

PS/PHED COMMITTEE #1
October 7, 2010

MEMORANDUM

October 5, 2010

TO: Public Safety Committee
Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee

FROM: Linda McMillan, Senior Legislative Analyst 

SUBJECT: **Public Safety Concerns Raised in Tenants Work Group Report**

Last June, the Council was briefed by members of the Tenants Work Group that was convened by the County Executive. Most of the findings and recommendations from the Work Group focus on affordability and stability issues such as unpredictable rent increases, rent surcharges, just cause eviction, and code enforcement. A survey completed as a part of the Tenant Work Group effort included questions about tenants' perception of their own safety. Public Safety Committee Chair Andrews asked that the PS and PHED Committee meet jointly to further discuss the issue of tenant safety. In advance of this meeting, Councilmember Navarro sent a memo (© 1-2) to PS Committee Chair Andrews and PHED Committee Chair Knapp sharing her concerns and providing questions she would like the joint committee to address.

Those expected for this discussion:

Matt Losak, Chair, Tenant Work Group
Assistant Chief Wayne Jerman, Montgomery County Police Department
Annie Alston, Executive Director, Housing Opportunities Commission
Les Kaplan, Director, Office of Community Partnerships, HOC
Andrews Oxendine, Division of Housing Management, HOC
Richard Nelson, Director, Department of Housing and Community Development
John Kenny, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, DHHS
Nadim Khan, Chief, Special Needs Housing, DHHS

Council staff suggests the following agenda for this discussion: (1) overview comments from Mr. Losak on behalf of the Tenant Work Group, (2) information from Assistant Chief Jerman on police calls for service to selected police reporting areas (PRAs) and from Mr. Kaplan on the percentage of those responses to calls to “HOC units” (including public housing, scattered site, and units occupied by someone with a Housing Choice Voucher), (3) discussion of policies and processes that may be used by HOC when there is a client living in a unit with multiple police responses, (4) discussion with Police, HOC, and DHCA on how the Police work with HOC and private landlords when problems are identified and other efforts from the Police Department to address crime issues in multi-family rental communities (including such things as assisting with background checks, performing crime prevention audits, and referring people to DHHS or other agencies that may provide assistance.)

Council staff notes that this session was set-up in response to the specific concern of crime/safety by renters and not the broader issue of crime/safety in parts of the county where, for example, there are large number of multi-family buildings or lower-priced housing (rental or owned). While the next section of this memo provides a summary of the data from surveys commissioned by the Tenants Work Group and County Government, **Council staff cautions the joint Committee not to draw conclusions about the actual prevalence of crime in any particular part of the county.** These surveys ask for residents’ **perception** of safety, and while a person’s perception of how safe they are is very important, especially in terms of how one feels about their community, it does not always accurately reflect the actual prevalence of crime or the type of crime that may have occurred.

Data from Tenant Work Group and County Survey (Background Information)

Tenant Work Group Survey

The Tenant Work Group survey was administered by Salisbury University. The following is a summary of the responses to questions asked about safety. (Note: there were 588 responses received but not all respondents answered all questions.)

	Very Safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe	No Opinion
How safe do you feel from crime in your property/building	30.6%	32.5%	19.3%	11.4%	6.2%
How safe do you feel from crime in your parking area/exterior building surroundings	25.8%	31.3%	23.8%	13.8%	5.3%
How safe do you feel from crime in your neighborhood	24.2%	35.3%	21.4%	14.1%	5.0%

About 70% of the respondents lived in a unit with a one or two person household. About 70% of respondents did not have anyone living in the unit that was under the age of 18. About 76% of the respondents did not have anyone living in the unit that was over the age of 65.

The Tenant Work Group survey separated data for five specific zip codes and divided the remainder into four regions. The tables on the following page show the results for each of the safety

questions for the specific zip codes (zip code map ©3). Regarding feeling “very safe” or “safe” in one’s unit or building, only in the 20904 zip code did a minority of respondents (44%) state that they felt very safe or safe. This zip code also had the highest percentage of respondents saying they felt either “unsafe” or “very unsafe” in their unit/building (46.7%). The 20904 zip code also had the lowest percent (37.8%) of respondents who said they felt very safe or safe in their parking area or building exterior. A majority (57.8%) said they felt either unsafe or very unsafe. With regards to feeling safe in one’s neighborhood, in both the 20906 and 20904 zip codes did less than half say they feel very safe or safe (20906 = 49% and 20904 = 43%).

