

LONG BRANCH

SAFETY PLAN

Purpose & Need

The Long Branch community has expressed concerns that personal and pedestrian safety matters may impede the growth and success of the area now and in the future. The Plan is meant to address some of the challenges faced daily. The goal of this Safety Plan is to:

- ◇ focus on specific measures that would increase public awareness of safety issues
- ◇ expand efforts to make Long Branch a safer and more inviting community for its residents and businesses
- ◇ establish a working plan that can be revised regularly as revitalization begins and strengthens.



The Department of Housing & Community Affairs (DHCA), in partnership with the Long Branch Advisory Committee, has developed this Safety Plan to prepare Long Branch for revitalization that will bring additional shoppers to the commercial core from the wider community. The Plan is meant to encourage new private sector investment in the core by creating conditions that attract shoppers and residents who will make purchases at local businesses. Residents and businesses need to feel the local environment is safe and inviting, before they will participate and invest fully in their neighborhood.

History

After years of civic advocacy to improve the Long Branch neighborhood, the County Executive appointed a 26-member Long Branch Task Force in 2002 to "address the full range of issues affecting the quality of life in the Long Branch community." The Task Force met monthly for three years. The Task Force organized Work Groups to focus intensively on important topics, including safety, both personal and pedestrian. The Work Group envisioned a community which was not only free from crime, but which was also perceived as safe. It called for safe, pedestrian-friendly access to schools, residences, commercial areas and recreational sites for everyone. The Work Group also advocated for safe driving and adequate parking. They urged measures to address substance abuse/public intoxication as well as to encourage positive activities for unsupervised youth, increase community reporting of crimes and to support positive law enforcement presence in neighborhoods. Their recommendations and input from the Long Branch Advisory Committee and the Long Branch Neighborhood Initiative have been incorporated into this Long Branch Safety Plan. In 2003/2004 the County assisted in the improvement of several shopping center facades in Long Branch along Piney Branch Road, Flower Avenue and University Boulevard. Public improvements in streetscape have already been done or are in process. The County also does community outreach through tenant counseling, neighborhood revitalization and community center contracts with non-profit organizations.

January 2008

Six Long Branch

1. A safe atmosphere, including Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) – attracts positive activities and provides crime prevention

through environmental design (CPTED)

- ◇ Good property maintenance - removal of trash, graffiti, broken windows, etc.
- ◇ Active code enforcement –zero tolerance for violations. Improved lighting
- ◇ Application of CPTED principles to new and existing development, building an environment that maximizes visibility, controls access and reinforces territorial boundaries
- ◇ ‘Eyes on the street’ approach where businesses, residences, pedestrians, drivers and police observe and report suspicious activities
- ◇ Clean parks and open space with regular recreational and commercial/ refreshment activities to encourage regular usage by all members of the community
- ◇ Reduction of gang activity and related territoriality through coordinated multi-jurisdictional, multi-faceted approach. Provision of “Safe Havens” in the community for children and teens after school and during vacation
- ◇ Discouragement of alcohol abuse, public intoxication and the sale of alcohol to minors
- ◇ Support for and encouragement of youth & family recreational activities offered at the Long Branch Community Center and Library
- ◇ Community centers within garden apartment complexes to offer residents convenient services and education



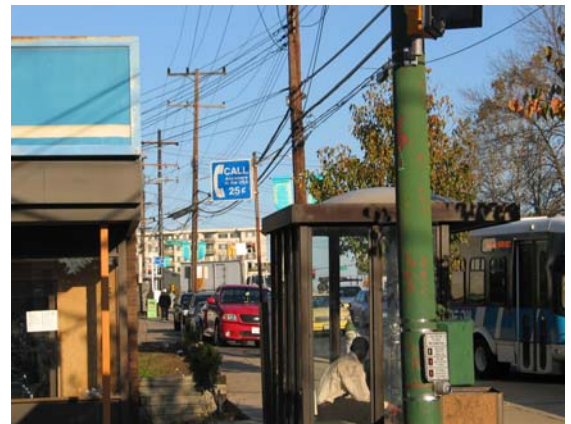
2. Positive Policing – instills community confidence, encourages dialogue and deters illegal activity

