

Barrio de Langley Park

A Neighborhood Planning Newsletter Published by Action Langley Park
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TRANSPORTATION

How Should We Pay for the Purple Line And Other Transportation Projects?

Yes, money is needed for transportation projects. There's light-rail ("streetcar") in Baltimore, light-rail for the Purple Line, BRT for I-270 in Montgomery County, and more.

"It is make-or-break time for the Purple Line and we are going to do everything in our power to get this project off of the paper and onto the rails," says PG County Executive Rushern Baker.

This year is indeed crucial for the Purple Line—which the Maryland Department of Transportation estimates will cost \$2.15 billion—because it needs funding from the



Federal Transit Administration in order to be built. The FTA this year will be giving out grants of up to \$900 million for transit projects. But to qualify and be seriously considered for the federal money, the state must be able to fund at least 40% to 50% of the project.

Should the state allocate the \$1 billion or so? And if yes, how should that money be obtained by the state so that it can be allocated for the various projects? Alas, the state doesn't have a dollar printing press. (Darn!)

The latest proposal is to raise the sales tax from 5 to 6 cents. Alternatively, the tax on gasoline purchases could be increased several cents per gallon. Which is the more regressive, that is, which is more hurtful to the working class and poor?

A regressive tax is a tax that is applied uniformly regardless of income. One classic example is the sales tax: a orange purchased by a poor person for one dollar may have a sales tax of five cents, and the same purchase by a rich person also is taxed at five cents. This means that it hits lower-income individuals harder; for the poor person who makes \$15,000, an orange a day for a year adds \$18.25 in tax, which is harder to pay for than the person who also is taxed \$18.25 but makes \$50,000..

What about gasoline tax? A distinguished economist writes: "Low-expenditure households devote a smaller share of their budget to gasoline than do their counterparts in the middle of the expenditure distribution." (<http://www.nber.org/chapters/c11271.pdf>)

So the Purple Line will ease some congestion, but paying for it still is regressive. How about raising the progressive income tax? That won't happen because wealth has more influence in the quest for government money.

POLICE IN JANUARY

The Prince George's County Police Department is intensifying efforts to cut crime and get guns off county streets. Each night this January, up to 125 additional police officers will be deployed in the focus areas identified in the county's Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative program—and Langley Park is one of the areas. The police officers are assigned to specialized divisions within the PGPD to include narcotic squads, the gang unit, traffic enforcement squads, the fugitive squad, robbery suppression teams and special assignment teams.

Well, thanks. But hasn't Langley Park's crime declined significantly in recent years?

Special Wishes for 2013

1. REDO THE SECTOR PLAN!

Prince George's County's Takoma-Langley Sector Plan calls for devastating the current Langley Park neighborhood—destroying apartment residences and small businesses. The county should create a plan that doesn't call for demolishing affordable housing and replacing it with upscale housing while displacing the current tenants. Affordability can be maintained while adding new structures for the gentry. Don't let the Purple Line (if it's funded) plus become a neighborhood minus.

2. LET THE FOOD TRUCKS RETURN!

After thriving for more than a handful of years, creating vibrancy in public spaces, the food trucks and sidewalk vendors in and around Langley Park in Prince George's County were banned by county officials. That cut the heart out of the socializing centers that the truck areas had become, killed the businesses of micro-entrepreneurs, and prevented residents and others from obtaining a good yet affordable meal. Even police officers and professors stopped for food and socializing.

Congratulations to the City of Takoma Park for supporting food vendors. They may even come to that city's Takoma-Langley Crossroads segment this year!

3. TURN THE "COMMUNITY CENTER" INTO A COMMUNITY CENTER!

Despite the good work of Director Lourdes Sulc, the center controls less than half of the small former elementary school building's spaces and therefore is severely limited in what it can provide the neighborhood. The regional administrative offices and the senior center should relocate, and the building should in its entirety serve Langley Park area's residents and other county users with a wide-range of opportunities: clinic, library, and more.

News and Notes

Ethics in the County

Prince George's County has been the site of too many crooked deals by high-ranking officials. The behavior of the past County Executive and a recent Superintendent of Schools immediately come to mind. Can the county be cleaned up? Let's hope so! One step in the right direction is the establishment of a serious, hard-nosed, well-staffed and well-funded governmental ethics unit. It has been a bit too long in coming, but the positive is that the office really will be operational before mid-year.

