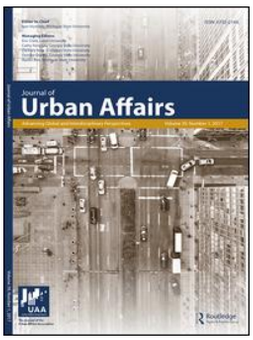

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Journal of Urban Affairs

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ujua20

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To cite this article: Willow Lung-Amam, Nohely Alvarez & Rodney Green (2022): We make us safe: Alternatives to policing in a Latinx immigrant inner-ring suburb, Journal of Urban Affairs, DOI: 10.1080/07352166.2022.2130072

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2022.2130072

JOURNAL OF URBAN AFFAIRS
https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2022.2130072

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We make us safe: Alternatives to policing in a Latinx immigrant inner-ring suburb

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ABSTRACT

Inner-ring suburbs have experienced disinvestment, White flight and concentrated poverty alongside increasingly racialized, anti-immigrant policing. Yet scholarship has tended to overlook these neighborhoods as sites of violent policing or models of community safety. In a 4-year collaborative community-based crime reduction project, this case study investigates how uneven development policies and underdevelopment in a low-income Latinx inner-ring suburb gave rise to and supported racialized policing and safety concerns. We also assess the possibilities of addressing community safety by investing in community building and revitalization. The research shows how the legacy of neighborhood disinvestment and deprivation contributed to a lack of quality affordable housing, public spaces, healthcare, employment, and other conditions that support residents' well-being—and thereby challenged public safety. Activities focused on community building and revitalization offered a positive and impactful alternative to community policing. While activities that invested in community policing demonstrated few successes, efforts focused on strengthening community knowledge, connecting residents to resources, engaging residents in community placemaking, and investing in youth had far better and potentially long-lasting results. The study suggests avenues to improve neighborhood safety in immigrant, Latinx, and declining suburbs without new investments in policing that too often puts residents at risk.

KEYWORDS

Anti-immigrant and racialized policing; Latinx immigrants and immigration; inner-ring suburbs; collective efficacy; neighborhood revitalization

Introduction

Suburbs have long been imagined as peaceful and placid places, free from racist urban policing practices. Suburban policing is presumed to focus instead on the protection of private property. This narrative ignores that many suburbs evolved alongside violent policing, which worked in concert with local governments, real estate institutions, White residents, civic associations, and other institutions to forcibly remove, contain, and exclude people of color. It also ignores that suburbs are the predominant home of African Americans, Latinx Americans, and Asian Americans—and poor people and immigrants of all races (Kneebone & Berube, 2013). Many Black and Brown suburbs are violently overpoliced like central city neighborhoods. In fact, between 2013 and 2019, police killed more people in U.S. suburbs than cities, and the number of killings *increased* in suburbs while dropping in cities (Sinyangwe, 2020).

In 2020, the brutal police killings of unarmed young Black men, women, and LGBTQ people prompted widespread uprisings amidst global health and economic crises that hit Black and Brown communities hardest. Centered on the calls to address police violence and systemic anti-Black racism, protests arose in cities, small towns, and suburbs across the U.S. and around the globe (Sisson, 2020). The Black Lives Matter movement was born in the suburb of Sanford, Florida, over the killing of

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Trayvon Martin in a gated community by a neighborhood watch volunteer. Following protests over the police killing of Michael Brown in the inner-ring suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, the call took on a new global force (Lung-Amam & Schafran, 2019). So too did one of its central rallying cries —"defund the police"—an effort to reduce the number and power of police, shift budget priorities to social and community services, and create new ways to promote community safety that rely less on carceral solutions (Nopper, 2020).

While stereotypes about suburbs often inform scholarship on policing and police violence, theories about racialized and anti-immigrant policing as well as calls for reform or abolition have also largely centered on urban spaces, particularly in Black urban neighborhoods. This overlooks the violent policing that occurs in race-class subjugated suburbs as well as the deeply spatial, socio-economic, and historical nature of the causes of neighborhood crime and the factors that contribute to it.[1] It also misses the potential solutions to community safety that emerge within immigrant suburbs that do not rely primarily on police—or on police at all.

Community-based efforts that center residents in determining and leading public safety initiatives have built alternatives to policing. By investing in conflict resolution and restorative justice, healing and trauma recovery support, employment and educational opportunities, and community infrastructure, communities across the country have decreased neighborhood violence and crime (Sakala et al., 2018). These efforts highlight the importance of crime prevention strategies that build and leverage community capacity, cohesion, and control to address the underlying factors that contribute to crime.

The important role of community building and investment recognizes that crime and criminalization are largely products of structurally uneven, racialized policies and practices that make some people and places more socially and economically disadvantaged than others (Beck, 2019; Bell, 2020; Wacquant, 1997). While high-crime neighborhoods were historically largely located in major cities, today many are suburban. More particularly, many are in inner-ring suburbs, which themselves are quite diverse. In the U.S., inner-ring suburbs, also variously referred to as first-tier or first suburbs, are typically defined as neighborhoods located adjacent to central cities. They include both incorporated and unincorporated areas in which most of the housing stock was built prior to 1970 (Hanlon, 2009). Over the past few decades, these suburbs have experienced rapid disinvestment, underinvestment, and decline coupled with over-policing.

In this article, we explore the historical conditions that gave rise to crime and safety issues in the low-income, Latinx immigrant inner-ring suburb of Langley Park, an unincorporated census-designated place in Maryland located just a few miles from Washington, DC's northeast border. We investigate how uneven development policies and underdevelopment in Langley Park gave rise to and supported racialized policing and safety concerns. We also assess the possibilities of addressing community safety by investing in community building and revitalization compared to more or even "better" community policing. Given documented challenges to community policing in urban immigrant neighborhoods (Kerley & Benson, 2000), we suspected that the former would be much more effective in a Latinx immigrant suburb.

Our assessment is based on our engagement as researchers in a 4-year, collaborative community-based crime-reduction (CBCR) project funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in which we assessed the effectiveness of multiple activities the collaborative planned and implemented to reduce crime and increase neighborhood safety (Table 1). The research employed interviews, focus groups, surveys, and secondary data analysis from program activities implemented between 2018 and 2020. The programs focused on gang prevention, alcohol awareness, access to community resources, neighborhood design and infrastructure improvement, youth soccer, Spanish language instruction for officers, community walks, and informal meetings between residents and officers. Program goals varied, but primarily focused on improving community-police relations, increasing social cohesion, and neighborhood revitalization, particularly in local crime hotspots.

Our analysis shows that Prince George's County's uneven development policies created conditions in Langley Park that challenged public safety. The legacy of neighborhood disinvestment and

Table 1. Program and organization acronyms.

287(g)	287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) allows federal-local partnerships in immigration enforcement
CASA	Lead organization in CBCR grant program
CBCR	Community-Based Crime Reduction Program
CPC	Langley Park Crime Prevention Collaborative
CPTED	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design
DOJ, U.S. DOJ	United States Department of Justice
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
IRCA	1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act
LAYC	Latin American Youth Center
NDC	Neighborhood Design Center
PGPD	Prince George's County Police Department
SARA	Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment
TNI	Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative
TRIM	Tax Reform Initiative by Marylanders
YETS	Youth Empowered Toward Success

deprivation contributed to a lack of quality affordable housing, public spaces, healthcare, employment, and other conditions that support residents' well-being—and thereby challenged public safety. CBCR activities focused on community building and revitalization offered a positive and impactful alternative to traditional or community policing to address these concerns. Programs focused on strengthening community knowledge, connecting residents to resources, engaging residents in community placemaking, and investing in youth generated robust engagement, sustained collaboration, and funding that went beyond the grant period.