- ◇ Active policing on foot or bicycle in the community, not only in police cars
- ◇ Encouragement of constructive and language-appropriate interaction between police and the community, through increased police presence all around the community, not only along the State roads
- ◇ Focus enforcement on drug and gang activity in the neighborhood, including graffiti
- ◇ Development of additional multi-lingual abilities and usage by police (e.g. Spanish, Russian, French and African languages)
- ◇ Encourage residents to report crimes, including relatively less serious activities like vandalism or loitering; publicize anonymous bi-lingual tip line
- ◇ Coordinated approach that includes Montgomery County, Prince Georges County, Takoma Park and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission
- ◇ Continued Montgomery County police officer attendance at local community meetings
- ◇ Continued Police sponsorship of the Long Branch Athletic League



3. Physical Improvements – effectively manage traffic and create inviting atmosphere for business customers and residents

- ◇ Traffic calming measures to reduce speeds
- ◇ Traffic management at intersections, including left turn lanes, re-aligned crosswalks, removal of visual obstacles, re-routing excess traffic
- ◇ Safe and clean walkways and crosswalks, especially near bus stops
- ◇ Implementation of façade treatment programs on deteriorated commercial properties
- ◇ Additional trash receptacles
- ◇ Themed banners, lights
- ◇ Pedestrian-friendly atmosphere and streetscape, including landscaping, signage, outdoor seating and street furniture on major pedestrian paths
- ◇ Well-traveled and safe pedestrian linkages that make sense
- ◇ Overall economic/commercial redevelopment of underutilized sites



Recommendations

4. Pedestrian Safety – offers enhanced walkability and safety design, as well as education, to enable members of the community to walk safely and easily

- ◇ Road and sidewalk design to effectively manage the current volume of vehicles and pedestrians. Increased and continued enforcement of current speed limits
- ◇ New traffic signals, signage and lane design, as needed, to help reduce speed and instill more traffic control
- ◇ Improved parking plans for the commercial area to divert unnecessary traffic from the main roads
- ◇ New and alternate pedestrian and bike paths to guide such traffic away from the main thoroughfares
- ◇ Improved crosswalk striping and time allowances for foot-traffic to create more effective and safer routes, especially near schools
- ◇ Concerted and repeated efforts to reach and educate local residents regarding pedestrian and vehicular safety (multi-lingual, primarily Spanish; repeated periodically)
- ◇ Assistance from local schools, businesses, organizations and religious institutions in reaching community members of all ages regarding pedestrian and vehicular safety, including repeated oral and written communication in appropriate languages



5. Comprehensive Communications Campaign – provides consistent and comprehensive outreach that advocates safety education and understanding for community members

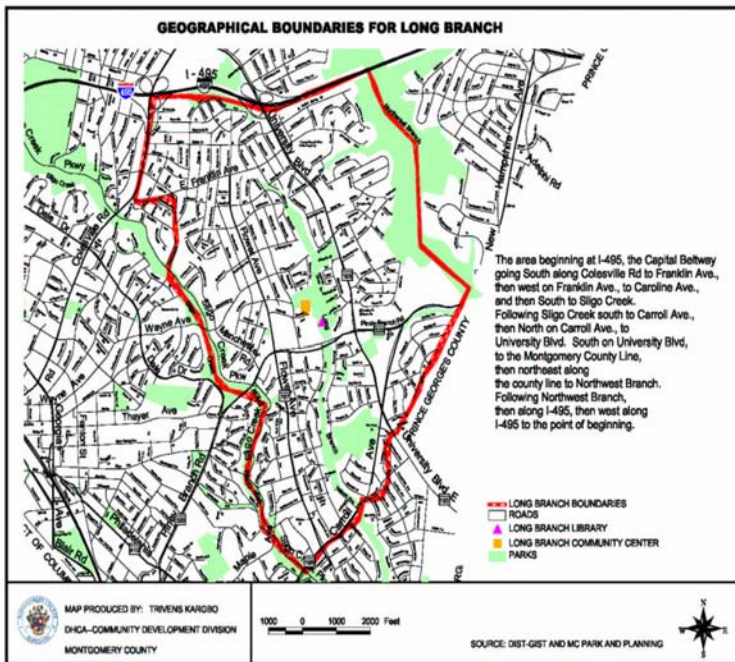
- ◇ Clear information on how to report crimes and poor property maintenance (multi-lingual, anonymous and easy-to-use)
- ◇ Activities to encourage trust between community members and the police (youth sports clubs, establishment of positive relationships, police presence on the street and at community meetings)
- ◇ Enhanced activities for children, especially between 11 and 17 years of age
- ◇ Education and support locally for families regarding drugs, alcohol, gangs, parenting
- ◇ Adequate mentoring or guidance opportunities for youth
- ◇ Outreach targeted to families, especially women, regarding domestic violence and sexual assault
- ◇ Services provided in English, Spanish and other targeted languages, as necessary (e.g. Russian, French or African languages)
- ◇ Easily accessible and visible information and education regarding personal safety, including emergency and other help phone numbers (pamphlets, cards, posters, radio)
- ◇ Regular education concerning traffic safety and rules
- ◇ Participation by local schools in traffic and personal safety message