There is now an Office of Ethics and Accountability. This month, there will be a search for people to fill the four slots in the office. (Is that sufficient for such a large county with a culture that has supported corruption?) The budget of the office will be just under \$400,000. (Will that be sufficient for the four staff members plus equipment and other expenses?)

But the bad news still trickles in. County Police Department has announced details regarding the arrest of a PG Department of Environmental Resources employee for extortion. And a state senator censured for "ethical lapses" will run for reelection. Chutzpah!

Community activist Arthur Turner sent this commentary via email about the recent vote for the Council chair: "Andrea Harrison voted in for a rare second term as chair of the Prince George's County Council. After reading that..., one came away wondering what dealings took place between council members Will Campos, Karen Toles, Derrick L. Davis and Harrison. We the citizens 'smell something dead up the creek' because there seemed to be a lot of back-stabbing and throat cutting. Campos got thrown under the bus. He must have not known what was planned for him before he changed and voted against Olson. By doing that, 'they' got Olson and Campos out of the way ... of ever attempting to become chair or vice chair. Why were County Executive Rushern L. Baker and former County Executive Wayne Curry mentioned? Were they involved? What key 'role' players did what?" Was there influence peddling? Meddling?

Immigration: Family Separation Shortened

Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano has just announced the posting of a final rule in the Federal Register that reduces the time U.S. citizens are separated from their immediate relatives (spouse, children and parents) who are in the process of obtaining visas to become lawful permanent residents of the United States. No more ten year wait! The final rule establishes a process that allows certain individuals to apply for a provisional unlawful presence waiver before they depart the United States to attend immigrant visa interviews in their countries of origin. The process will be effective as of 4 March 2013, and more information about the filing process will be made available in the coming weeks at www.uscis.gov. For more information now, go to go.usa.gov/geB4.

Our Good Cops

The County Police Department's District I COPS unit partnered with the University of Maryland and United Healthcare for a Kids Fit Camp. The activities took place at the University of Maryland's Comcast Center in College Park. Members of the Police Athletic League (P.A.L.) and students from Langley Park-McCormick Elementary School joined the University of Maryland's Men's basketball team for a day of fitness training. The students also

learned about maintaining active lifestyles and healthy eating habits. The participants then watched the U. MD Terrapins take on—and dramatically defeat—the Virginia Tech team.



Crime research note: A very detailed *NY Times* (3 January 2013) study of crime in Chicago leads to the not surprising finding that low income, minimal education, minority status, and youth are correlated with homicide.

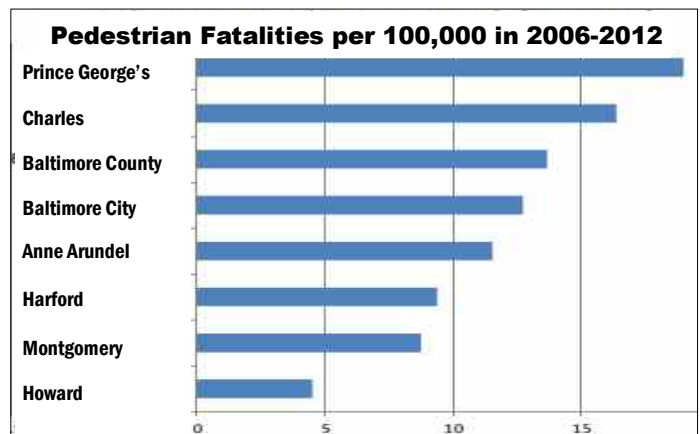
Put Out Fire, Play Poker

According to the *Washington Examiner* (2 January 2013), Prince George's County's delegates are considering advancing legislation to allow "charity" poker games in volunteer fire departments and nonprofit organizations "that promote the arts and preserve the culture" of the county. Ah! Action Langley Park can become a poker haven! Note: The Executive Secretary of ALP played poker in Las Vegas and Gardena more than a half-century ago, so watch out!

Ah, the fire fighting units: Some in the county will lose their professional fire fighter and have to rely only upon volunteers. Is that the best way to have a fast response and fight fires effectively?

Pedestrian Safety

Readers probably know that the area at or near the University Boulevard - New Hampshire Avenue crossroads is dangerous (and often congested). Indeed, the area ranks first in the county for pedestrian collisions! Now, data from the State Highway Administration show



that at the county level, a lot of danger lurks for pedestrians.

Of course, population density and low auto ownership are factors. Nevertheless, it must be asked: What is being done to reduce the carnage? Along University Boulevard, some fencing has been installed. How about rumble strips? More stoplights? Other traffic calming? Wide sidewalks and bike lanes (as were included in the streetscape plan that now gathers dust)?