In foregrounding inner-ring suburbs as sites of anti-immigrant policing and immigrant community building, this case study suggests avenues to improve neighborhood safety in suburbs without new investments in policing. It highlights the need to deepen analyses of the conditions that underlie crime in distinct geographic and social contexts to frame new, real, and even emancipatory strategies. In immigrant suburbs, it demonstrates that such strategies need not focus on increasing the capacities of, or relationships with, police. Rather, strategies that focus on investing in neighborhoods, residents, and community-based institutions in ways that develop their capacities and connections while addressing critical resource gaps may prove more potent and long-lasting. This case study shows how one resource- and capacity-strapped Latinx immigrant suburb addressed crime by strengthening social capital, investing in neighborhood spaces, and improving access to critical resources and supports. It offers insights into how to improve safety in disinvested inner-ring suburbs without depending solely, or even primarily, on policing that too often puts residents more at risk.

Literature review: Policing and collective efficacy in Latinx immigrant suburbs

America's system of police violence, intimidation, and control has often been associated with central cities in which Black and Brown people (and thus supposedly crime) are imagined to largely exist. Predatory policing practices, such as regular fines, fees, and surveillance, disproportionately target areas of racially concentrated urban poverty (Henricks & Harvey, 2017; Prowse et al., 2020). Recent policies, including those that rely on broken-windows theory and "stop-and-frisk" practices, have further alienated and inflamed relations between communities of color and police in neighborhoods across the U.S.

In suburbs, police were historically among the enforcers of discriminatory policies such as vagrancy laws, racial covenants, and racial zoning that excluded people of color and restricted their opportunities within suburban neighborhoods (Rothstein, 2018). In recent years, however, many former suburban towns, cities, and unincorporated areas have experienced vast demographic shifts, with growing numbers of immigrants, people of color, and individuals living in poverty (Kneebone & Berube, 2013). Today, racially diverse suburbs are growing faster than either central cities or

predominantly White suburbs (Orfield & Luce, 2012). Suburban poverty rates that had already grown faster in suburbs than central cities picked up pace after the Great Recession, with foreclosures hitting suburbs particularly hard (Kneebone & Berube, 2013; Lung-Amam et al., 2022). Immigrants, Latinx Americans, and African Americans are overrepresented in suburban neighborhoods with high poverty rates (Kneebone & Holmes, 2016; Suro et al., 2011).

As once racially exclusive suburbs have opened to new groups, many have become policed in similar ways to central cities. Discriminatory policies and practices have increased the surveillance of and violence toward Black and Brown suburbanites, including the privatization and securitization of public spaces and more frequently stopping of Black drivers (Bell, 2020; Meehan & Ponder, 2002; Wells et al., 2003). Compared to cities, however, suburban crime and policing practices are less visible and more varied across diverse and diffuse suburbs (Singer & Drakulich, 2019). Effective interventions must acknowledge the differences *between* cities and suburbs and *among* suburbs that range from exclusive White exurban enclaves to low-income, immigrant inner-ring suburbs. Poverty is most acute in inner-ring suburbs with older, poor-quality housing and aging infrastructure that have been subject to decades of neglect and underinvestment (Hanlon, 2010).

In Black and Brown suburbs, especially low-income communities, policing is often associated with racial boundary maintenance and social control. Quality-of-life and nonviolent arrests related to disorderly conduct, loitering, and vandalism are common in suburbs with rising poverty rates, even more so than in cities, and have significant racial disparities (Beck, 2019). Inner-ring suburbs with older housing stock, poor public services, and aging infrastructure that have eroded alongside White residential and capital flight, have seen a particularly sharp increase in these policing practices (Boyles, 2015; Henricks & Harvey, 2017; Lung-Amam & Schafran, 2019; Rios, 2020).

In Ferguson, a predominantly Black inner-ring suburb in the St. Louis metropolitan area, over-policing of Black residents through traffic stops and related court fines and fees was tied to the death of 18-year-old Michael Brown. According to the DOJ, Ferguson public officials and the police department worked together to secure municipal financing by issuing citations for low-level offenses, prioritizing revenues over community safety. While two thirds of Ferguson residents were Black, they accounted for 90% of citations and 92% of warrants (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2015). Such practices are common across the U.S., saddling communities of color with legal debt. Henricks and Harvey (2017) found that for every 1% increase in a city's Black population, the average fine increased by $34,864 per 100,000 residents and by $53,112 for every 1% increase in undocumented immigrants. In Meacham Park, another St. Louis inner-ring suburb, police often stopped Black pedestrians in areas that lack sidewalks and public transportation and stopped Black drivers on the road dividing predominantly White and Black suburbs to maintain the area's racial boundary (Boyles, 2015). Boyles (2020) argues that historic and ongoing suburban segregation create conditions that legitimize the criminalization of Black suburbanites.

Negative experiences with police contribute to poor community-police relations in urban and suburban neighborhoods (Bell, 2019). Community policing programs attempt to repair and build trust with residents and reduce crime using such tactics as police foot and bicycle patrols, community meetings, and partnerships with local organizations (Fielding, 2005; Lombardo & Donner, 2018). Yet many scholars have found community policing to be ineffective in reducing crime or increasing community-police trust (Kerley & Benson, 2000; Lung-Amam et al., 2021; MacDonald, 2002). Residents, especially immigrants, are often reluctant or unwilling to actively engage with police in crime prevention (Kerley & Benson, 2000).

Instead, scholars and community advocates have highlighted the importance of building community capacity, cohesion, and control to address the underlying factors that contribute to crime. Scholarship has shown that crime is lower in neighborhoods that residents perceive as cohesive and share a sense of collective efficacy, or the belief that neighbors will intervene in community problems (Sampson et al., 1997; Wickes et al., 2013). Sampson (2004) defines collective efficacy as "the link between cohesion—especially working trust and shared expectations for action" (p. 108). While social cohesion is related to how residents feel about their neighborhood, collective efficacy speaks to their

willingness to work together toward the common good. A key component of collective efficacy is community trust (Sampson, 2004). Negative experiences, a lack of trust, or a weak social fabric can decrease residents' willingness to act collaboratively and increase social disorder (Kleinhans & Bolt, 2014). Social and physical disorder, marked by dilapidated buildings, graffiti, litter, and public drinking, indicate weak social control and a lack of community investment that can lead to crime (Kim & Conley, 2011; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004; Sampson et al., 1997).

The Ferguson uprising and those that occurred in 2020 have stimulated new models of community safety that leverage and build collective efficacy. During the Ferguson uprising, protesters forged "communities of care" to protect each other and provide social services, support, and safety (Boyles, 2019). The Missouri governor's Forward to Ferguson initiative set up in the wake of the uprisings supported a community development approach to public safety focused on supporting the whole child through schools and health centers, addressing hunger, and developing strong employment connections among educators, youth, and employers (The Ferguson Commission, 2015). While much of the emerging scholarship on policing in suburbs and alternative models of community safety has focused on Black neighborhoods, far less has focused on Latinx and immigrant suburbs, especially those with large undocumented populations.

Policing immigrant suburbs

Immigrants have historically settled primarily in ethnic enclaves in large cities, such as New York City and Chicago. Today, however, immigrant gateways are emerging in suburbs or "ethnoburbs" with large populations of people of color (Li, 2008). The expansion of crimmigration theory, the cross between criminal and immigration law, sheds light on the over-criminalization of immigrants in traditional gateway cities and emerging gateway suburbs (Armenta, 2016; Menjívar et al., 2018; Stumpf, 2006).

Federal policies enacted since the 1980s, ostensibly to protect the U.S. from outside threats, led to the increasing criminalization of immigrants and mass deportations. These include the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, and Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. For instance, although the IRCA was supposed to provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, it instead made minor crimes into deportable offenses and allowed the U.S. Border Patrol to charge immigrants who reentered the country with felonies.

As immigrants settle in new gateway communities, many encounter anti-immigrant laws and policies. Immigrants in new gateways often experience high levels of segregation, surveillance by federal and local authorities, and restricted use of public spaces and services (Armenta, 2016; Crowley & Lichter, 2009; Erikson, 2009; Lichter et al., 2010). While new immigrant destinations often experience greater declines in crime than other places, an increasing number of federal laws, such as 287(g) and Secure Communities, allows local police to collaborate with federal immigration enforcement (Stuesse & Coleman, 2014). State and local partnerships with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) provide local police training and the power to stop "suspected" undocumented immigrants, increasing deportations and fear, while decreasing police-community trust (Theodore & Habans, 2016).

