



# EVALUATION REPORT

Center · for · Youth · Policy · Research

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## *Gang Intervention Partnership*

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Evaluation of and Recommendations  
Regarding a Program to Reduce Criminal  
Activity of Latino Gangs in the  
District of Columbia

Prepared for:

**Office on Latino Affairs  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
Washington, District of Columbia**

**September 13, 2006**

## Acknowledgements

This report was funded by a grant from the Office on Latino Affairs of the Executive Office of the Mayor of the District of Columbia. We thank the Mayor's Office for this support and for selecting the Center for Youth Policy Research as project evaluator and report author.

Several youth, parents, community members, and GIP partners provided information about the GIP initiative and the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods. Without their knowledge, expertise, and commitment to the evaluation process, this report would not have been possible. In order to protect the anonymity we promised them, we are not listing their names here; nonetheless, we thank each and every one of them.

For their assistance in serving as members of the evaluation process steering committee we thank:

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## Executive Summary

### Background

From 1999 to 2003, a series of Latino gang-related homicides rocked the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods. The violent deaths of several young people and non-fatal retaliatory shootings shocked neighborhood residents and put the community on edge. In response to these disturbing events, law enforcement officials, representatives of community agencies, and concerned citizens came together to discuss how to stem the tide of youth violence. As a result of these discussions, in August 2003 Metropolitan Police Department Chief Charles Ramsey, in partnership and collaboration with several community agencies, established the Gang Intervention Partnership, or GIP as it is more commonly known.

The Partnership, supported in part by special funding through the District of Columbia Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA), provides a comprehensive, holistic approach to reducing youth violence in the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods. The Partnership consists of multiple community partners, neighborhood schools, public agencies and a special Metropolitan Police Department Gang Intelligence Unit that works out of the 750 Park Road police sub-station. Appendix A provides the contact person for each agency and outlines each partner's specific role(s) in the GIP project.

### GIP's Goals

GIP's primary goal is to eliminate or significantly reduce gang-related homicides and other forms of gang-related violence in the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods. Specifically, GIP's goals are to:

1. Reduce incidence of gang-related violence in Ward 1;
2. Decrease gang-membership and stop the proliferation of new gangs operating in the target area;
3. Reduce the number of gang-related suspensions in targeted schools; and
4. Increase the involvement of at-risk youth in recreational and other productive activities.

### GIP's Core Strategies and Activities

The Partnership was founded on five core strategies:

1. Conduct intensive and targeted police work and build strong police/community partnerships.
2. Provide targeted outreach to gang-related youth and their family members.
3. Educate parents and community members.
4. Improve and expand access to services critical to diversion and family strengthening.

5. Build capacity.

Five activities have guided GIP's implementation:

1. Weekly meetings;
2. Use of a critical incident emergency protocol;
3. Involvement of targeted outreach teams including street-based outreach;
4. Cool Down group; and
5. Reduce gang-related school suspensions.

In addition, GIP law enforcement engagement has focused on three components:

1. Intelligence, which includes identifying individuals involved in gangs, monitoring gang-involved individuals, and conducting surveillance at locations gang members are known to frequent;
2. Enforcement, which involves locating and arresting wanted gang members, coordinating efforts with lead detectives in criminal investigations, and patrolling locations known to be gathering places for Latino gangs; and
3. Intervention and Prevention, which involves educating school staff, administration, and students about how to prevent gang-involved violence in their schools; maintaining contact with School Resource Officers; and instructing officers in targeted schools to notify the unit when information about gangs arises in the school (e.g., skipping parties, gang initiations, and after-school fights).

## Evaluation of GIP

We employed both quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluating GIP. Quantitative methods included analysis of descriptive statistics regarding population demographics, education, crime rates, and gang involvement in the District of Columbia, as well as analyses of changes in these variables over a 5-year period. Raw data for these analyses, with no identifying information attached, was obtained from law enforcement agencies and school personnel whose participation had been invited by the Mayor of the District of Columbia. In addition, we conducted a series of focus groups and telephone interviews involving more than 40 individuals. To protect anonymity, we neither audiotaped nor videotaped the focus groups. While we made no verbatim recording of the focus group discussions, we took extensive notes and extracted quotes and themes from the focus group sessions.