'HEAD START' OPPORTUNITY

There's a full-day early childhood education program for income-eligible 3 and 4 year old children. (Must be 3 before September 1). Also programs for eligible children with disabilities. Transportation available in family's attendance area. Applications are accepted until August 31st. For information, contact the Head Start office at the Judy Hoyer Family Learning Center (8908 Riggs Road, Room #103) or telephone 301 408-7100.

Work—And lack of it

Day Laborers Got Hurricane Sandy Work

The hurricane and floods that followed were terrible, and billions of losses took place. But for some day laborers, there was a lot of work. One report about a day laborer in New York:

“In the first weeks after the storm, he performed work that required muscle and a strong back, hauling water-logged sofas and broken refrigerators out of flooded basements, stripping mold-infested walls and sweeping away mounds of sand from front yards. But, as homeowners turned to rebuilding, he has performed more skilled jobs, installing new wallboard, wood floors and bathroom tiles. There has been so much demand that he was able to buy his two sons in Ecuador a computer, bicycles and new shoes.” (*New York Times*, 30 December 2012)



Unemployment by Industry Sector

Agriculture and construction are still the sectors with the highest unemployment rates, both over 10%. Alas, those are the sectors where a disproportionate number of immigrants find work—or don't find it. But there are positive reports on a new construction boom; let's hope the boom provides many opportunities.

Unemployment—Getting Specific

The Maryland unemployment rate, as last reported, is 6.6%. Need a job? North Dakota's rate is 3.1%. Want many people around you who are unemployed? Go to Nevada where unemployment is 10.8%. Want a better chance for employment? Get a bachelor's degree (3.8%), don't drop out of high school (12.2%). If you want an awful unemployment situation, be a teenage Black male (44%). For Latino/a teens, the figure is 30%.

U.S. Unemployment			
Euro	Afro	Latino/a	Asian
6.80%	13.20%	10%	6.40%

Why High Minority Rates?

Yes, discrimination and lack of higher levels of education are factors. Also, there is a lack of social capital, that is, knowing people who can help with the job quest. Connections! Why is the Black unemployment rate higher than for Latino/as? Immigrants have better connections.

HEALTH ALERT

Recent studies indicate that so-called energy drinks can be dangerous. The drinks are too often used by students cramming for a test or long-distance drivers who are working past their bed time. These drinks have a large amount of concentrated caffeine—much more than a cup of coffee or glass of cola. Alas, one study showed that 24% of those who used 5-Hour Energy suffered a “moderately severe” crash hours after consuming it. The study reported higher crash rates for Red Bull and Monster Energy. Some deaths have been attributed to the drinks. So for health's sake, keep these energy drinks away.



Americans Favor Path to Citizenship

The Center for American Progress has compiled recent polling on possible legislation concerning immigrants and citizenship. Here are some of the results:

1. CBS News: Americans want a path to citizenship, not second-class status, for immigrants. 47% of the respondents agreed that the undocumented should be allowed to stay in the country and “eventually apply for U.S. citizenship.” Only 27% agree that these immigrants should be required to leave the country entirely.

2. Bloomberg News: A majority of Americans see a mandate to fix immigration. 57% believed that the president's re-election shows that he has a mandate to “overhaul immigration law to provide a path to legal status.” Only 38% disagreed.

3. ABC News/*The Washington Post*: Younger voters overwhelmingly support a path to citizenship. 57% of all respondents favored a path to citizenship for the undocumented; younger voters were especially in favor of a pathway, with 65% of 18- to 39-year-olds in favor.

4. National election exit polling: Two-thirds of all voters supported a path to legal status.

5. CNN: Americans want undocumented immigrants to become legal residents. A majority of the respondents, 56%, believed that the “main focus” of the next administration's role in immigration policy should be “a plan to help [undocumented immigrants] become legal residents.”

6. Gallup: Immigration policy's first priority should be resolving the status of the undocumented. Fully 55% felt that the top priority of immigration policy should be dealing with the undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Only 41% believed that halting the flow of undocumented immigrants should be the top priority.

Source: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2012/12/20/48651/immigration-polling-roundup-the-american-people-put-the-11-million-undocumented-immigrants-first/>



It's still a long road!

MCASA on VAWA

BLP received the below item as the horrors of gang rape, murder, and suicide in India filled the airways. Of course, the USA has had horrors of rape and even occasional rape-murder. So we need to deal with “macho” impulses and male-on-top cultural elements. But until these challenges are met, we need rape-crisis organizations such as MCASA.

