

Barrio de Langley Park

A Neighborhood Planning Newsletter Published by Action Langley Park
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THIS IS SCARY!

A September 14 item from AP is a bit scary: PG County officials have approved the tearing down 26 apartment buildings in the Coral Hills neighborhood. They are said to be vacant. The assertion is that the apartment complex is blighted and a safety hazard. "The demolition is part of Baker's Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative, which targets quality-of-life concerns in six areas of the county." (Anyone know the Pruitt-Igoe story?)



As readers know, the Sector Plan for Langley Park calls for demolishing the neighborhood's apartments and in their place building condos and other more expensive housing.

The Sector Plan has never been withdrawn, although recently county planners have suggested that the demolition will take place over a number of years. Let's hope that number is something like 30 or maybe 50, especially because the county has no legislation that would provide affordable housing near by so that the community that is the neighborhood would not be destroyed.

The Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative has a team working to improve the quality of life in Langley Park. And they have made progress. That suggests any demolition is not imminent (at least as far as the team members know). Let's hope that the vibrant Langley Park neighborhood is a place of peace and opportunity for a long time.

MEDICAL/DENTAL - THIS IS GREAT!

Prince George's County, working with the Children's National Medical Center, Mary's Center, the University of Maryland School of Nursing's Governor's Wellmobile, the Deamonte Driver Dental Project and Smile Maryland are expanding the medical and dental services provided to public school students and their parents. The mobile facilities will go to about 175 schools during the 2012-2013 year with a special emphasis on dental care. Wow! Great! Thanks, county officials and others!

Hispanic Festival 2012

The weather on September 16th was perfect for an outdoor festival, and the good fortune was that the 31st annual Hispanic Festival* took place. Lane Manor Park was filled with food stands, children's activity structures and games, information booths, and lots of music—including a village performance



Lots of children's activities

group flown in from Guatemala.

Prince George's County's Park and Planning unit organized the event, and once again the team did a very good job (including arranging for good weather). Among those who created this wonderful festival are Joe O'Neill and Lydia Ocasio of MNCPPC. Much thanks! And of course the 15,000 or so people who attended made the festival very vibrant.**



Good Food, Smiling Faces



And Lots of Good Music!

*Announcers from the stage repeatedly stated that the event was the "Langley Park Festival." Well, thanks. We like good publicity, and being connected with the 31st Hispanic Festival is good publicity. But why those announcements? Maybe because some organizers have offices in Langley Park?

**How do we know the attendance? The MNCPPC staff had "clickers" at the entrances to get an accurate count.

NEWS AND NOTES

BETTER MOVE TO SAFE LANGLEY PARK

News media report that in Greenbelt there have been three armed robberies over the period of one week: the first robbery involved a knife and ski mask, the second was at gunpoint, and in the third, suspects used a BB gun to take an iPod. The *Baltimore Sun* (15 September 2012) reports that there were four shootings over the weekend, two of them fatal. A double shooting in Capitol Heights left one woman dead and another just hanging on.

Langley Park is safer, so perhaps the Greenbelt and Baltimore and Capitol Heights residents will consider moving to this comparatively safe and certainly vibrant neighborhood. But don't dare gentrify—there are too many current residents who are already struggling to meet rental or mortgage payments!

OUR LOCAL HOUSING MARKET

♦The median cost of a house sold in Prince George's County from January through March of this year was \$172,000. Remarkably, that was a decline of \$13,000 (minus 7%) from the previous year's sales during the same months. The 20783 zip code, within which is Langley Park, had a median sales price of \$160,500, almost the same as a year ago. That's about double the cost of houses in the lowest PG area and half that of the highest.

♦Most of the houses of Langley Park neighborhood seem to be priced a bit higher than the 20783 median. These are the original houses with 910 square feet of floor space that have at least to some extent been modified. One house on 17th Avenue has a \$250,000 asking price, on New Hampshire Avenue it's \$228,888. However, there is a cluster of three tiny homes along Riggs Road that sell in the \$79-89k range. (These are not typical Langley Park structures.)

