he would advance to the next stage sometime in 2012. That’s a 10-year wait for a skilled immigrant with a job offer from a U.S. firm.” Shameful.

Not Nice: Alabama Harming Children
Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Thomas Perez asserts that Alabama’s immigration law HB 56 and Section 28 creates “diminished access to and quality of education for many of Alabama’s Hispanic children, resulted in missed school days, chilled or prevented the participation of parents in their children’s education, and transformed the climates of some schools into less safe and welcoming spaces for Hispanic children.” That seems right on. But the anti-immigrant mood in the country and, apparently, the Supreme Court, may protect the laws of states designed to create fear among immigrants and out-migration. (Be sure to see page 6, below.)

Dreaming Gets Support
The latest United Technolo-gies/National Journal Congres-sional Connection Poll found that a diminishing, majority of Americans support key elements of Arizona’s anti-illegal-immigration law. At least it’s diminishing.

The survey also found that a preponderant majority of Americans reject the option of deporting all of the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants, and an even larger percentage believe that young people brought to the USA without papers should be allowed to remain if (as some Dream
Neighborhood Survival

Months ago, the county planners developed the Takoma-Langley Crossroads Sector Plan in anticipation of the construction of the Purple Line. The plan enables developers to tear down almost all of the affordable apartments with no provision for proximate relocation so that the "community" of Langley Park would not be destroyed. Several key stakeholders (CASA de Maryland, St. Camillus, Action Langley Park) have been working to have the plan modified or cancelled. There is a long history of gentrification and displacement in the Washington metro area and elsewhere. The planners and the County Council appeared not to budge. However, there now seems to be a degree of moderation among the planners—which is hopeful. But residents and small business people are still fearful.

The TNI team has identified the problem: "Preservation of minorities in the area"; "A barrier is needed with the development in the area to preserve the minority community"; "Displacement fear with the Purple Line". Of course, the threat of the plan contributes to the "lack of trust of the government."

The residents and small businesspeople in the Langley Park area need a public commitment to the preservation of the neighborhood that welcomes and supports its immigrant population and works to enhance it without significant gentrification or displacement. Such a statement by the County Executive, the County Council member who represents the area, and others would not only lessen fear but would also lead residents and small businesspeople to invest (emotionally and perhaps economically) more in the area.

TNI

The list of opportunities prepared by the TNI is a good one. (Of course, there are other issues.) But there is a difference between words and deeds. Will the TNI officials address these needs, somehow, without having money allocated to the project? Can they work with the neighborhood to raise the needed funds? Let’s hope TNI is a team that not only issues words but also accomplishes deeds.

The TNI staff also prepared a list of "strengths"; some of these are most appropriate, e.g., diversity, passion, youth, location, entrepreneurship, beauty, cultures, walkability, cultural pride, family orientation, and cultural celebrations. Some are strange or in error, e.g., labor availability (yes, but with about 40% unemployment, it is a weakness), accessibility to programs (not too many in the neighborhood), community center (see above: there currently is no community center), schools (there is one school in the neighborhood; the secondary schools are struggling with high dropout rates and low performance scores), small churches (where are the churches in the neighborhood?), Judy Hoyer Center (it is not in the Langley Park area), attractive to outside visitors/restaurants (only Woodlands), and underutilized parcels (in the commercial area; otherwise, the implication may be to tear down affordable housing).

READERS: Want to add to or subtract from the suggestions in this article? Provide support or offer criticism? Send the suggestions et cetera to actionlangleypark@yahoo.com.
EDUCATION: Longer School Day
Thirty-four PGPS middle schools will add 40 minutes to the school day in order to rationalize bussing—and save a few million dollars of transportation costs. Of course, the extra time will (hopefully) have a positive impact on academic achievement. Buck Lodge is one of the impacted middle schools; its students will have to arrive at 7:30 a.m. and will be let out at 2:50 p.m. Early to bed, early to rise! Not all the time shifts are uniform, and some students don’t have to arrive at school until 9:00 or even 9:30 a.m.!

EDUCATION: High Quality Teachers
Congratulations to Shona Sandlin of Carole Highlands ES and Danielle Spisak of Cool Springs ES for being nominated to receive the Christa McAuliffe Award for outstanding county educator.

EDUCATION: High School Ratings by U.S. News
These ratings don’t seem to have a high degree of validity, but they are widely distributed and (alas) believed. The two highest rated high schools in our state are Winston Churchill in Potomac and Walt Whitman in Bethesda. Eleanor Roosevelt makes it into the top twenty-five despite its above-average teacher-student ratio, 1 to 20; fully 90% of the students are proficient in Algebra, and 86% are in English. High Point’s proficiency percentages are 75% and 71%. Northwestern’s percentages are 79% and 78%. So our local high school’s are behind, but the gap does not seem so great that it cannot be overcome, especially with two new talented principals. Go for it!!