Anti-immigrant policing has hit Latinx immigrants, especially undocumented residents and mixed-status families, particularly hard. As the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S., Latinx Americans have a disproportionate share of undocumented residents (Passel & Cohn, 2019). Undocumented immigrants are more likely than other groups to face violent crime, be stopped and questioned by police, and are less likely to report crime, leaving major gaps in research on their experiences with police (Sung et al., 2016). Some states prohibit undocumented immigrants from obtaining a driver's license, increasing their risk of police encounter in suburbs that lack public transportation (Roth & Grace, 2018). In many emerging immigrant gateways, new housing codes, noise ordinances, day laborer and loitering complaints, and 911 calls reveal established residents' growing anxieties over

immigrant illegality and increasing Latinx settlement (Herrera, 2016; Singer et al., 2008). In the Maryland suburbs, Frederick County partnered with ICE under the 287(g) program in 2008, a deliberate response to its growing Latinx population (Keyes, 2012).

Immigrant rights activists and allies have mobilized to fight anti-immigrant policies and policing practices. Since the 1980s, approximately 200 cities, suburbs, and rural communities have adopted sanctuary policies that challenge exclusionary and discriminatory federal policies and the criminalization of undocumented immigrants at the local level (Ridgley, 2008). However, even in sanctuary municipalities, police sometimes collaborate with ICE and criminalize undocumented immigrants, leading to their deportation (Graber & Marquez, 2016).

Like many communities of color, immigrant neighborhoods often possess high levels of social capital and trust, hold close ties to local institutions, and have a strong sense of community and culture that help frame alternatives to policing (Garcia-Hallett et al., 2020). Immigrants often foster strong relationships with each other and engage in community building through community-based organizations (Collins et al., 2014). Such organizations offer critical support for immigrants who are less likely to seek public assistance for fear of deportation or who are ineligible for public benefits. They often deliver social services related to employment, mental health, substance abuse, and legal assistance (Roth & Grace, 2018). Connections among residents and between residents and community-based organizations decrease violent crime, improve public safety, and reduce a sense of social disorder (Collins et al., 2014; Kleinhans & Bolt, 2014; Sampson et al., 1998).

Despite the increasing scholarship on the criminalization of immigrants, little research has demonstrated the effectiveness of community-based efforts to improve safety in Latinx suburbs, especially those that build on their strong community ties toward collective action. This research helps to fill the gap by examining the outcomes of a 4-year effort to improve public safety in a primarily Latinx immigrant suburb.

Background: Langley Park and suburban policing

Langley Park is a vibrant immigrant neighborhood with a strong sense of culture and community located in Prince George's County, Maryland. Typical of many inner-ring suburbs, its housing, commercial spaces, and other infrastructure have declined in recent decades with few major public or private investments, contributing to concerns over neighborhood safety.

For much of the early 20th century, Prince George's County was majority White and working class. Residents of color were excluded from or forced to leave the county by practices common to many suburban areas, including racial covenants, redlining, steering, police and mob violence, and arson. Some Black and Brown rural towns and suburbs survived but did so amidst the threat of violence from both residents and police (Denny, 1997; Loewen, 2005).

After the 1968 Fair Housing Act, African Americans made greater inroads into Prince George's County as suburbs slowly opened. In the 1980s, Washington, DC, experienced its first decade of Black population loss, with many African Americans settling into Prince George's County, pulled in part by the allure of quieter, safer neighborhoods. As African Americans moved in, White residents and businesses often left. At the same time, Langley Park and a few other Prince George's neighborhoods became popular "arrival suburbs" for diverse immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, South Asia, and Africa. African Americans continued to migrate to more distant suburbs in Prince George's County, leaving the neighborhood majority immigrant by 1990.

Today, Langley Park is a predominantly Latinx immigrant community. Of the neighborhood's roughly 19,000 residents, nearly two thirds are foreign-born (Table 2).[2] About 84% are Latinx, the overwhelming majority of whom are recent arrivals from Central America, largely Guatemala and El Salvador. Among non-Hispanics, over half are Black, including a large West African immigrant population. The neighborhood has one the largest concentrations of undocumented Latinx immigrants in Prince George's County (Park & McHugh, 2014).

Table 2. 2015–2019 American community survey, census bureau data for Langley Park Census Designated Place (CDP) and Prince George's County.

	Langley Park CDP	Prince George's County
Total Population	19,250	909,327
Female	41%	52%
Male	59%	48%
Median Age	29.9	37.1
Households with One or More Children	32%	51%
Median Household Income	$63,105	$84,290
Housing Units	4,930	333,041
Foreign-Born Population	61%	23%
Residents Living Below Poverty Level	20%	9%
Race and Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	84%	18%
Black Alone	11%	62%
Asian Alone	2%	4%
White Alone	2%	13%
Education Attainment for 25+		
No High School Diploma	63%	28%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	9%	87%

With residents largely migrating for economic opportunity or fleeing political repression in their home countries, the neighborhood is disproportionately young and male, with a median age of just under 30. Roughly a third of Langley Park residents are children. Households average about four people, roughly 1.5 points higher than the county or state. Many related and unrelated individuals often crowd in the neighborhood's dense garden-style apartments (Lung-Amam et al., 2019).

Residents struggle with challenges typical of low-income immigrant communities. Many have low levels of education and English language proficiency. Nearly two-thirds of those over 5 years of age speak English less than "very well." Drop-out rates at local high schools are higher than the overall rate in Prince George's County, with many Langley Park youth leaving school to help their families make ends meet.

Adults often work in low-wage, low-skill positions outside of the formal labor market. Many hold intermittent, part-time, or seasonal jobs with few benefits, and often work multiple jobs. Most are employed in construction as day laborers, with others commonly working in waste management, healthcare, and food services.

Poverty rates are high and household incomes are low. Nearly one half of households earn incomes below the DC metropolitan area median. Langley Park's median household income is nearly 25% lower than that of Prince George's County, which has one of the lowest median incomes in the region. One in five residents live below the federal poverty line.

Community health is poor, with residents suffering from conditions linked to poverty like heart disease and diabetes, and over half lacking healthcare coverage. Teen pregnancy rates are high, as many women lack prenatal care, resulting in high infant mortality rates and low birthweight (Scott et al., 2014).

The neighborhood also lacks quality affordable housing. About four in five households are renters, and over half pay more than 30% of their income on rent, a common affordability indicator (Lung-Amam et al., 2019). The vast majority live in garden-style apartments that are over 60 years old and have not been renovated in decades. Many have issues related to overcrowding, pests, mold, and other health and safety hazards (Lung-Amam et al., 2019).

Small businesses help to connect the neighborhood but struggle to stay afloat. Of the neighborhood's roughly 1,500 businesses, many are family-run and immigrant-owned. Business owners often lack access to capital and struggle with time and language barriers to access government assistance. Small businesses cluster in dense, run-down strip malls, where predatory leasing practices often lead business owners to pay for major building upgrades, increasing their financial fragility and vulnerability to closure (Ajayi et al., 2011).

These conditions contribute to a lack of neighborhood safety. In 2012, the county government labeled Langley Park a crime hotspot, with crime rates nearly twice the statewide average and frequent complaints of gang activity, alcoholism, and domestic violence (Meils, 2017). Policing in Langley Park and the broader county, however, has sometimes exacerbated rather than alleviated the neighborhood's safety challenges.

Complaints about racialized and anti-immigrant policing in Prince George's County are longstanding. They include brutal accounts of police violence against African Americans in the 1960s by its then-majority-White police force, infamously called the "Death Squad." Since then, the county has had many high-profile accounts of anti-Black policing, including the police murder of Gregory Habib, an unarmed Ghanaian immigrant in Langley Park in 1989 (Hutto & Green, 2016). Protests to end police brutality and an exposé in the *Washington Post* led to a 1999 DOJ investigation of the Prince George's County Police Department (PGPD). As a result, PGPD operated under two separate consent decrees from 2001 until 2012 (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2017).