GAMBLING MONEY INFLUENCE

MGM in Vegas, hoping to build a resort casino at National Harbor, put up another \$2.9 million (for a total of \$5.4 million) to lobby for the Maryland ballot question calling for expanded gambling in the state, approximately matching the money Penn National Gaming has put up (about \$5.5 million) to defeat the measure. (Reported in the *Baltimore Sun*, 10 September 2012) Well, let's hope all this money was spent in the state and therefore helped the economy. But of course it's another example of money distorting democracy.

POT MONEY INFLUENCE

Thanks to Federal action and elderly ill-at-ease, the laws against marijuana are fairly strict. The result of the prohibition is that many people are arrested and incarcerated because of the sale or use of pot. "There's a growing sentiment that nonviolent drug offenses are



clogging not just courts, but prisons as well," said Senator Jamie B. Raskin (D-District 20) of Takoma Park, who sponsored legislation for medical marijuana the past two legislative sessions. "We're at a moment where people are looking at creative responses to drug policies." (Quotations from *Gazette* 14 September 2012).

It is perhaps the youth of our country's population that few people remember or even know about the prohibition against alcoholic drinks that prevailed nationally from

1920 to 1933. People continued to drink in the shadows, and crime syndicates controlled most of the commerce, enriching criminals. From Wikipedia: "Organized crime received a major boost from Prohibition. Mafia groups limited their activities to prostitution, gambling, and theft until 1920, when organized bootlegging manifested in response to the effect of Prohibition. A profitable, often violent, black market for alcohol flourished. Powerful gangs corrupted law enforcement agencies, leading to racketeering. In essence prohibition provided a financial basis for organized crime to flourish." And we are repeating the prohibition mistake enhancing crime power in the USA and south of the border—and indirectly causing many deaths in Mexico as rival cartels battle.

ARE YOU IN THE MIDDLE CLASS?

One of the presidential candidates indicates that earning \$250,000.00 a year is typical of the middle class. Any reader in this issue in the middle class by that definition? Unfortunately, no one on the very large BLP editorial team is at that level. Donations are always welcome.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND SPEED CAMERAS

♦Hey, they are not working so let's breeze through the intersection! Well, you can do that daringly for a few more days. But on October 1, a driver approaching a nonfunctioning traffic light from any direction at an intersection must stop at the clearly marked stop line before crossing any crosswalk and before entering the intersection. Seems like a good regulation.

♦The county police have announced that they will install new cameras to monitor speed cameras. Since April, six speed cameras have been attacked, including one that was shot and another that was burned. Darn those speed cameras: they want us to drive no faster than about ten miles per hour above the limit, and if one has a powerful engine, 10+ is for children. The hot-ego drivers want to go +20 or +30, and the darn government wants to stop that. Government regulation! Communism!



GRIM FACT ABOUT WATER

Each year 850 billion gallons of wastewater enter the US public drinking water supply because of aging or inadequate water systems. That's equivalent to 13.6 trillion eight-ounce glasses. The EPA says US water systems need \$500 billion in maintenance and new capital investment by 2020. Maybe we should all filter our water before we drink up? Of course, managing wastewater is far from the only challenge of ageing infrastructure. We need billions of dollars; we will be able to get the needed money? Scary. (Source of wastewater information: Face The Facts USA.)

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE

One negative of the visit to the Hispanic Festival was seeing how many people—especially women—were overweight or more. There must have been hundreds of women weighing over 200 pounds.

The US Office of Minority Health reports: "Obesity is a growing epidemic in the United States. From 1976-2006, the overall prevalence of overweight preschool-age children ages 2-5 years more than doubled from about 5% to 11%. From 1960-2006, the percentage of obese adults ages 20 years and older more than doubled, increasing

OUR SCHOOLS

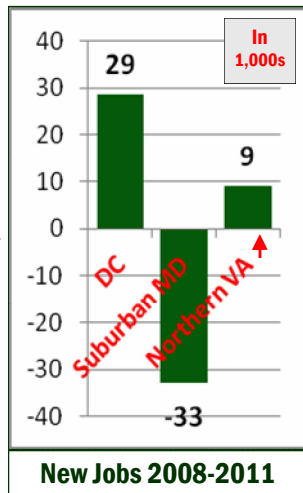
from 13% to 35%. Among adults, overweight and obesity are associated with increased mortality rates, as well as elevated risks of heart disease, diabetes, and some types of cancer. Obesity is of particular concern for our children, since overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults." One-third of Latinos are reported to be obese, and Latinos are not far behind. (Non-Latino/as are also not far behind. (Source: <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=537>.)