ZIP CODE	20814	20874	20906	20904	20910
Area Name	Bethesda	Germantown/ Darnestown	Aspen Hill	Colesville/north of White Oak	Silver Spring
% of total respondents	7%	6%	10%	8%	15%
Percent responding:					
They feel VERY SAFE in their unit/building	37.2%	25.0%	31.5%	20.0%	36.8%
They feel SAFE in their unit/building	25.6%	40.6%	29.6%	24.4%	35.6%
They feel UNSAFE in their unit/building	18.6%	31.3%	16.7%	20.0%	14.9%
They feel VERY UNSAFE in their unit/building	9.3%	3.1%	16.7%	26.7%	9.2%
Have NO OPINION	9.3%	0.0%	5.6%	8.9%	3.4%

ZIP CODE	20814	20874	20906	20904	20910
Area Name	Bethesda	Germantown/ Darnestown	Aspen Hill	Colesville/north of White Oak	Silver Spring
% of total respondents	7%	6%	10%	8%	15%
Percent responding:					
They feel VERY SAFE in their parking area/building exterior	25.6%	21.9%	25.5%	11.1%	28.2%
They feel SAFE in their parking area/building exterior	30.2%	46.9%	29.1%	26.7%	36.5%
They feel UNSAFE in their parking area/building exterior	25.6%	21.9%	23.6%	26.7%	22.4%
They feel VERY UNSAFE in their parking area/building exterior	11.6%	6.3%	20.0%	31.1%	10.6%
Have NO OPINION	7.0%	3.1%	1.8%	4.4%	2.4%

ZIP CODE	20814	20874	20906	20904	20910
Area Name	Bethesda	Germantown/ Darnestown	Aspen Hill	Colesville/north of White Oak	Silver Spring
% of total respondents	7%	6%	10%	8%	15%
Percent responding:					
They feel VERY SAFE in their neighborhood	34.9%	21.9%	29.1%	13.0%	29.9%
They feel SAFE in their neighborhood	32.6%	50.0%	20.0%	30.4%	39.1%
They feel UNSAFE in their neighborhood	11.6%	21.9%	25.5%	28.3%	19.5%
They feel VERY UNSAFE in their neighborhood	14.0%	6.3%	18.2%	21.7%	8.0%
Have NO OPINION	7.0%	0.0%	7.3%	6.5%	3.4%

Montgomery County Survey

Montgomery County Government contracted with the National Research Center, Inc. to conduct countywide surveys in 2007 and 2009 on a wide range of issues about the quality of life in Montgomery County. The 2009 survey is based on the receipt of 851 responses to the mailing of 2,864 surveys to randomly selected households. Survey results are weighted so that they represent the entire county in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity. There is a margin of error of +/- 3%. A part of the survey asks questions about how safe or unsafe residents feel from different types of crime. The data is available in several demographic breakouts including the household income of the respondent and whether the respondent is a renter or homeowner.

The following table (continued on next page) shows the countywide results for 2007 and 2009:

MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENT SURVEY 2007 and 2009		
	2007 Response	2009 Response
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel from VIOLENT CRIME:		
Very safe	17%	19%
Somewhat safe	49%	43%
Neither safe nor unsafe	16%	20%
Somewhat unsafe	15%	14%
Very unsafe	3%	3%
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel from PROPERTY CRIME:		
Very safe	12%	11%
Somewhat safe	45%	41%
Neither safe nor unsafe	18%	21%
Somewhat unsafe	19%	20%
Very unsafe	6%	6%

MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENT SURVEY 2007 and 2009		
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel in their neighborhood during the DAY:	2007 Response	2009 Response
Very safe	58%	57%
Somewhat safe	33%	33%
Neither safe nor unsafe	5%	5%
Somewhat unsafe	4%	3%
Very unsafe	1%	1%
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel in their neighborhood AFTER DARK:	2007 Response	2009 Response
Very safe	22%	22%
Somewhat safe	48%	48%
Neither safe nor unsafe	13%	12%
Somewhat unsafe	14%	13%
Very unsafe	4%	5%

The countywide results show a large percentage of the population feels “very safe” or “somewhat safe” in all the categories. Only a very small percentage of respondents feel “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” in their neighborhood during the day.

In the County Survey, there is little difference in the results based on whether the respondent rented or owned their home.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENT SURVEY 2007 and 2009				
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel from VIOLENT CRIME:	2007 Rent	2009 Rent	2007 Own	2009 Own
Very safe	20%	18%	16%	19%
Somewhat safe	45%	48%	50%	42%
Neither safe nor unsafe	16%	19%	16%	20%
Somewhat unsafe	14%	12%	16%	15%
Very unsafe	4%	3%	2%	3%
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel from PROPERTY CRIME:	2007 Rent	2009 Rent	2007 Own	2009 Own
Very safe	17%	12%	10%	11%
Somewhat safe	39%	45%	47%	40%
Neither safe nor unsafe	16%	20%	18%	21%
Somewhat unsafe	19%	16%	19%	22%
Very unsafe	9%	7%	5%	6%

Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel in their neighborhood during the DAY:	2007 Rent	2009 Rent	2007 Own	2009 Own
Very safe	53%	58%	60%	56%
Somewhat safe	33%	31%	32%	35%
Neither safe nor unsafe	8%	6%	4%	5%
Somewhat unsafe	4%	4%	3%	3%
Very unsafe	1%	1%	0%	1%

Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel in their neighborhood AFTER DARK:	2007 Rent	2009 Rent	2007 Own	2009 Own
Very safe	18%	18%	23%	24%
Somewhat safe	42%	51%	50%	47%
Neither safe nor unsafe	16%	13%	11%	12%
Somewhat unsafe	17%	12%	13%	13%
Very unsafe	7%	7%	3%	4%

There are however, greater differences when the responses are categorized by the income of the household as shown in the following tables (continued on the next page). For example, only about 1/3 of respondents with a household income of less than \$25,000 felt “very safe” in their neighborhood during the day; whereas about 65% of those with incomes of \$100,000 or more responded that they felt very safe. On the positive side, it should be noted that a much lower percent of those with incomes of less than \$25,000 reported feeling “very unsafe” or “somewhat unsafe” from violent crime in 2009 than did in 2007. This data suggest that the joint Committee may want to have a future discussion around neighborhoods with a higher number of low-income household as opposed to focusing on the issue of whether the household rents or owns.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENT SURVEY 2007 and 2009						
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel from VIOLENT CRIME:	2007 Less than \$25,000	2007 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2007 \$100,000 or more	2009 Less than \$25,000	2009 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2009 \$100,000 or more
Very safe	7%	16%	20%	4%	15%	26%
Somewhat safe	37%	50%	51%	50%	44%	42%
Neither safe nor unsafe	17%	17%	14%	24%	21%	19%
Somewhat unsafe	27%	14%	14%	17%	18%	10%
Very unsafe	12%	3%	10%	5%	3%	3%

Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel from PROPERTY CRIME:	2007 Less than \$25,000	2007 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2007 \$100,000 or more	2009 Less than \$25,000	2009 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2009 \$100,000 or more
Very safe	10%	12%	11%	3%	10%	14%
Somewhat safe	28%	44%	51%	51%	40%	41%
Neither safe nor unsafe	10%	21%	16%	20%	21%	22%
Somewhat unsafe	33%	17%	18%	20%	23%	17%
Very unsafe	20%	5%	4%	7%	7%	6%

MONTGOMERY COUNTY RESIDENT SURVEY 2007 and 2009						
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel in their neighborhood during the DAY:	2007 Less than \$25,000	2007 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2007 \$100,000 or more	2009 Less than \$25,000	2009 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2009 \$100,000 or more
Very safe	32%	53%	68%	34%	53%	65%
Somewhat safe	46%	36%	26%	52%	34%	30%
Neither safe nor unsafe	12%	6%	3%	6%	7%	2%
Somewhat unsafe	6%	4%	3%	1%	4%	2%
Very unsafe	3%	0%	0%	7%	2%	0%
Responses from residents about how safe or unsafe they feel in their neighborhood AFTER DARK:	2007 Less than \$25,000	2007 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2007 \$100,000 or more	2009 Less than \$25,000	2009 \$25,000 to \$99,999	2009 \$100,000 or more
Very safe	5%	17%	29%	15%	19%	27%
Somewhat safe	35%	51%	50%	43%	46%	51%
Neither safe nor unsafe	16%	14%	10%	21%	14%	10%
Somewhat unsafe	27%	15%	10%	13%	16%	10%
Very unsafe	16%	4%	2%	8%	6%	3%



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

OFFICE OF COUNCILMEMBER
NANCY NAVARRO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Councilmember Phil Andrews, Chair, Public Safety Committee
Councilmember Mike Knapp, Chair, PHED Committee

CC: Linda McMillan

FROM: Councilmember Nancy Navarro, District 4 *Nancy Navarro* ^{NK}

SUBJECT: Public Safety/PHED Joint Committee Meeting

DATE: September 20, 2010

I am writing to express my concerns regarding tenant safety in District 4, in advance of the October 7 Public Safety and PHED Joint Committee Meeting regarding this issue.

Over the last year, many residents have contacted me requesting information on how the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) is working to address safety in their neighborhoods. Many of these residents are tenants or live in neighborhoods with high numbers of rental units, and describe ongoing crime issues including drug dealing, thefts, robberies and vandalism. Some of these tenants live in neighborhoods known to be "hot spots" of crime.