## Has GIP Achieved its Goals?

In a word: *Yes*.

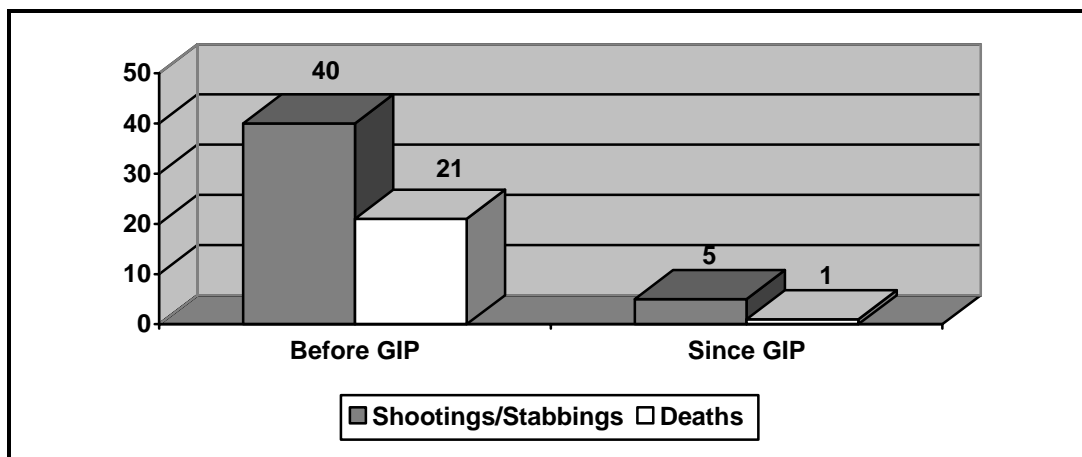
Since its inception, the Gang Intervention Partnership has had tremendous success in stemming the tide of Latino gang violence. The best indicator of this success can be stated succinctly:



***There has been no Latino gang-related homicide  
in the District of Columbia since October 9, 2003.***

This is a remarkable accomplishment.<sup>1</sup> In addition, according to GIP internal records, during the four-year period before GIP was established (Summer 1999 – Summer 2003), more than 40 youth were shot or stabbed; 21 of these young persons died as a result of the violent attacks. In contrast, during the three years since GIP's inception (August 2003 – August 2006), there have been five shooting/stabbing incidents in the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods; MPD closed each of the shooting cases (one resulting in loss of life) within 48 hours. These facts represent a significant reduction in the incidence of gang-related violence in Ward 1.