6. Maintenance – Maintains improvements, discourages crime, improves appearance, encourages business to improve storefront appearance

- ◇ Deliberately and conscientiously preserve safety improvement goals, including physical changes and improved individual actions and behaviors
- ◇ Monitor and maintain physical improvements such as street lights, landscaping, code enforcement standards, environmental clean ups and implementation of CPTED principles
- ◇ Direct continual energy and attention from law enforcement, community organizations, local individuals and the public sector to maintain focus on the steady need for education and outreach, especially to the large segment of mobile residents, many of whom are very new to this country and may not speak English well
- ◇ Commit ongoing resources and personnel towards long-lasting safety for the community





Community The Long Branch population, located in the southeastern part of Montgomery County, is more ethnically diverse and denser than the rest of the County. According to the 2000 census, 3.2% of the County population lived in the Long Branch Study Area. Forty percent of Long Branch's population is comprised of Hispanic or Latino residents. Many of these and other immigrant households are also "linguistically isolated," meaning that no one over 14 years of age speaks English very well.

Economically, Long Branch families on average earn less than the rest of Montgomery County with 34.8% of Long Branch households taking home less than \$35,000 a year in 1999, compared to 19.4% Countywide. Similarly, only 4.3% of residents within the Long Branch Study area earned more than \$150,000 per year in 1999, compared to 15% Countywide. The diversity of the area is also reflected in its housing stock, which is among the oldest in the county. Long Branch housing is varied and characterized by large multi-family complexes, garden apartments, townhouses and many single family houses, some of which have been converted to multi-family use. About 42 % of the housing consists of apartment homes, concentrated along Piney Branch Road. Over 80 % of the apartments were constructed before 1970 and some as early as 1928. As a result, many of these properties were built well before today's construction and development standards. Internal building maintenance and adequate parking have long been community concerns, and turn-over rates tend to be high. While rents in the area are among the most affordable in the County, they are still high compared to incomes. Renters tend to shop in the local Piney Branch Road commercial corridor. Single family homes, located mostly north of Piney Branch Road, have significantly appreciated in value over the last few years. These residents tend to be longer term and often go outside of Long Branch for shopping needs.

Business Profile About 95 businesses operate in the neighborhood-serving commercial area of Long Branch on 25 commercial properties located along Piney Branch Road and adjacent parts of University Boulevard and Flower Avenue. All but a handful of the businesses are independently owned by persons born outside of the US. The commercial area has few vacancies, little turnover and steady customers. Most of the businesses are food-related (restaurants or grocery stores) or service providers (barbers, hair and nail salons, banks, dentist, opticians, cell phone sales/service, driving, cosmetology and martial arts schools, travel agencies, accountants, auto repair, gas stations, and a car wash). The major safety problems for Long Branch business owners are public inebriation and chronic loitering. Inadequate public space and inconsistent private property or building maintenance contribute to a poor public perception of the commercial area. Some businesses have installed security cameras, which police recommended, and many owners provide basic maintenance, lighting, and trash collection though some areas continue to lag.

**With special appreciation to:
The Long Branch Advisory Committee,
the Long Branch Task Force, the Long Branch
Neighborhood Initiative and the Long Branch
community in general.**

CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) aims to prevent crime BEFORE it occurs by promoting an environment that emphasizes:

- ◇ Natural surveillance
- ◇ Natural access control
- ◇ Natural territorial reinforcement
- ◇ Maintenance
- ◇ Activity support

By reducing opportunities for crime to occur, CPTED also leads to an increased quality of life for residents through reduced fear of crime as well as reduced actual crime incidents. These goals can be achieved by addressing issues that may be inherent in the design of structures, in the design of neighborhoods or in the placement and selection of greenery.



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