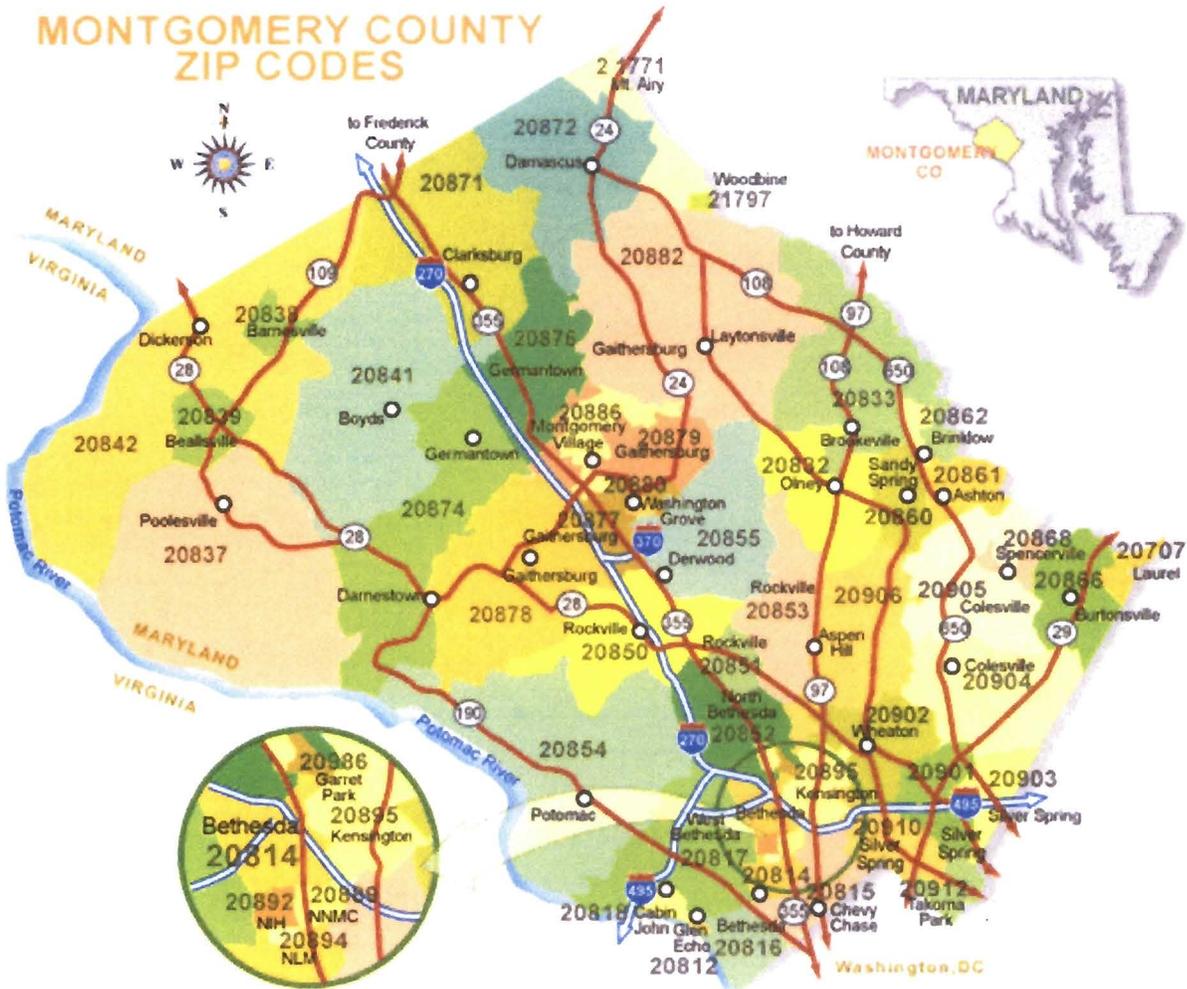
The Montgomery County Housing Policy states, "The vision for Montgomery County is for *all of its residents to have decent housing in sound neighborhoods.*" While the Housing Policy emphasizes code enforcement as a means to achieve safety, I am also interested in exploring the relationships between MCPD and the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), and how they affect safety in our communities.

I respectfully request that the Joint Committee discuss these relationships, including how the various housing programs in the County work with MCPD to handle public safety issues. Some specific questions that should be addressed include:

- How does MCPD report crimes that occur in rental communities?

- In Briggs Chaney, Bel Pre, and White Oak, I have received many complaints from residents that there are habitual offenders in their neighborhoods who are removed from one housing unit, only to be placed in a unit in another complex in their neighborhood. What policies and monitoring procedures do DHCA, HHS, and HOC follow regarding units/tenants with multiple police incidents? Do the department directors feel that these procedures are effective? Does MCPD notice any flaws in this system?
- Do MCPD, DHCA, HHS, or HOC conduct surveys seeking information regarding tenant safety? If so, could the department directors provide information they've obtained through these surveys? If not, is this something they would consider?

I look forward to learning more about tenant safety, and how we can work with our County agencies to provide residents with the highest quality housing experience possible. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my Chief of Staff, Miti Figueredo, if you have any questions.



3