### Shootings/Stabbings and Deaths: 4 Years Prior to versus 3 Years Since GIP Inception

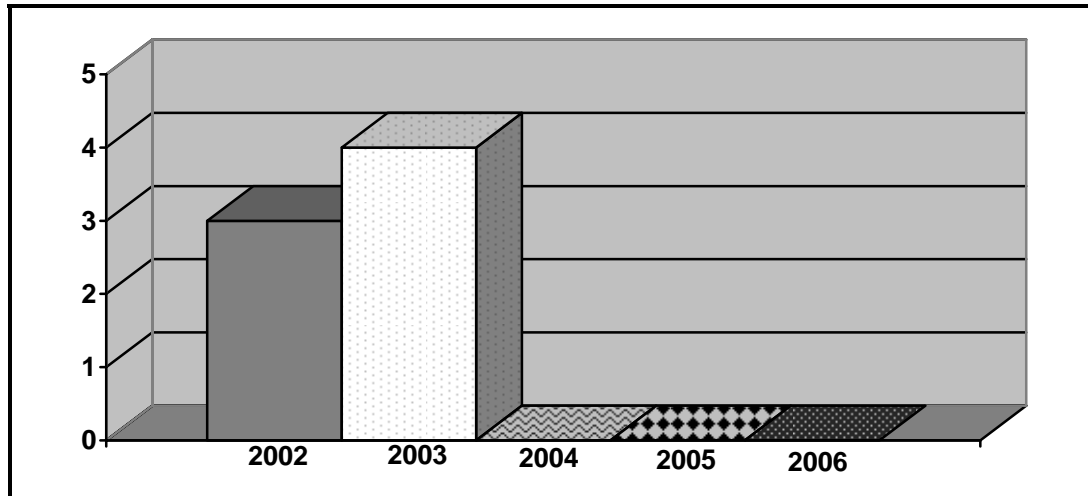


**Source:** Urquilla, M. (2006). *Gang Intervention Partnership Chronology: Timeline of Key Events 1999 – 2005*.

Recent Metropolitan Police Department records provide additional data showing the reduction in Latino gang-related crimes since GIP's establishment:

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that one young man who had lived in the District was killed in a suspected gang-related shooting in El Salvador on August 10, 2006, four months after his parents sent him to Central America following a series of gang-related incidents in the District.

### Latino Gang-Related Homicides by Year: 2002 - 2006



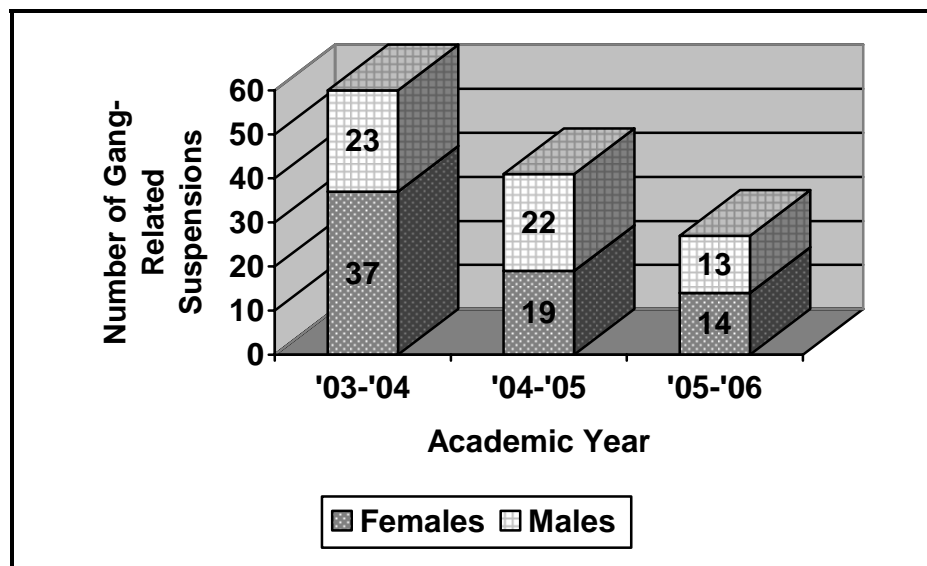
Source: Sgt. Aguilar, GIP Unit, Metropolitan Police Department: "Latino Gang Related Crimes."

Members of the GIP consortium noted that while there may be a greater number of known youth gangs in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods now than there were previously, the number of gang *members* actually has decreased. Also, the currently operating gangs have devolved from highly organized groups into less structured collections of youth. GIP partners describe many of the newly recognized gangs as "spin-offs of larger gangs" that are less likely to be in conflict with one another. In large measure, these outcomes have resulted from intensive community outreach.

GIP has built strong relationships with five schools (Garnett Patterson, Lincoln and MacFarland Middle Schools, and Bell and Wilson Senior High Schools) in order to reduce chronic suspension and truancy among gang-involved youth. GIP offers family support services and case management to families when a pattern of chronic truancy and suspension develops.

As a result of these collaborations, gang-related violent incidents resulting in suspension declined 56% from 2003-2004 to 2005-2006 at Bell Multicultural High School. Female gang-related suspensions decreased 62% during the three-year period, while male gang-related suspensions declined 43%.