EDUCATION: Mitchell 20
This feature film is about twenty teachers in a Phoenix school district who commit to creating a high quality education despite a student body mostly made up of working class and poor children, mostly Latino/as. It can be downloaded for $5 for seven days of viewing by going to www.mitchell20.com—where the trailer can be seen for free. (Thanks for the tip, Laurie.)

ENGLISH = OK: But Only?
Maryland’s Queen Anne’s County Commissioners voted 4 to 1 to make English the only official language used in the county. It is the second county in the state to do so—following Frederick County. That’s great: make all non-fluent English speakers feel like second class citizens and other residents. How about cutting off all state and federal funds for these counties?

HANDICAP TAGS
Dare we congratulate the Washington Examiner? On its front page for the 13 May 2012 edition, it identifies a widespread problem: illegal use of handicap parking tags. At the University of Maryland, for instance, many healthy and able students borrow handicap tags to park on campus in the reserved spaces. And little official effort is made to counter the misuse.

“Et Cetera” continued from last column

GENTRIFICATION
Langley Park is far from the only neighborhood threatened by gentrification and displacement. As noted elsewhere in this issue, there appears to be a moderating stance on the part of the PG County planners, so devastation in the near future seems much less likely than was the case a few months ago. But in Alexandria:

In northern Virginia, Alexandria’s City Council has approved a plan drawn up by five area real estate companies to redevelop the city’s Beauregard neighborhood, which is diverse and affordable. Fully 2,475 apartments will be demolished. Indeed, the Lynbrook Apartments in the neighborhood look very much like the garden apartments in Langley Park. Not surprisingly, many residents fear losing their homes in the near future. Not to worry: the 2,475 families that will be bulldozed out of their homes can look forward sometime in the future to 800 new affordable apartments as part of the redevelopment. One family out of every three: how thoughtful. But it’s better than what’s on paper for the Takoma-Langley Sector Plan. (May it never be fully implemented!)

“The [Alexandria] hearing drew a packed house and ran seven hours, with emotional testimony from tenants in orange T-shirts holding signs in Spanish and English and economic arguments from the plan’s supporters.” (Washington Post, 12 May 2012) Surprise: the developers carried the day. Moral of the story: If you don’t want to be pushed aside, don’t be poor.

RENTAL HOUSING
At $1,008, average monthly rents across the United States hit an all-time peak in the first quarter of this year, surpassing a record previously set 3.5 years ago. And this trend shows no sign of slowing down. Even “affordable” rentals are becoming unaffordable. Prince George’s County must address this problem—not exacerbate it.

“Immigration” continued from Page 2

Act versions state) they attend college or join the military. It is, however, a partisan issue; as the table (above) reveals, Democrats support the youth-focused policy much more than do the Republicans. And Independents are not yet on the side of Dream.

Not Nice: Sheriff Arpaio
The Justice Department has filed suit against Maricopa County, Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio and his office for unlawfully discriminating against Latinos, and in turn, for disregarding basic constitutional rights. No surprise: Arpaio says he’ll fight the charges in court.

Assistant Attorney General Tomas Perez on NPR: "If you look Latino, the complaint alleges, you are all-too-frequently fair game for [Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office] officers. ... MCSO detention officers have forced Latino prisoners with limited English skills to sign key legal documents that are printed in English which they can’t understand, in which they have forfeited - or potentially forfeited - key rights. ... [And an ethics complaint] found that the sheriff and others were involved in a 'concerted effort to wrestle power from the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, county officials and Superior Court judges, and to instill fear in the hearts of those who would resist.'"
Some Data from the Nation’s Report Card: Mathematics 2011

A closer look at some of the background characteristics of lower- and higher-performing students

Profiles of students scoring at the lower end of the scale (below the 25th percentile) and those scoring at the higher end (above the 75th percentile) show how the two groups differed demographically.

Among fourth-graders who scored below the 25th percentile (i.e., below a score of 222) in 2011:

- 31% were White, 28% were Black, 34% were Hispanic, and 4% were Asian;
- 74% were eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch;
- 24% were identified as students with disabilities; and
- 22% were identified as English language learners.

Among fourth-graders who scored above the 75th percentile (i.e., above a score of 261) in 2011:

- 72% were White, 5% were Black, 10% were Hispanic, and 10% were Asian;
- 23% were eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch;
- 4% were identified as students with disabilities; and
- 3% were identified as English language learners.

BLP COMMENTARY

At the national level, it is clear that the White (31% of the low-scoring category, 72% of the highs) and Asian (2%, 10%) children were disproportionately in the top quartile, whereas the Black (28%, 5%) and Hispanic (34%, 10%) children were disproportionately in the opposite direction. That’s the well-known and disturbing gap. But we do not know from the data whether this is a racial-ethnic difference one of socioeconomic status, and/or language. The latter is probably much more important.

The gap between Whites and Hispanics over the past two decades has essentially not changed, although for both groups the math scores have improved. Again, socioeconomic status is certainly a major contributor to the gap, but how much of it is uncertain.