Like African Americans, Latinx and other immigrants have been subject to repressive policing in Langley Park and throughout the county. In 2002, the federal government added civil detainers for immigration violations to the National Crime Information Center's database, in effect deputizing local law enforcement to serve as ICE agents. In response to local protests, the Prince George's County Council passed a resolution stating that its police force would not cooperate with ICE without a valid criminal arrest warrant. This policy, however, was not codified until 2019, after protests over anti-immigrant crackdowns and documented instances of PGPD cooperation with ICE (Hernández, 2019). In Langley Park, advocates led a related fight over PGPD's gang list, complaining about a lack of transparency over how immigrants were put on the list and inappropriately turned over to ICE. The county did not take action on their demands.

Anti-immigrant "segregation policing" (Bell, 2020) also occurs in Langley Park's pseudo public spaces. In the 1990s, CASA, the Mid-Atlantic's largest immigrant rights organization whose headquarters are in Langley Park, launched Montgomery County's first immigrant worker center in an adjoining neighborhood after multiple residents and businesses complained about day laborers loitering in local parking lots. They now run five centers throughout the DC region, including one in Langley Park. In the 1990s and 2000s, police repeatedly cited neighborhood food trucks for illegal vending, as Prince George's County officials associated them with crime and damaging the county's image (Aizenman, 2004). By the start of CBCR grant implementation, these instances heightened skepticism about policing in Langley Park and were associated with fractured local government relationships, raising the possibilities for safety interventions that leveraged residents' energies and strong community ties (Rattley & Green, 2016).

In 2016, CASA applied to the DOJ's CBCR grant program to work with county police, residents, landlords, business owners, and other community-based groups to address public safety concerns in Langley Park. The CBCR program, now known as the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program, was launched in 2012 to encourage data-driven, comprehensive, and community-led strategies to reduce crime and spur neighborhood revitalization. While emphasizing community policing, it also stresses community engagement, comprehensive revitalization, and collaboration and partnerships with cross-sector community leaders (Local Initiatives Support Corporation, n.d.).

CASA had previously received DOJ funding for neighborhood crime prevention and led the Langley Park component of the Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI). TNI sought to reduce crime by coordinating and funneling county services to targeted neighborhoods while also increasing their police presence. After 4 years, Langley Park "graduated out" of the program based on various

performance measures, including crime reduction. The program's functions were handed off to a community coalition with little county support (Meils, 2017).

With $1 million in CBCR funding, CASA brought several organizations previously engaged in the TNI and others together under the Langley Park Crime Prevention Collaboration (CPC). CPC members included county police, politicians, university researchers, apartment managers, tenants, parents, faith-based leaders, and representatives from other community-based organizations. In the 2-year planning phase, members met monthly to identify public safety priorities and initiatives and draw up an implementation plan that was approved by DOJ in 2018.

Research methods

Researchers were members of the Langley Park CPC that convened to plan and implement the CBCR project. As engaged researchers, our research and analysis informed the planning of grant activities and the CPC's assessment of implementation activities. It also gave us additional insights and context for the CPC activities that we participated in, including community walks and meetings. This study reports on the findings from the 2-year implementation phase (2018–2020). For comparison, we sometimes also include findings from the proceeding 2-year planning phase (2016–2018).

During the planning phase, researchers used multiple methods to analyze Langley Park's safety challenges and aid the CPC in developing strategies to address them (Table 3). In 2016, we conducted a community survey administered by CASA to 175 residents, which asked questions about public safety challenges, perceptions regarding police-community relations and law enforcement, and recommendations for improvement. We helped CASA conduct focus groups with 12 county police officers and civilian employees as well as seven neighborhood youth. We also led interviews with two county officials involved in neighborhood public safety programs. Finally, we analyzed PGPD data to assess crime trends from 2010 to 2015 and mapped these to identify neighborhood crime hotspots (Figure 1). Research results were shared with residents and other stakeholders during three community forums and in monthly CPC meetings attended by researchers that shaped the implementation plan's goals and activities.

Table 3. Planning phase research activities (2016–2017).

Method & Program	Events or Activities	Frequency or Date	Participants or Sample Size
Participant Observation			
CPC and Community Meetings	CASA-led meetings to plan initiatives with residents, community partners, and researchers.	Monthly	7 - 16
Surveys			
Community Surveys	Researchers developed survey instrument used by CASA to assess residents' views of community cohesion, and perceptions of public safety and police.	Summer 2016	175
Focus Groups			
PGPD Officers	Researchers developed focus group guide used by community leaders to elicit officers' views on policing and public safety issues.	2016	12
Langley Park Youth	Researchers developed focus group guide used by community leaders to elicit youth concerns about public safety.	2016	7
Secondary Data Collection & Analysis			
Crime and Calls for Service	Researchers tracked crime data and calls for service. Mapped in GIS to identity crime hot spots.	Quarterly	–
Interviews			
County Officials	Researchers interviewed officials involved in neighborhood public safety programs.	2016	2
Community Walks	Researchers participated in walks with residents and CPC members to observe crime hotspots and discuss ideas for improvement.	2016-17	3

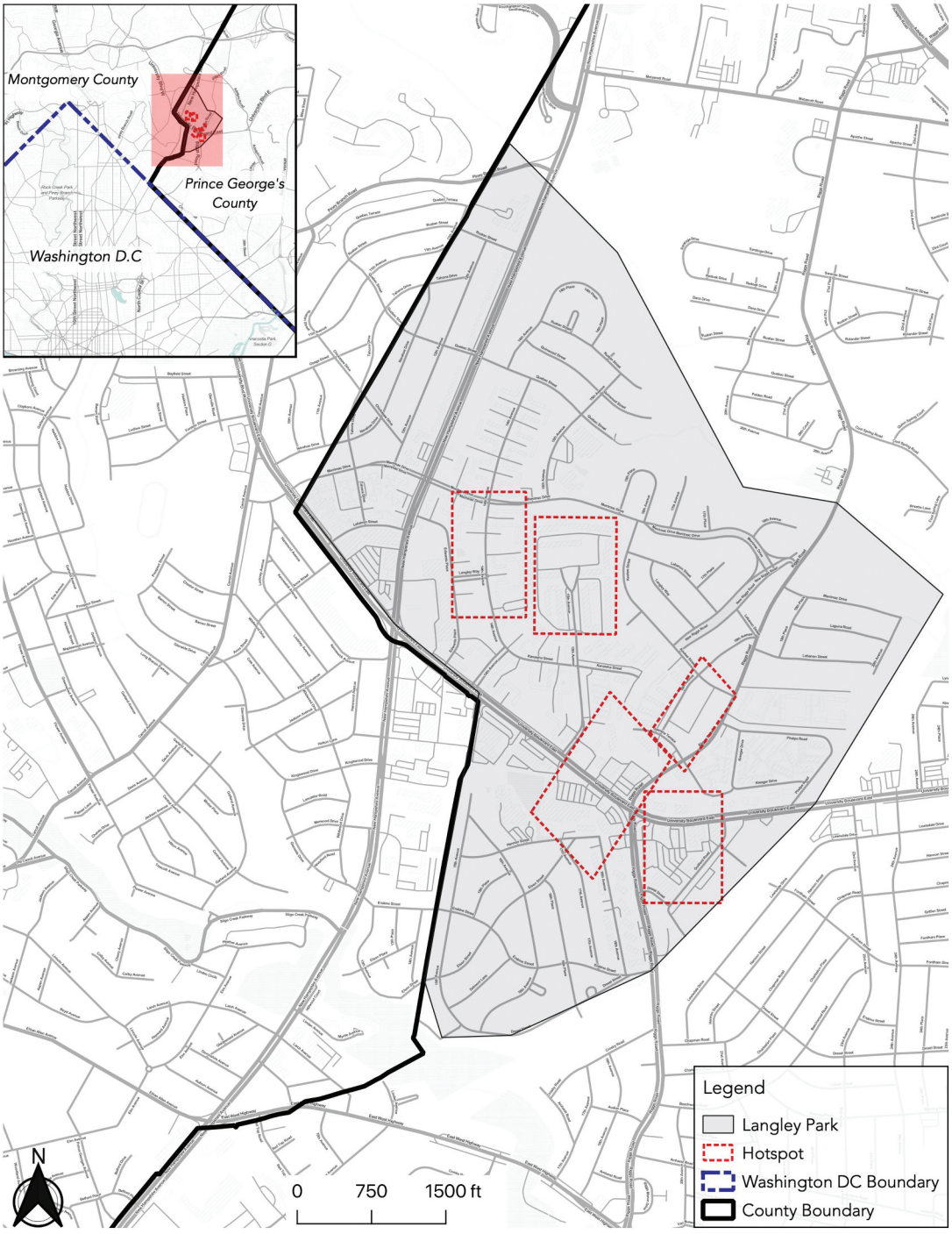

Figure 1. "Crime hotspots" in Langley Park. Source: Crime data from Green (2020b). Map data: ©OpenStreetmap contributors. Map design: ©Stamen Toner.