**Reduction in Gang-Related Suspensions  
at Bell Multicultural High School:  
2003-2004 to 2005-2006**



Source: Bell Multicultural High School suspension records.

Moreover, a variety of recreation programs and activities have been instrumental in providing young people “safe havens” for after-school and summer activities.

The Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods have experienced other positive outcomes as well: Partners report a drastic reduction in “gang-on-gang” violence and “skipping parties” as well as an increase in the rate of prosecution of gang-related violent incidents. Convictions have been handed down in the Latino gang-related *Vatos Locos* conspiracy case. In addition, for the violent incidents that did occur, GIP intervened successfully, thus preventing retaliatory violence.

These positive indicators are particularly striking because they are occurring while gang violence has continued to rise elsewhere in the region. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), an organization of law enforcement officials from large cities and counties, sponsored a Crime Emergency Summit in Washington, DC on August 31, 2006. The group provided more than two dozen examples of cities, including Washington, DC, where violent crime has spiked this year. “Crime is coming back, and it has a new and troubling element,” said Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton. That is “a youthful population that is largely disassociated from the mainstream of America.”

## What Makes GIP Successful?

GIP’s impressive record is the result of a constellation of several factors rather than any single component. These factors include:

1. The commitment of the District of Columbia Mayor’s Office on Latino Affairs (OLA) to providing the funding, personnel assignments, and inter-governmental advocates

necessary to create an effective and comprehensive network of communication, coordination, and strategy development among multiple partners.

2. The multi-agency, holistic approach to gang intervention developed and required by GIP that focuses on partners communicating with one another in a detailed fashion on a frequent and regular basis.
3. The commitment of the Metropolitan Police Department Latino Gang Unit to providing stable, visible and highly specialized youth outreach, gang intervention and suppression, and intelligence gathering efforts on a 24 hour per day, 7 days per week basis.
4. The dedication of the Columbia Heights / Shaw Collaborative in providing program management, direct services and technical assistance in ensuring the effective delivery of the various components of the partnership.
5. The commitment of neighborhood youth-serving agencies to serving a crucial role in intervening with gang-involved youth.
6. GIP's coordinated and rapid response to all levels of incidents and monitoring of situations to prevent flare-ups.
7. The recognition that "gentrification" causes problems as well as solving problems.
8. A commitment to intolerance of continued violence as a way of life in the neighborhood.

## Remaining Challenges

Without a doubt, GIP has achieved impressive successes; however, there still is work to be done. Focus group participants and individuals interviewed described the challenges remaining:

1. GIP is understaffed and has insufficient resources.
2. The District of Columbia Public Schools is not providing high level support for GIP, specifically requiring all DC public schools to participate in the GIP initiative.
3. GIP team members are not known to all community partners.
4. Communicating with other police jurisdictions regarding gang-related issues is difficult.
5. Alternatives to lock-up are inadequate.
6. New gangs with younger members are being established. Violence has been reduced, but often it is just below the surface.
7. Deep social problems such as poverty, disenfranchisement, affordable housing, and deteriorating schools must be addressed. Also, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and alcohol abuse are increasing among gang-involved youth.
8. Prevention work and street outreach strategies that focus on youth development principles need to be enhanced.
9. Youth are not yet adequately engaged as GIP team members. Partners need to explore ways to engage youth and their families in GIP-related events.

10. Communication among agencies and families in order to build awareness of regional, national and international components of gang activity requires continued coordination.

## Conclusions

Law enforcement and school data, as well as feedback from community residents interviewed during focus groups held in June and August 2006, clearly demonstrate that the Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP) offers the District of Columbia and the nation a model for how multiple agencies can – and *must* – work together to successfully stem the tide of youth violence. As one school partner noted:

*My experience with GIP has been like a breath of fresh air. . . . I can do better as a professional [because of GIP].*

GIP has created, and is sustaining, a comprehensive network that successfully addresses the complicated contexts that contribute to young people’s engagement in violent behaviors. This network, involving prevention and intervention initiatives alongside intelligence gathering and enforcement efforts, has resulted in significant penetration into Latino gang networks in the District of Columbia.