The situation of overweight in the USA is a serious health threat that our government and all of us must confront. What is the county Department of Health doing? What should they be doing?

SUBURBAN MARYLAND NEEDS JOBS!

The director of George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis keeps his eyes and his statistics on the region. His research shows that Northern Virginia has been outperforming suburban Maryland in the generation of jobs for the past 30 years. He notes that in the past year, Northern Virginia generated over 17,000 new jobs whereas suburban Maryland generated about 4,000. Wow! Invalid?

Federal procurement differences is a big factor. Plus the location of Dulles the big advantage, and also some early high tech firms that drew others to the area? Otherwise, are we doing something wrong? We'd better figure it out!



CONSOLIDATION COMING?

The *Gazette* (13 September 2012) reports that the consolidation of PGCPs schools is again being considered. The explanation is that some schools are under-enrolled. Well, below maximum, let us say. But in general smaller schools may have a better record of accomplishment, so being at the maximum may not be ideal.

KIDS FAILING? IT'S THE TEACHERS FAULT!

A bunch of students are not doing well at, say, High Point High School, and some will drop out rather than work to graduate. Those darned teachers! If there were better teachers, the kids will do well. Hum.



But maybe not: "Are we expecting too much of our teachers? Schools are clearly a critical piece — no, *the* critical piece — in any anti-poverty strategy, but they can't go it alone. Nor can we do school reform on the cheap. In the absence of any bold effort to alleviate the pressures of poverty, in the absence of any bold investment in educating our children, is it fair to ask that the schools — and by default, the teachers — to bear sole responsibility for closing the economic divide? This is a question asked ... in virtually every urban school district around the country. ...

"The stories are all too familiar, and yet somehow we've come to believe that with really good teachers and longer school days and rigorous testing we can transform children's lives. We've imagined teachers as lazy, excuse-making quasi-professionals — or, alternately, as lifesavers. But the truth, of course, is more complicated. Quality schools and quality teaching clearly can make a difference in children's lives, sometimes a huge difference, but we too often attempt to impute to teachers impossible powers." (From Alex Kotlowitz, "Are We Asking Too Much From Our Teachers?" *New York Times*, 16 September 2012)

Lots of politicians strongly support grading teachers and then fire, keep, or keep and raise them on the basis of their students' scores on standardized tests. Alas: "There is no evidence, however, that this approach helps kids learn. There's none, either, that teachers in the most under-resourced schools could with any amount of talent, energy, and can-do spirit boost scores each and every year." (Melinda Henneberger, "Parties can agree to blame the teachers," *Washington Post*, 12 September 2012)

WE'RE ALL INVOLVED

No school is an island, one might say. There are factors in the home, the neighborhood, the peer group, the availability of medical help, mentors, and more—all may contribute to the success or failure of a young person in school. We must take a broad approach to change.

Money to Promote Civic Integration

On Sept. 17, 2012, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced the award of approximately \$5 million in grants designed to promote immigrant civic integration and prepare permanent residents for citizenship. Thirty-one immigrant-serving organizations will receive funds. In our area, two organizations received awards: Baltimore City Community College and the Central American Resource Center in DC.

WILLARD M. ROMNEY ON IMMIGRATION

Candidate Romney addressed the immigration issue in a speech on September 17th. It was an elaboration of points made earlier by him and his staff.



One component is making it easy for well educated foreigners to live and work in the USA, and for those who earn graduate degrees in the USA to stay here.

For those not in the educational elite, there are two planks:

(1) Mitt Romney will develop an effective, mandatory employment verification system that will enable employers to be sure that those they hire are eligible to work. This will discourage illegal immigrants from coming to America to seek jobs. Employer violators will be punished.

(2) Governor Romney opposes all "magnets" that entice illegal immigrants to come to our country. As governor, he vetoed in-state tuition benefits for illegal immigrants and opposed driver's licenses for illegal immigrants.