The CPC's implementation plan sought to address key issues, including language and cultural differences between police and residents; a lack of trust between police and residents; unemployment and poverty that contribute to crime; and crime hotspots that undermine public safety. Activities included: (1) Spanish language training for PGPD officers working in Langley Park; (2) a monthly *Club de Café*, a program similar to coffee with an officer meetings in other communities in which residents met informally with officers; (3) a youth-police summer soccer league attended by neighborhood youth and officers; (4) a community resource campaign that distributed information about various resources related to crime, safety, and other critical neighborhood resources; (5) an alcoholism awareness program led by neighborhood health promoters; (6) support for an existing youth gang prevention program; (7) community walks of neighborhood hotspots with county leaders, officers, and residents; and (8) infrastructure and built environment upgrades to improve neighborhood safety (Table 4)

In the program's last year, some activities were changed or ended as COVID-19 hit. The DOJ allowed CBCR programs to reallocate funds toward COVID-19 response. With poor housing conditions, high poverty rates, and many essential workers, Langley Park had some of the highest infection rates in the county and state (Green, 2020a). In March 2020, the *Club de Café*, community walks, and Spanish language classes were suspended. The gang prevention, alcoholism awareness, and youth soccer league programs transitioned to online programs, though the latter resumed in-person practices in summer 2020.

During the implementation phase (2018–2020), researchers evaluated outcome data on each program and the overall project according to the grant's objectives and outcome measures, which varied for each program. Generally, the goals related to the number of participants or those reached. Our analysis was based largely on pre- and post-survey data, program notes and minutes, and other materials provided by program administrators, such as curricula, reports, and sign-in sheets. Most surveys were constructed and administered by CPC partners implementing each program. Researchers designed and helped lead a focus group for the youth soccer league. Participants included 18 youth (ages 8 to 15) who enrolled in the program's first year. Focus groups questions centered on youth's participation, perceptions of police, and how the soccer league helped to change their perceptions. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, in the program's second year, we conducted telephone interviews with three youth, two parents, the coach, CASA staff coordinator, and one police officer who participated in the league.

To assess the overall impact of project implementation, researchers designed and analyzed the results from two annual community surveys with questions about residents' perceptions of safety, trust of police, and project impacts. These surveys, available in both English and Spanish, were administered by CASA staff to 93 residents in the summer of 2019 and 60 residents in the summer of 2020.[3] Researchers also reviewed minutes and notes from the 2 years of monthly CPC meetings in which we participated. After reviewing the data, researchers conducted six interviews with CPC partners to answer outstanding questions about program administration and implementation.[4]

We tracked quarterly neighborhood and hotspot crime data during the implementation period, integrating it with resident perspectives on hot spots obtained during community walks, to report on public safety trends in Langley Park to the CPC. This included reported crime from the county's public safety database, and PGPD crime data and calls for service in neighborhood hotspots. To aid in program changes during the program's final year, researchers tracked and analyzed neighborhood COVID-19 case counts. These methods helped assess whether programs could measurably affect crime and residents' sense of safety and offer a model of community safety in a Latinx immigrant suburb. The following sections describe the results of this research. We show how CBCR activities helped to promote safety in Langley Park by investing in community building and revitalization through programs focused on community knowledge, resource access, community placemaking, and youth. After describing the outcomes of these activities, we then show the relatively modest successes of those activities focused on building trust between residents and police.

Table 4. Implementation phase research activities and outcomes (2018–2020).

Method & Program	Events or Activities	Frequency or Date	Participants or Sample Size	Outcomes
Participant Observation				
CPC Meetings	Researchers attended monthly meetings and analyzed meeting notes.	Monthly	7-16	Qualitative assessments of various programs.
Surveys				
Community Surveys	Researchers developed survey implemented by CASA on residents' views of social cohesion and perceptions of public safety and police.	2019, 2020	90, 60	Community cohesion high. Limited improvement in police- community trust.
Youth Gang Prevention	Researchers analyzed student pre- and posttest scores in gang prevention curriculum and program satisfaction surveys.	2019-20	50, 49	88% increased knowledge and high program satisfaction in both years.
Spanish Language for Officers	Researcher interviewed Spanish teacher and analyzed first-year CASA-led post-survey.	2019-20	24, 16	47% attendance rate in both years. Limited outcomes due to low-attendance.
Focus Groups				
PGPD Officers	Researcher designed questions on officers' views of police-community relations, program outcomes, and public safety.	2016	0	Police declined to participate.
Youth Soccer League	Researchers designed questions and led focus groups in Year 1 and conducted interviews with CASA staff, soccer coach, PGPD, parents and youth participants in Year 2. Reviewed What's App communication.	2019, 2020	18, 8	Exceeded goals for participation. No evidence of improved community-police relations. Satisfaction with other program aspects.
Secondary Data Collection & Analysis				
Crime and Calls for Service	Researchers collected data from public sites and PGPD's IT division to analyze crime and calls for service in hotspots and Langley Park.	Quarterly	–	Property crime trended downwards. Violent crime flat, consistent with national trends.
Alcohol Awareness	Researchers reviewed program materials and interviewed CASA personnel about activities.	2018-20	>1500	Over 1,500 contacts and successful campaigns around community hotspots.
Community Resource Campaign	Researchers informed resource guide and reviewed evidence of distribution.	2019-20	>1000	Over 1,000 guides distributed with various community resources.
Coffee with an Officer (*Club de Café*)	Researchers interviewed program administrator and resident organizer. Reviewed program documents and participation notes.	Monthly, 2019-20	Average attendance = 15	Limited police-community interaction. Increased access to safety information.
Interviews				
Community Walks	Researchers interviewed program administrators, reviewed program documents and participation notes, and directly observed several walks.	8 walks, 2018-20	Average attendance = 9	Limited police-community interaction. Useful community data and exchange on hotspot interventions.
Community Placemaking	Researchers interviewed NDC and CASA staff and reviewed project plans and reports on various programs.	2019-20	–	$2 million in additional funding, high rates of resident participation and satisfaction. Activities continued beyond grant.
CBCR Final Assessment	Researchers interviewed CPC partners about program administration and implementation.	2020	6	Various levels of success across programs.

Promoting safety through community building and revitalization

Moving beyond racialized policing requires a power shift between police and marginalized communities as well as the recognition of residents' diversity and their needs (Bell, 2019). Under the CBCR program, the Langley Park CPC attempted to meet residents' diverse needs by strengthening their community knowledge, access to resources, engaging residents in community placemaking, and investing in youth. Residents welcomed these community building and revitalization activities and contributed their time and talents to ensure their success.

By supporting these efforts, the CPC built on and increased Langley Park's strong sense of community. The community survey suggested that, while social cohesion was high at the start of the implementation period, it improved even more by the end. Between 2019 and 2020, the percentage of respondents who felt they belonged in the neighborhood rose (71% to 85%) as did those who talked with their neighbors (65% to 86%) and had pride in the neighborhood (44% to 59%). In some cases, community support led to long-lasting programs that will likely continue to improve public safety and strengthen Langley Park's social fabric well beyond the grant term.