Now, GIP learns of critical incidents in record time – often through multiple sources. Latino gang-related crime – from graffiti to homicide – has been dramatically reduced. Since GIP’s establishment as a long-term entity, there has been *no* Latino gang-related homicide in the District of Columbia. When altercations have occurred, GIP has intervened to prevent retaliation, thus stemming further violence. Hundreds of parents and community members have been educated about gangs. “Skipping parties” have been disrupted and youth returned to school. Out-of-school and summer youth programs have been established to help youth leave gangs and engage in prosocial activities, life and job skills training, and recreational programs

These remarkable achievements should be recognized and celebrated!

The work of the Partnership is not done, however. Unfortunately, violence continues to be a daily reality for too many communities in general and for young people in Washington, DC in particular. As one GIP partner noted:

*It will require a lot more from us to move individuals and institutions to a mind set that murders and violence are not normal or inevitable in a city that once was known as the “murder capital of the world.” We need to create new expectations for ourselves. We need to create a public sentiment of zero tolerance for violence. We must change the attitude that certain lives are expendable.*

Moreover, Latino gangs still operate in the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods. School “skipping parties” still occur. Complex social problems such as poverty and discrimination still fuel violent acts in the neighborhoods.

For these reasons, GIP must be continued and should be expanded.

At the 2005 conference of the Inter-American Coalition for the Prevention of Violence, speakers from Central and North America commented on the increasing need for community-based initiatives to advance parent and youth dialogue. In addition, they called for enhanced efforts to improve the overall health, education, and economic conditions of families.

GIP provides a model for addressing both of these needs.

## **Recommendations**

### **A. Funding**

- 1. Provide continued funding to sustain the Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP).**
- 2. Provide new funding to expand capacity-building efforts within the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods (such as intensive pastoral and mental health interventions with families of gang-involved youth).**
- 3. Provide expanded funding to allow efforts such as GIP to operate effectively in all neighborhoods within the District of Columbia.**
- 4. Provide new funding to allow GIP to create mentoring partnerships so the successful GIP model can be shared with other districts throughout the region and across the United States.**

### **B. Partnership Development and Enhancement**

- 1. Obtain support for GIP from top administrators in the District of Columbia Public Schools.**
- 2. Ensure that GIP is operational in *all* relevant schools in the District of Columbia, both public and charter.**
- 3. Provide ongoing team building experiences for GIP team members so trust can be built and renewed.**
- 4. Develop training and support programs to provide intensive pastoral and mental health interventions with families of gang-involved youth.**
- 5. Provide training in conflict resolution and mediation models.**

### **C. Tracking and Reporting Data**

- 1. Create and use a more aggressive truancy reporting/pre-suspension protocol, particularly when working with gang-involved youth.**

2. **Maintain an accurate accounting of truancy among all students, and ensure data can be disaggregated by race/ethnicity.**
3. **Use consistent boundaries (such as Wards, Districts, or neighborhoods) for crime statistics so that crime in a given area can be accurately tracked across time.**
4. **Develop and apply a workable set of definitions for critical concepts such as “gang,” “crew,” “hood,” and “gang-related crime.”**

#### **D. Communications**

1. **Create frequent opportunities for GIP team members and community members to come together to learn about one another’s concerns, accomplishments, and activities.**
2. **Establish and use a protocol for communicating with neighboring jurisdictions so cases can be tracked through the system seamlessly.**
3. **Establish and use a protocol for sharing information between and among all of the GIP partners that protects confidentiality, supports professionalism yet supports and advances the work of the GIP team.**

#### **E. Opportunities for Youth**

1. **Assist existing programs (such as the Latin American Youth Center and Mary’s Center) to develop and implement comprehensive, strategic approaches to prevention and intervention with gang-involved and at-risk youth.**
2. **Provide opportunities for meaningful involvement of youth with the GIP team.**
3. **Create “safe houses” for youth in danger.**
4. **Improve re-entry programs for youth leaving gangs or returning to the community following detention or incarceration.**
5. **Establish programs to assist young people to leave gangs.**

