

HHS COMMITTEE #1
November 12, 2009

MEMORANDUM

November 10, 2009

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst *LMC*

SUBJECT: University of Maryland School of Public Policy project regarding Langley Park
(including Long Branch)

The Committee will be joined by Councilmember Ervin and the Honorable Will Campos, Prince George's County Councilmember, for this briefing and discussion.

At this session, the Committee will hear from Ms. Jeananne Sciabarra, who is a graduate student at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy, on work she has been doing with Professors Chuck Short (Special Assistant to Councilmember Leggett) and Jacqueline Rogers (who previously served as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget for Montgomery County) on community assets in the Langley Park area. Mr. Short will also be present at this session.

Ms. Sciabarra has provided a background memo on her efforts which is attached at ©1 and a brief from the Advocates for Children and Youth on replicating the Harlem Children's Zone in Maryland (©2). As noted in the brief, the Harlem Children's Zone project focuses on 100-square blocks in East Harlem, providing a system of services to help transform a community plagued by poverty into a supportive community for children and their families.

MEMORANDUM

To: Montgomery County Council Health and Human Services Subcommittee and Prince George's County Councilmember Will Campos

From: Jeananne Sciabarra, University of Maryland School of Public Policy
Graduate Student

Date: 11/9/09

RE: Langley Park / Long Branch Research

Last Spring, University of Maryland School of Public Policy Professors Chuck Short and Jacqueline Rogers enlisted my help to research the Langley Park / Long Branch area. I am a graduate student pursuing a Master of Public Policy degree with a concentration in Social Policy, and funding for my research was provided by the Schaefer Internship Program. Professor Short and Professor Rogers asked me to research the community assets currently available to the area and the potential for greater involvement by government, non-profit organizations, and the University of Maryland. Today's presentation summarizes the research that has been done and recommends actions which I believe would be useful next steps for this work.

The challenges facing the families of the Langley Park / Long Branch area are well-known: poverty, limited English proficiency, crime, substandard housing, limited activities for children and youth, and the proliferation of gang activity. In addition, the area's location along the Montgomery County / Prince George's County / Takoma Park borders is confusing to residents and contributes to differential access to critical services.

Furthermore, the current sector planning processes and preparation for the Purple Line, provide both opportunities for revitalization and threats to the affordable housing and small businesses that make this area so unique.

There are several non-profit organizations serving the children and families of the area, but with limited collaboration. The presentation will highlight the work of some of these groups and discuss how efforts to help these organizations collaborate could be part of a plan to more comprehensively address the community's needs. In addition, there are several programs at the University of Maryland that work with selected schools and non-profits in the area. These efforts would benefit significantly from better coordination.

Notwithstanding the existing non-profit and University involvement, the challenges of the Langley Park / Long Branch area persist. My research highlights the difficulties brought about by the multi-jurisdictional nature of the area and points to the need for a multi-jurisdictional solution. To effectively address the diverse needs of the community, I recommend that Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and Takoma Park form and empower an official body comprised of public, private, business, community and faith individuals and organizations to provide leadership and promote collaboration and cooperation among the stakeholders and resources involved in enhancing the quality of life for children and families in the Langley Park / Long Branch areas. With this capacity, the area stands a greater chance to seek and receive foundation and/or federal funds. In particular, the Promise Neighborhoods grant program seems to be a good match and should be pursued.

Replicating the Harlem Children's Zone in Maryland

The Harlem Children's Zone

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) Project is an innovative strategy to improve outcomes for poor children. The HCZ transforms neighborhoods plagued by poverty, violence and low-expectations into supportive, enriching environments where children can thrive. The HCZ aims to create a tipping point so that school success and college—rather than dropping out and jail—become the neighborhood norm.

The Harlem Children's Zone works with families in 100-square blocks in East Harlem, New York City, providing direct services to children and parents. Unlike many social service programs, which are reactive, piecemeal and disjointed, the HCZ is a cohesive pipeline of preventative services from birth through college. (See box at right for examples.) The HCZ aggressively reaches out to all neighborhood children and families, offering incentives to increase participation. All services are free to families.

The New York Times calls the Harlem Children's Zone's innovative approach "one of the most ambitious social-service experiments of our time". President-elect Barack Obama included replication of the Harlem Children's Zone as part of his plan to combat urban poverty.

Key Elements

- All neighborhood families are included, starting with families with young children ages 0 to 5.
- Services include basic supports that help all families succeed, preventing the need for more intensive interventions.
- Services continue and evolve as children get older.
- There is strong, charismatic leadership.
- Parents and community members are involved in early phases of project development. Parents are viewed as part of the solution, not the problem.
- Trusted members of the community keep in regular contact with families, who are therefore more likely to take advantage of the services offered.
- Collaborative service provision from HCZ, community organizations and government.

Sample of Harlem Children's Zone Programs

- The Baby College is a 9-week parenting workshop series addressing topics like ages and stages of development, discipline, bonding, safety, health, and nutrition.
- Harlem Gems is a pre-kindergarten program that prepares four-year-old children for entry into kindergarten, with extended day care to support working parents.
- The three Promise Academy Charter Schools offer an extended school day and year for elementary and middle school students.
- Single Stop offers access to a wide variety of services - from counseling to financial advice to legal consultations - at several locations each week.
- The Harlem Children's Health Project offers free on-site medical, dental and mental-health services to families.
- Harlem Peacemakers are college-aged interns who offer in-classroom support, supervise transitional periods during the school day, provide after-school programming, and coordinate outreach to parents.

Replication and Recommendations

Several groups in Maryland have begun efforts to replicate the Harlem Children's Zone. As these efforts proceed, it will be critical that the projects build on the fundamental principles of the HCZ: help children at as young an age as possible and surround children with a critical mass of adults who are committed to helping them succeed. Successful replication efforts depend on a dynamic leader like Harlem Children's Zone founder Geoffrey Canada. Replications must also develop sustainability plans to ensure children will be supported through college.

President-elect Barack Obama's plan to create 20 Promise Neighborhoods should jumpstart replication efforts in Maryland. The Governor can also provide leadership by designating a high-level point person to support community-based planning and implementation efforts.

For additional information on the Harlem Children's Zone, please visit: www.acy.org.