Strengthening community knowledge, connecting to resources

Residents who lack English proficiency, education, or documentation often struggle to access social services in sprawling suburbs. In Langley Park, this problem is exacerbated by a lack of private transportation in a neighborhood that lacks efficient public transportation. More than one in five (21%) occupied housing units in the neighborhood lack a vehicle. The Langley Park CPC helped strengthen residents' connections, knowledge about the neighborhood, and access to community-based and county resources through a resource campaign, alcohol awareness program, and *Club de Café*. Their approach recognized that when neighborhoods have strong social service programs, community-based prevention and intervention activities, and resident participation, collective efficacy is also strong (Collins et al., 2014).

The CPC developed a resource guide based on needs reported by residents in the planning and implementation phases. Reflecting CASA's holistic community development approach, the guide included public safety services as well as an array of social and community services—from educational, financial, health, and employment to workforce development and language resources. CASA printed over 1,000 copies in English and Spanish and their organizers distributed the guide door-to-door to Langley Park homes before COVID-19 hit in early 2020. CASA staff then quickly shifted their energies and CBCR funding to initiate a Solidarity Fund that provided direct cash and food assistance to residents. The fund raised more than $1 million in non-federal dollars and assisted over 2,300 families and individuals.

CASA also developed an alcohol awareness program in response to community concerns about alcoholism and its link with violent crime. In the planning phase, residents noted their desire to reduce alcoholism, stop illegal beer sales in apartments, and curb public urination at a popular gathering space, a tree known locally as "*Palo Miado*." During the implementation phase, CASA leveraged their existing nationally recognized health promoters (*promotora*) program to increase residents' awareness and access to alcohol-related resources. The volunteer *promotoras* become peer educators to their neighbors, friends, and family. *Promotoras* visited shopping centers, liquor stores, the local farmers market, and other gathering places to speak to residents about the dangers of alcohol consumption, warning signs of alcohol abuse, and recovery resources. They also distributed a newly prepared bilingual brochure that focused on the social and health consequences of alcohol abuse and its potential legal and immigration repercussions. The program reached over 1,500 people through social media and one-on-one conversations, referrals, and other connections. During CPC meetings, the CASA program director shared stories about its successes. One story referenced a homeless man who *promotoras* connected with an alcohol addiction specialist, a doctor, health insurance, and employment. The job also provided the man with stable housing. *Promotoras* and other residents also

successfully pressed the county to cut down the *Palo Miado*. CASA organized *promotoras* and residents to testify at public hearings and submitted CPC crime reports to support a successful campaign to prevent the reissuance of a liquor license to Tick Tock Liquors, a site of historic alcohol abuse located in a crime hotspot. At one board of license hearing, a *promotora* who had struggled with alcoholism testified:

> I can tell you firsthand from my work in the Langley Park community that alcohol abuse is an issue that affects many individuals and families and has grave health, social, and immigration-related consequences. Additional access may mean increased risk for residents, who frequently complained about public intoxication, prostitution, and assaults at or near Tick Tock Liquor Store when it was open. Already limited police resources will be diverted and our program's efforts to increase public safety, clean up, and beautify this corner will be counteracted if Tick Tock is allowed to sell liquor again. (*Tick Tock Liquor Store Hearing*, 2020)

The CPC also held monthly *Club de Café* meetings to better resource residents with neighborhood safety information while also hoping to build community-police trust. In a survey completed by participants at one *Club de Café*, respondents noted that the meeting allowed them the opportunity to learn how to call officers from non-emergency numbers and voice their concerns about officers calling ICE. It also provided a space to discuss important topics with their neighbors, such as domestic violence services and visa processes. A resident who helped to organize the program and recruit participants reflected that it was "nice because it was a chance to talk with families and connect them to the CBCR program." However, she and CASA leadership noted that the police largely presented information to residents, rather than interacting, engaging, and collaborating with them as the program intended. The resident organizer concluded that the meetings did little to reduce the distrust residents had of police.

These efforts underscored that Langley Park residents faced barriers to meeting basic resources and services that were exacerbated by its inner-ring suburban location. By better connecting residents to each other and a range of community resources, the CPC helped to reduce residents' insecurity and contribute to their welfare in ways likely to reduce crime in the long run.

Engaging residents in community placemaking

An essential component of Langley Park's CBCR program was to enhance neighborhood infrastructure. CASA initially conceived of their strategy as Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), a principle emphasized by the CBCR's Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (SARA) model of community policing (U.S. DOJ, 2014). However, in working with the Neighborhood Design Center (NDC), a local community design nonprofit, the CPC's emphasis turned away from CPTED's focus on crime prevention through enhanced surveillance to collaborative community placemaking, emphasizing neighborhood beautification and strengthening a sense of place. An NDC representative noted that the focus brought greater attention to the systems that led to crime and residents as problem-solvers, rather than problems that needed to be fixed.

Placemaking refers to collective actions to transform physical spaces in ways that support human interaction, economic exchange, and well-being. Placemaking occurs when residents become agents of change and work together to improve their local environment (Lara, 2018). Social cohesion, social capital, and neighborhood ties are strengthened when neighborhood investments, trust, and solidarity are visible (Lombardo & Donner, 2018). The CPC learned about challenges in the built environment through community walks and conversations with residents about places where interventions could improve public safety and enhance community identity. These conversations led to planned community clean-ups, a traffic box art wrap project, a community garden, graffiti removal, murals, and new landscaping and lighting.

CPC-led community walks in neighborhood crime hotspots were opportunities for residents, police, and other stakeholders to build trust, share information, and collaborate around potential interventions (Figure 2). In these eight walks, residents provided valuable information about

neighborhood conditions. In a 2019 walk, for instance, one resident noted a dangerous area behind a gas station, a young boy noted his fear of kicking a soccer ball by himself in the neighborhood, and a girl worried aloud about MS-13, a Central American gang with ties throughout the U.S. All argued that improved lighting was critical. Before another walk, a resident organizer set up a pizza party in an apartment courtyard and arranged games for youth and parents to share ideas about potential neighborhood improvements and solicit resident feedback. NDC helped CASA facilitate interactive community walks and *Club de Café* meetings that encouraged resident engagement in community design interventions. CASA organizers, however, pointed out the limits of input from walks because of police participation in them. "When [residents] were invited to the walks, even those active were scared because they said neighbors would see them with the police," a resident organizer explained, " . . . They said they didn't know who was watching." Over half of residents who completed the community survey in 2019 and 2020 said they felt uncomfortable reporting crime to police. Many said they feared doing so because of retaliation from neighbors.

The priorities of Langley Park residents identified during community walks and other CPC-sponsored events included investments in neighborhood open spaces and improved walking conditions. The neighborhood includes large lawns between apartment complexes and many privately-owned parking lots surrounding strip malls. With a lack of public space, residents often use these areas as pseudo-public space (Lung-Amam & Dawkins, 2020). Hemmed in by three six-lane state highways, Langley Park also has dangerous walking conditions. Sidewalks are deteriorated and missing in places, despite heavy foot traffic in this transit-dependent community. As in many suburbs, Langley Park's superblocks are disconnected, leading residents to walk along busy state highways rather than neighborhood streets. Between 2009 and 2017, at least 138 pedestrians were hit by vehicles on University Boulevard, Langley Park's main street, including eight fatalities (Rainey, 2017). Vacant spaces and overgrown vegetation along roadways also create unsafe pedestrian conditions with few "eyes on the street" over long stretches.

Figure 2. Community walk with residents and PGPD officers in Langley Park. Source: CASA.

Working with NDC, residents planned a variety of improvements. They suggested widened sidewalks at a popular school bus stop, traffic-calming measures on dangerous roadways, areas for improved lighting, murals in common gathering spaces, and traffic box wraps that could turn everyday infrastructure into opportunities for community celebration.

The CPC faced many challenges in implementing the community's desired projects. CASA and NDC's attempts to secure timely cooperation from the county's Department of Public Works and Transportation proved elusive. Further, the DOJ barred the use of CBCR funds for projects to improve private property, and local regulations and agencies made investments on public facilities slow and sometimes impossible. The longstanding failure of landlords (most of whom were absentee and whose properties were managed by out-of-state real estate investment trusts) to maintain their properties made upgrades on private property a pressing concern. However, only one manager from Langley Park's 14 apartment complexes responded to CASA's attempts to engage them in the CPC, stunting landlord cooperation. Residents were also highly distrustful of landlords and county officials. As one CASA staff member reported, "Residents have been there for a long time and have [been] made promises to [do] things that haven't unfolded, especially among property owners."