“Sexual assault survivors and service providers were let down when Congress failed to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) this week. Funding for anti-violence programs will continue on a temporary basis through March 2013. If this is not resolved by March, it could result in 200,000 fewer individuals receiving essential services nationwide. Maryland's 17 rape crisis and recovery centers depend on VAWA's critical funding to provide services to thousands of women, men, and children every year. ... We are counting on the new 113th Congress to take action for all survivors of sexual violence.” Congress: Do good! Do it!

Home Helpers

The Invisible and Unregulated World of Domestic Work

In late 2012, the National Domestic Workers Alliance issued a report on the conditions of work for domestic workers in the United States. It is not a pretty picture. Here, we reproduce a small portion of the report. May we all be aware of exploitation.

From Barbara Ehrenreich's Forward: "This report documents serious and widespread mistreatment of domestic workers—nannies, housecleaners, and caregivers—in the



United States. They are underpaid, in many cases less than the minimum wage, and often at levels too low to adequately care for their own families. They are almost universally excluded from cover-

age by labor laws and usually work without a contract or any kind of agreement, written or oral, with their employers. They often perform work that is physically punishing, involving heavy lifting, long hours, and exposure to potentially harmful cleaning products. They may be subject to physical and verbal abuse by their employers, even enduring, in the case of live-in immigrant workers, conditions indistinguishable from slavery. ...

"It is the intimacy of domestic work that makes the mistreatment of domestic workers so baffling, at least when compared to the mistreatment of more anonymous corporate employees. Many employers respond to this intimacy by attempting to treat their domestic workers as 'members of the family'—taking an interest in their employees' health and financial well-being, including them in family celebrations. But many others are hostile or exploitative toward their domestic workers, in ways that seem almost perverse. Why would anyone want the person who takes care of their children to be suffering from sleep deprivation, a common complaint of live-in domestic workers, or seething with resentment over unpaid back wages?"

From the Executive Summary: "Despite their central role in the economy, domestic workers are often employed in substandard jobs. Working behind closed doors, beyond the reach of personnel policies, and often without employment contracts, they are subject to the whims of their employers. Some employers are terrific, generous, and understanding. Others, unfortunately, are demanding, exploitative, and abusive. Domestic workers often face issues in their work environment alone, without the benefit of co-workers who could lend a sympathetic ear.

"The social isolation of domestic work is compounded by limited federal and state labor protec-

tions for this workforce. Many of the laws and policies that govern pay and conditions in the workplace simply do not apply to domestic workers. And even when domestic workers are protected by law, they have little power to assert their rights.

"Domestic workers' vulnerability to exploitation and abuse is deeply rooted in historical, social, and economic trends. Domestic work is largely women's work. It carries the long legacy of the devaluation of women's labor in the household. Domestic work in the US also carries the legacy of slavery with its divisions of labor along lines of both race and gender. The women who perform domestic work today are, in substantial measure, immigrant workers, many of whom are undocumented, and women of racial and ethnic minorities. These workers enter the labor force bearing multiple disadvantages."

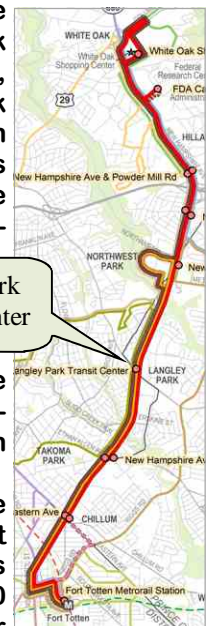
Source: <http://www.domesticworkers.org/pdfs/HomeEconomicsEnglish.pdf>

THE K9 BUS

There a new bus route that should be very beneficial to the residents of Langley Park. It's the Metrobus K9, and it began service in late December 2012.

The K9 runs along the same route as the K6 between Northwest Park and the Fort Totten Metro station, but instead of stopping every block or so like the K6, the K9 stops much less often. This means that K9 riders get to their destinations more quickly than with the local K6 service. K9 stops and buses are branded with the "Metro Extra" logo so the new service is easily recognizable. The K9 route operates every 15 to 20 minutes during weekday peak periods in both directions.

Alas, there's a big drawback: the last bus leaves Langley Park for Fort Totten at 6:30 p.m., and it last leaves Fort Totten to Langley Park at 7:00 p.m. But the availability of the K6 for a longer stretch of the day and night can help the off-hour travelers.