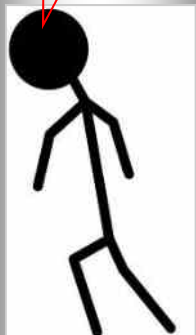
What, we wonder, will Mr. Romney do about the 11 million undocumented residents of the USA? He doesn't say.

What, we wonder, will Mr. Romney do about brain drain because of the open door for the well-educated?

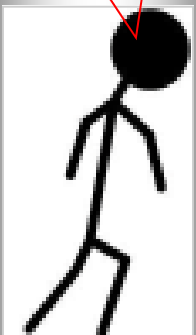
I was born in a small village. No certificate. How can I prove how old I am?



I have lived in the shadows. How can I prove how long I have been here?



My dreams are over now. I'll have to go to a country I don't even know.



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.

2012

Now until October 21—Maryland Renaissance Festival, 1821 Crownsville Rd., Annapolis. It's mostly on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. until 7 p.m. The space includes performances, craft shops, food and drink, and more. It isn't cheap: most adults pay \$17 and kids \$8. But there is a complicated fee schedule. For fees and lots of other information, check <http://www.rennfest.com/>.

September 19, 26, et cetera—Crossroads Farmers' Market, this and every other Wednesday afternoon (last market day this year is October 31. Halloween?!), 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., in the parking lot at the south end of the 7676 New Hampshire Avenue building. Lots of fruits and vegetables and live music and more. Sometimes the Amerigroup bounce bus is there!!

September 20—Action Langley Park Open Meeting at the Langley Park Community Center, 7 to about 8:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome; ideas always welcome! One focus will be the plans and accomplishments of the Neighborhood Initiative.

September 21—Visit Maryland Day is an open house for prospective University of Maryland (College Park) students and their families from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Visiting families park in the Stadium Drive Garage and go to Stamp Student Union for registration and welcome. Students visit various academic departments around campus and attend sessions in the Student Union throughout the morning and afternoon.

September 22—47th District Family Picnic. From noon to 5 p.m. in Bartlett Park, 4300 39th Place, Brentwood. The entire 47th delegation is hosting. Free food, games, music, and more. Plus we can lobby our representatives!

September 22, et cetera—Free Community Dinner & Food Distribution at St. Michael and All Angels Church, 8501 New Hampshire Ave. in upper Langley Park. From 5 to 6:30 p.m. This is a regular event on the third Saturday of the month. For information, call 301 434-4646.

September 22-25—National Immigration Integration Conference, Baltimore. For more information, go to <http://www.integrationconference.org/>. Note: Participation is not free, so check the costs for a day, a student, etc.

September 24—Marylanders for Marriage Equality, 6-9 p.m. at Joe's Movement Emporium, 3309 Bunker Hill Rd., Mount Rainier. Entertainment, food! Suggested donation: \$50.

September 29—Hispanic Heritage Celebration at the Mount Rainier Nature Center. Music, food and craft vendors, and more. Details TBA.

October 6—Noche Multicultural, 6 p.m. and onward at the Washington Ethical Society, 7750 16th St. NW. Dances, music, dinner. \$25 (\$12 for children under ten). Organizer: Comité Monseñor Romero de Washington, DC. Information: 301 806-1083.

October 7—Hops for the Hungry, a benefit event organized by the Crossroads Community Food Network, 5 to 7 p.m. Cheese, wine, and more. For details, write crossroadsmarket@gmail.com. At the least, a small donation is expected.

November 1—Action Langley Park Open Meeting at the Langley Park Community Center, 7 to 8:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. One focus: Health Check 2012.

November 11: Health Check at the LP Community Center noon to 3:30 p.m. There will be a wide range of health screenings plus information and counseling. Is your heart okay? Are you infected with HIV? How's your lung strength? Your oral health? Et cetera! Everything is free. Medical professionals welcome!



2013



May 5 —Langley Park Day, a festival of music, dance, food, information, and especially health (there's a big health fair). The whole world is invited!!! Everything is free except purchases of food or craft.

Volunteer doctors, nurses, dancers, musicians, clowns, and guides are all welcome. Just contact ALP at actionlangleypark@yahoo.com