The CPC also failed to connect with business owners and engage them in CBCR activities, especially around placemaking. The CPC envisioned bringing business owners together to develop concrete public safety improvements, such as lighting and façade improvements. Planned business roundtables, however, were poorly attended and eventually stopped. Langley Park's small business owners are often sole proprietors operating on slim margins who do not have the time and resources to leave their businesses to attend meetings (Lung-Amam et al., 2019). During the economic downturn associated with COVID-19, these businesses were further strained, with several shutting down temporarily or permanently (Gallaher, 2020).

Despite these many hurdles, by late 2020, CASA and NDC had begun improving neighborhood infrastructure. They widened the sidewalk at a popular bus stop and started a tree planting program on private and public properties, installing shrubs and fence pillars along popular pedestrian corridors. They also began planning a community garden with *Mi Espacio*, a youth program run by CASA, working with the sole property manager who responded to CASA's invitation to engage in the CPC. CASA conducted a community survey to plan for the garden, and residents started a WhatsApp group to share ideas and photos with NDC. CASA and NDC also started a graffiti removal program and installed several vandalism-resistant art wraps on 16 traffic and utility boxes, including one designed by *Mi Espacio* youth (Figure 3). Working with local artists, residents, and a community development corporation, CASA and NDC also began installing artwork on storm drains, traffic stops, and other high-traffic areas, which included two community murals amplifying a message of hope during the pandemic. Community interest led CASA and NDC to plan a community art walk and form a partnership with Arts on the Block's Youth Arts Movement to facilitate a virtual art camp for 20 Langley Park youth. While limited in scale, these projects had strong community support that helped CASA leverage an additional $2 million in county funding and commitments to extend the work into the future.

Investing in youth

While many community placemaking activities employed youth, the CPC also designed programs with a more explicit goal of youth engagement, crime prevention, and an improved sense of safety. In the planning phase, Langley Park youth said they felt unsafe in the neighborhood and lacked youth-related activities and spaces. Adults worried about youth being recruited into gangs, especially MS-13. In other contexts, youth engagement in community building activities has been shown to facilitate collective efficacy, with positive community safety impacts (Berg et al., 2009; Collins et al., 2014). Through its summer soccer league and gang prevention program, the CBCR program leveraged and strengthened the neighborhood's existing capacity and cohesion by approaching public safety as a process of collective problem solving and building community with youth.

Figure 3. Langley Park traffic box art wrap. Source: Hyattsville Community Development Corporation.

One program brought youth together with officers in a summer soccer league (Figure 4). This free program provided youth with a healthy activity that kept them engaged, displaced a local crime hotspot, and provided an informal venue for youth and officers to get to know each other and build trust. While the two former goals were met, the latter was not. During the program's first year, few officers attended practices and they rarely played with youth, often standing in uniform (including bullet proof vests) at the field's perimeter. With no clear explanation of their purpose and little interaction, several youth reported that they felt like they were being surveilled and found the officer's behavior intrusive. Focus group feedback and discussions with coaches and police led CASA to change the program's structure the following year, assigning police a less central role and setting clearer expectations for youth and officers. Police attended half of the practices in the second year, but mainly presented public safety information during brief, structured water breaks. None of youth or parent interviewees reported an increased sense of trust of police.

The soccer league, however, had positive community building impacts. Youth and parents appreciated the opportunity to engage in a healthy, popular sport in a neighborhood with limited open space. The soccer league allowed youth to reclaim a central neighborhood space, *la cancha* (soccer field), that had previously been mainly used by older children and adults and was also a crime hotspot known for active gang activity and drug dealing. Youth participants in both years emphasized their love of soccer and how much they enjoyed having an activity to look forward to in the neighborhood. One youth reflected, "When kids get bored here, they just sit around on the curb, play in the cuts, or go inside and watch TV or something." Parents echoed youth's appreciation for the program given the lack of sports or other positive neighborhood activities for youth. One parent said she hoped the program would continue so youth would "increase their love of soccer and find joy in playing with other kids." In the second implementation year, CASA began a WhatsApp group to share soccer training videos. The platform also became a useful tool for parents and CASA to share resources, including those related to COVID statistics, food assistance, and mask distribution. The WhatsApp

Figure 4. CASA and Langley Park's Vision Elite Futbol Club. Source: CASA.

group and soccer league continued after the CBCR project ended without police participation. The league engaged 50 youth over the 2-year period, double its original goal.

To address community concerns about gang recruitment and activity, the CPC strengthened the capacity of an existing community-based organization. It enhanced the existing Youth Empowered Toward Success (YETS) program led by the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) at two local high schools. Like many suburban nonprofits, LAYC struggled with resources and staffing (Allard, 2017). The CPC helped to fund a new staff member for its popular after school YETS program who bolstered their holistic approach to gang prevention, which included college preparation, job readiness, academic assistance, cultural integration, and health and fitness programs. Participants demonstrated, through their improved scores in standardized assessments before and after program enrollment, that their knowledge of gang avoidance strategies and related conflict resolution skills grew. The vast majority were highly satisfied with the program and staff in both years. In addition, after COVID-19 hit, LAYC quickly pivoted their programming to provide direct relief to youth and their families, including computers, internet, and food assistance. YETS staff also conducted daily calls to students to support them through challenges, such as setting up e-mail and Zoom accounts. Their rapid response shows how improving the capacities of existing community-based organizations allows them to nimbly adjust to serving the critical needs of youth and families and strengthens collective efficacy.

The limitations of community policing in a Latinx suburb

In contrast to the many successes of CBCR programs aimed at community building and revitalization, those focused on building trust between residents and police met with less success. Programs with the goal of building community-police trust included cultural competency training and Spanish language classes for officers, the youth soccer league, the *Club de Café*, and community walks. As noted above, the latter three activities had positive community building and revitalization benefits, which residents

appreciated and contributed to their time and actions toward but did little to build community-police trust. The one program focused solely on improving community-police relations—the cultural competency training and Spanish language classes for officers—also demonstrated little success.

Even before the implementation grant began, PGPD officers declined to participate in the cultural competency training based on their perceived negative experience in a prior cultural competency training. This training, conducted by researchers unaffiliated with the CBCR initiative, attempted to include virtual reality exercises that officers found offensive. Shortly thereafter, PGPD notified CASA that they would not participate in the CBCR-led training.

Officers agreed to take part in Spanish language classes, but the first cohort of police participants unanimously declined to consent to a researcher-led pre-survey assessing their Spanish proficiency and opinions about Langley Park. In the first year of these CASA-led classes, 24 police officers attended the 12-week sessions, averaging a 47% attendance rate. In the second year, 16 officers participated, with the same average attendance rate. The program ended prematurely due to COVID-19. In a limited class survey designed and implemented by the instructor, most officers expressed relatively positive views of Langley Park, but noted difficulties in building trust with residents—a goal of the cultural competency program in which they had refused to participate.

Incidents of police brutality in Langley Park, unauthorized police-ICE collaboration, and the 2020 uprisings following the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other unarmed Black people amplified already strained police-community relations. Several problematic police actions occurred in the neighborhood during the CBCR program. In early 2020, a confrontation caught on tape and widely shared across social media showed an officer pushing a resident to the ground in a Langley Park shopping center, rendering him unconscious. The video then showed that the officer failed to help the resident (Morse, 2020). PGPD suspended but did not charge the officer, who was already the target of an unrelated internal affairs investigation. Tensions were further inflamed a few months later when PGPD released a video showing an officer violently kicking a suspect at a Langley Park gas station (Davies & Weil, 2020). The video was reluctantly released by PGPD 2 months later, after multiple community requests. Its release coincided with national uprisings around police violence, including protests in Prince George's County.

In the program's final months, police participation in CPC meetings waned. Officers also did not respond to repeated researcher invitations to participate in planned focus groups intended to analyze police officers' impressions of changes in public safety in Langley Park since the focus group during the planning period. The lack of progress in police-community relations over the implementation phase as well as incidents in Langley Park that further strained community relations likely contributed to their lack of response.