THE 'NEW AVE'

The name "New Ave" is the promotional name of the area along and near New Hampshire Avenue close to University Boulevard. It's the center of what has been called "Maryland's International Corridor." The area has lots of international restaurants, bakeries, fabric stores, and groceries. The area now has a web site with maps that identify the locations of the riches. Check it out at <http://theNewAve.com/explore/walking-tours>.

SCHOOLS 1

Where Are the Males?

In the Maryland university system, males are 49% of the Euro total but only 37% of the Black total and 45% of the Latino/a total. Where are the Black males and the Latinos? Of course, the percentages to some extent reflect the secondary school graduations. In Maryland, the male graduation rates of 2009-2010 cohorts are Black=57%, Latino=62%, and Euro=81%.

Counties in Maryland differ. For instance, Montgomery County's Black male graduation rate



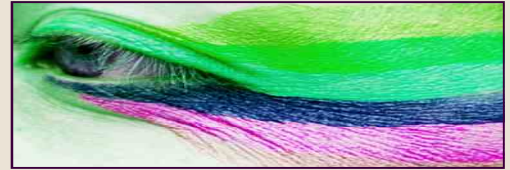
is 74% (at the top nationally), whereas the figure for Prince George's County is 55%. Well, they are better than Detroit, which has a 20% graduation rate for Black males; in Philadelphia, the figure is 24% and in New York City it is 28%. Agh!

Looking at one local school, High Point High School, promotion from 9th to 10th grade was only achieved by 66% of Blacks and 59% of Latino/as.

Prejudice? Maybe some, hopefully by a small minority of staff members or others or relevance. But the Maryland data on the national assessment of educational progress in 2011 for grade 8 reading has more scary data. (Some of these data are in the graphic below.)

So the gap at the university level can be traced to the secondary school level and beyond. The beyond would include family support, neighborhood peer norms and support, availability and use of pre-school, and more. For Latinos, the language challenge must be added.

WHAT & WHEN



Here we list upcoming ALP activities and other events that are called to our attention. Have an event to list? If so, send information well in advance to actionlangleypark@yahoo.com.

January 8—Mis Quince Open House at the Community Center, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Check it out! It's a great experience for a young girl becoming a young woman.

January 8 - Montgomery College Open House, 5:30 p.m., 7600 Takoma Avenue. CM 211 (English session), CM 210A (Spanish session). This information session is for adult students who are new or returning to college. The sessions will cover basic information about the enrollment process and include information on turning work experience into college credit, transferring previous college credits, balancing multiple priorities, and applying for financial aid. Sessions in English and Spanish will run simultaneously. For the full list of events college-wide, visit this webpage: www.montgomerycollege.edu/openhouse. Information: 240 567-3961.

January 10—Meeting on gangs, 7 p.m. at West Laurel Community Center, 16601 Supplee Lane, Laurel. Lead speaker: gang expert Sgt. Michael Rudinski.

February 2—Folk Society Festival, noon to 10:30 p.m., the Takoma Park Middle School, 7611 Piney Branch Rd, Takoma Park. The Takoma Park festivals offer a wonderful range of folk cultures. Parking is challenging.

March 7-9—Physics is Phun, "Energy and Motion." 7 p.m. U of MD Physics lecture halls. For information, call 301 405-6045 or email lohara@umd.edu.

March 14—Action Langley Park meets at 7 p.m. in the Langley Park Community Center. It's an open meeting: come one, come all!

May 2-4—Physics is Phun, "Water." See above information.

May 5 —Langley Park Day, a festival of music, dance, food, information, and especially health (there's a big health fair included as part of the event). The whole world is invited!!! Everything is free except purchases of foods or crafts. Time: Noon to 4 p.m. Location: Langley Park Community Center. Volunteer doctors, nurses, dancers, musicians, clowns, and guides will participate; other volunteers are all welcome (let us know). Food and craft vendors should contact Lourdes Sulc at 301 445-4508; health professionals and information providers should contact Bill Hanna at 301 405-4005.

SCHOOLS 2: What Happens to Young People When They Enter the Seventh Grade?

The graphic below shows the percentage of students in Prince George's County who score "proficient" or "advanced" in the standardized testing that takes place each year. The students do fairly well in grades three through six, and then there is a dramatic drop in scores. Is middle school that different from elementary school? Is there something about middle school that doesn't work well? Let's hope the answer is found before too many young people get discouraged and drop out. Readers: What explanation can you offer? (Data from Maryland Department of Education)