The Hispanic scores have steadily improved from the dismal 2/3 of students who in 1990 scored below basic. That percentage has been cut more than half. The percentage of children reaching the proficient level has increased (dramatically between 2000 and 2003) whereas the below basic percentages have dropped. There are still few—and of course many too few—students who reached the advanced level: Only 2% in 2011. Even in math, English language fluency may be a factor.

Maryland’s math scores are now above the national level (they weren’t before 2005), which is good news. Let’s hope it’s soon “way above.”

Average scores in mathematics for 4th grade public school students: USA and Maryland

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Source: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/ds2011/2012452.asp. Pardon the quality of the images taken from the report. The BLP staff was too lazy or busy to redo them.
LEGAL VIOLENCE

1. Violence Against Central American Immigrants

An article by Cecilia Menjivar and Leisy J. Abrego (American Journal of Sociology 117/5, March 2012) focuses on what the authors call "legal violence." Here is the abstract: "This article analyzes how Central American immigrants in tenuous legal statuses experience current immigration laws. Based on ethnographic observations and over 200 interviews conducted between 1998 and 2010 with immigrants in Los Angeles and Phoenix and individuals in sending communities, this study reveals how the convergence and implementation of immigration and criminal law constitute forms of violence. ... The authors use the analytic category ‘legal violence’ to capture the normalized but cumulatively injurious effects of the law. The analysis focuses on three central and interrelated areas of immigrants’ lives—work, family, and school—to expose how the criminalization of immigrants at the federal, state, and local levels is not only exclusionary but also generates violent effects for individual immigrants and their families, affecting everyday lives and long-term incorporation processes.”

What is legal violence? It includes sources of material injuries such as the loss of earnings; the psychological outcomes of fear, shame, anxiety, or diminished self-esteem; and the social consequences of public humiliation, stigmatization, exclusion, banishment, and imprisonment. Our local and national laws certainly engage in these actions, and therefore we should perhaps consider the governments to be engaged in a form of violence.

Family: The effects of the current immigration regime are manifested in several ways in the lives of Central American immigrants, from lengthy and uncertain family separations as a result of raids and deportations, to children being cut off from basic services such as access to higher education and health care, to the insecurity of wages and worrying about not having enough money to buy food or pay rent.

Work: "Many immigrants earn low wages in jobs with no benefits. However, the recent activities of the National Fugitive Operations Program, by targeting undocumented workers, facilitates various forms of immediate abuse in the workplace as well as long-term consequences for immigrant workers and their perceptions of their rights and civic participation. Workplace raids ... have increased scrutiny and suspicion of immigrant workers, especially Latinos."

School: "The 1982 U.S. Supreme Court case, Plyler v. Doe, grants undocumented youths access to public schools in grades K–12, yet students speak of feeling unwelcome when their legal protections end after high school. Even students who have ‘played by the rules’ and excelled in school are effectively blocked from college eligibility. The impacts are felt not only for the youth but also a cumulative impact for the community in which they reside. In schools, legal violence manifests itself through blocked paths to mobility and intense stigmatization of the youth who otherwise feel a strong sense of belonging in U.S. society."

So the laws do not usually lead to physical punishment, but they do lead to harm of Central Americans (and others) that for some people may last a lifetime. More often, the legal violence is directed to the undocumented, but too often, the victim has papers and may be a citizen. Do those who make the laws and regulations realize that they are engaged in violence?

“Violence” continued in next column


Jim Wallis and Reverend Rax Rodas writing in the Huffington Post (25 April 2012): “This [Arizona] legislation is not just ethically bankrupt but undermines basic Christian values and American ideals. The court will decide whether it is legal, but it is already clear it isn’t moral. We are both evangelical Christians. One of us is [Euro-American] and one of us Hispanic. It is our common faith commitment, not the color of our skin, that unites us on the need for comprehensive immigration reform and in opposition to patchwork punitive legislation like we have seen in states like Arizona and Alabama.

“At the core of our Christian commitment is to love our neighbors and to speak out for and defend vulnerable and marginalized people. The Bible shows a special concern for those it refers to as “the stranger,” what today we would call an immigrant. Because immigrants are often vulnerable to exploitation or discrimination, Christians should go out of their way to show both empathy and kindness to them as well as speak out for justice on their behalf. SB 1070 violates all of these principles and as a result families, churches and communities are being ripped apart. The goal of the legislation is to make life unbearable for undocumented people in an attempt to get them to "self-deport." Legislation intentionally designed to increase the suffering of any of God’s children is unconscionable. …

“We are a nation of immigrants and our diversity is a strength, not a weakness. There are deeper values and commitments that bind us together than our ethnic background or country of origin. We are brought together by the dream of building a country where liberty and justice for all is not just a phrase but a reality.” Let us hope for the reality of liberty and justice for all.