Implementation programs failed to bridge the trust gap between residents and police. In community surveys undertaken in both 2019 and 2020, about half of respondents reported feeling uncomfortable reporting crime to the police. Similarly, about half indicated that they did not feel the police did a good job addressing neighborhood problems. When compared to improvements in measures of social cohesion, the lack of improvement in measures of community-police relations suggest that investments in community building and revitalization were more effective in improving community safety in Langley Park, offering lessons for other Latinx and immigrant suburbs.

Conclusion: We make us safe

Low-income Black and Brown suburbs, especially immigrant communities, have been under-analyzed as sites of police violence and places that offer community-led safety solutions. In this article, we have shown that Langley Park resembles patterns evidenced in other inner-ring suburbs where decades of in-migration by diverse immigrants and African Americans were attended by White flight and processes of divestment and underinvestment. These conditions made Langley Park as vulnerable as central city neighborhoods to deepening poverty and increasing crime. It also prefaced the racialized,

anti-immigrant policing that historically failed to address the underlying sources of neighborhood crime, while criminalizing residents and breeding police-community distrust.

Like many struggling inner-ring suburbs, Langley Park had little access to county and state resources to shore up its social safety net and improve public safety. Instead of helping to secure these resources, Prince George's County increased policing—or in the case of TNI, increased policing in concert with county social services. This cycle of racialized over-policing strained community-police relations but did not substantially change neighborhood conditions.

In the 4-year $1 million CBCR program, the most promising outcomes were focused on community building and revitalization. Efforts to increase pedestrian safety also strengthened residents' sense of community and neighborhood identity. Activities to improve an existing youth gang prevention program increased the capacity of a fragile community-based organization. Equipping residents to lead the community resource campaign, improved access to alcohol, health, and other social services as well as community connections and data access. CASA and LAYC's successful pivot to COVID-19 support showed the value of increasing the capacity of community-based organizations that can respond quickly to residents' needs. By resourcing and educating residents and community-based organizations, investing in their capacities and connections, and improving neighborhood infrastructure, the CPC leveraged the power of an already close-knit community to generate sustained engagement, long-term partnerships, and new funding commitments. They offer interventions that can be "scaled up" to other Latinx immigrant suburbs struggling against the forces of decline and disinvestment that are relatively low-cost. While the interventions relied heavily on the time and resources of residents and community-based organizations, the CPC also invested in them, giving back to the community in ways that residents often found beneficial. The Langley Park CPC offers a model of collective efficacy in immigrant suburbs that relies on strengthening community bonds and investing in its built environment as keys to community safety.

The findings also underscored what has long been known about the limits of policing and police reform to address the concerns of communities of color. As Bell (2019) argues, a subordinated community needs to *ask* for new policies, but a transformative community demands institutional change in power structures and creates community-based alternatives (p. 211). In Langley Park, efforts to repair the breach between residents and police and equip police with better skills and resources to communicate with residents in culturally competent ways fell short. While police refused to participate in some planned activities, those in which they did participate failed to build greater trust or improve community relations. The soccer league, community walks, and *Club de Café* seemed to reinforce residents' negative views of police, rather than change them. The language course lacked its planned cultural competency focus and was too poorly attended and short-lived to have had a significant impact. Beyond the CBCR programs, the long history of police brutality and anti-immigrant policing in Prince George's County that continues today highlights the difficulties in reforming police culture as the primary thrust of community safety programs.

While greater attention has recently been paid to issues of suburban police violence and the transformative possibilities that lie in redirecting police funding to place-based strategies, scholarship is still largely focused on Black communities (Boyles, 2015; Rios, 2020). The social and material conditions of immigrant, inner-ring suburbs have been overlooked. In places like Langley Park, public transit is lacking, housing is in decline, small businesses are struggling, neighborhood infrastructure is crumbling, public spaces are virtually nonexistent, and social services, especially those for immigrants, are few and far between. This research highlights the importance of sustained attention to the physical conditions of immigrant suburbs as well as to needs of Latinx immigrants, documented and undocumented, in coming up with viable and sustainable community safety solutions.

CASA effectively led the CPC by leveraging its unique position as a high-capacity, immigrant-serving, community-based suburban nonprofit. It used the CBCR grant to strengthen other community organizations, its own relationships with residents, and residents with each other. As Sampson (2001) points out, if local institutions are weak, so is social capital and local resident involvement. Many low-income, immigrant suburbs require major investments in the community-based organizations upon which residents rely that

often struggle with staff and resource capacity to lead such robust and long-term projects (Allard, 2017). By working closely with CPC partners and residents, CASA turned a relatively modest, short-term community safety grant into a comprehensive community building and neighborhood revitalization project likely to sustain itself for years to come.

Their approach built on a recognition of the importance of collective efficacy and neighborhood improvement to community safety. By improving neighborhood-based services, activities, and participation, the CPC leveraged and built stronger connections among residents, which contributes a sense of social control and efficacy (Collins et al., 2014). It also recognized that residents and nonresidents associate a neighborhood's physical deterioration with social disorder, which in turn contributes to crime (Kim & Conley, 2011; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004; Sampson et al., 1997). By improving Langley Park's built environment and involving residents in the process—from conceptualization to design and implementation—community placemaking activities invested in residents' collective sense of agency and neighborhood identity, while also reducing perceptions of disorder. Modest investments in revitalization, such as community gardens and murals, can have long-lasting impacts on neighborhood pride and trust that may ultimately lead to even greater long-term community outcomes, including residents' willingness to work together in the future (Kleinhans & Bolt, 2014). CBCR investments in existing community-based organizations and other activities further leveraged and strengthened the neighborhood's capacity and cohesion. They relied on collective problem solving, strengthened social capital, and improved residents' access to critical resources and supports. They showed how other organizations working in disinvested inner-ring suburbs, might address community safety concerns by similarly investing in the underlying social, physical, and economic factors that contribute to crime. Langley Park's CBCR project showed that effective strategies are not police-centered; they are community-centered and led. They work by leveraging and strengthening trusted community bonds in ways that allow residents to imagine and engage in programs that enhance safety by improving neighborhood conditions, and educational, employment, and other opportunities. They empower residents and community-based organizations to lead and invest in their capacity to do so.

In 2022, the proposed police budget in Prince George's County was over $764 million, roughly 20% of the county's general funds. Low-income, immigrant neighborhoods like Langley Park need major reinvestment but are likely to continue to take a backseat to the clear priorities reflected in the county's budget—leading to greater policing of already overpoliced neighborhoods and community-police tensions. This research suggests that diverting even a small portion of police funds to community-driven efforts could preserve and extend innovative programs that improve public safety, while increasing a sense of place, community, and collective efficacy in far more cost-effective ways. Over the long-term, re-imagining police and policing altogether is the larger and more transformational work envisioned by abolitionists, activists, and communities of color across the U.S. Langley Park's community safety projects that relied primarily on residents and community-based organizations offer a generative point from which such imaginative possibilities might take root.

Notes

1. The term *race-class subjected suburbs* refers to Soss and Weaver's (2017) conceptualization of how race and class interact to produce unequal policing practices.
2. All demographic statistics are from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2015–2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates for the Langley Park Census Designated Place.
3. The community survey was designed by researchers from the University of Maryland and administered by CASA staff in August–September 2019 and September–October 2020 at CBCR and other community events. The survey was available online and as written surveys. Almost all participants completed the written survey in Spanish with the assistance of CASA staff members. The 2020 survey was combined with a needs analysis of COVID-19 resources. Outreach was hampered by the pandemic. Due to the low turnout rates, researchers did not conduct tests of statistical significance.
4. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes come from interviews conducted by CPC researchers, October 2020.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank all the CPC members who diligently contributed to this effort, particularly those from CASA, including Alonzo Washington, Donta Council, Sara Rockefeller, and Julio Murillo. We also appreciate the guidance and support of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, particularly Matt Perkins.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This project was supported by Grant No. 2017-AJ-BX-0002 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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