



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

February 16, 2012

Mr. Isiah Leggett
County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe St, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Mr. Roger Berliner
Council President
Stella B. Warner Council Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Ms. Valerie Ervin
Council Member
Stella B. Warner Council Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Leggett, Mr. Berliner, and Ms. Ervin,

The Silver Spring Citizens' Advisory Board has hosted two community meetings to discuss the challenges and needs of at-risk youth and offers the following summary for your consideration in budget and policy formulation to prevent teen crime. As background, these meetings were led by the Neighborhoods committee and included representatives from ten non-profit organizations and several Montgomery County government organizations that serve at-risk youth as well as principals from five area public schools and about a dozen youth. The following is not a comprehensive list, but rather the recurring themes we heard voiced from multiple constituents:

- Northwood High School's Wellness Center and the youth programs at the Long Branch recreation center are seen as great successes that the community would like to see continued.
- The lack of jobs for teens and young adults is seen as a major contributor to crime. While the economy is a key culprit, there also seems to be a lack of career preparedness in our schools. We heard over-and-over that there is limited opportunity to learn a trade which disenfranchises teens without the resources to attend college. While Thomas Edison High School is seen as a good resource, enrollment is limited. Youth want the opportunity to study a trade irrespective of their GPA and to be able to take a class or two in the trades before committing to Thomas Edison. There also appears to be a lack of training for teens on how to get and keep a job.
- The community would like to see the reinstatement of dedicated SROs (school resource officers). It is believed that the reduction in SROs has contributed to increased teen violence and crime because the SROs no longer have daily interactions with the students at one school which enabled them to proactively prevent incidents and appropriately and quickly react to events. There is also a concern that training of SROs does not seem to be consistent in how to effectively interact with teens.
- Many in the community have expressed the need for a teen center or multi-generational center either as a stand-alone facility or collocated with a school or rec center. Ideas for the center have included offering programs for teens and their siblings, providing study periods and tutors, fostering youth run enterprises, offering classes in the trades, and housing non-profit organizations to enable pooling of resources.

We hope you find this input from the community helpful.

Sincerely,

Bernice North & Sue Decker,
co-chairs of the Neighborhood Committee of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board
on behalf of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board