#### **F. Evaluation**

1. **Assess and evaluate individual GIP team members to ensure that the most effective individuals and agency representatives are serving the Partnership.**
2. **Complete comprehensive evaluations, with planning from project inception. It is time for GIP to move beyond its current role of responding to emergencies; GIP now must mature into a mechanism that identifies evaluation criteria *before* new initiatives are implemented and then accurately measures the variables specified.**

## I. Introduction

*Latino youth gangs present a challenge to public health, security, educational systems and family economic stability and advancement throughout the Americas. Central American countries and Central American immigrant communities in the US face particular challenges in fashioning responses that deal with these issues while maintaining respect for human rights and current law. Youth gangs have emerged in response to the social and economic situation of young people and programs of prevention and rehabilitation need to be crafted taking into account these realities.*

~ Comment by Lainie Reisman of the Inter-American Coalition for the Prevention of Violence (IACPV) at the February 23, 2005 Conference "Voices from the Field: Local Initiatives and New Research on Youth Gang Violence in Central America," organized by the Pan American Health Organization, IACPV, the Due Process of Law Foundation, and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA).

From 1999 to 2003, a series of Latino gang-related homicides rocked the Washington, DC neighborhoods of Columbia Heights and Shaw. The violent deaths of several young people shocked neighborhood residents and put the community on edge. In response to these disturbing events, law enforcement officials, representatives of community agencies, and concerned citizens came together to discuss how to stem the tide of youth violence. As a result of these discussions, in August 2003 Metropolitan Police Department Chief Charles Ramsey, in partnership and collaboration with several community agencies, established the Gang Intervention Partnership, or GIP as it is more commonly known.

The Partnership, supported in part by special funding through the District of Columbia Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA), provides a comprehensive, holistic approach to reducing youth violence in the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods. Originally, GIP was conceived as a six-week, emergency program involving a detail of police officers working closely with neighborhood task force members and other critical partners to end violence. Over time, as the Partnership became established in the neighborhood and began to experience success, financial support and Partnership tasks were extended.

Now, having operated for three years, it is time for a critical assessment of GIP. What has the initiative achieved? What are the Partnership's strengths and shortcomings? What obstacles has GIP faced? What barriers remain? What should be done next?

This report addresses those questions. It includes a list of report goals and the definitions that guided our work, an explication of the contexts necessary to understand the problem of Latino youth gangs in the District of Columbia, an overview of the problem of gangs in the District, and a description of the GIP initiative. The report then describes the quantitative and qualitative measures we employed in evaluating GIP and provides data and anecdotal evidence supporting our conclusions. The report ends with a list of specific recommendations.



## II. Report Goals

1. To present demographics and characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia today.
2. To describe the Columbia Heights / Shaw region of the District of Columbia today and how it has changed during the past five years.
3. To elucidate the problem of Latino gangs in the District of Columbia today.
4. To depict criminal activity of Latino gangs in the Columbia Heights/Shaw region of the District of Columbia including:
  - A context for understanding the problem;
  - Nature and scope of the problem today and during the past five years; and
  - Risk factors for gang membership among youth who live in this area.
5. To explain and evaluate the *Gang Intervention Partnership*, a program to reduce Latino gang-related crimes in the Columbia Heights / Shaw area of the District of Columbia, including:
  - Goals, activities, and anticipated outcomes;
  - Stakeholders;
  - Implementation;
  - Evaluation methods; and
  - Outcomes.
6. To provide a set of recommendations regarding the GIP initiative.

### III. Definitions

Unfortunately, standardized definitions of such terms as *gang*, *crew*, and *hood* have not been generally agreed upon. Many state jurisdictions do not have definitions of these terms, either formal or commonly understood. In fact, many different definitions exist among jurisdictions at the state and local levels, which makes it difficult to have a common discussion on gang issues – or to quantify the nature and scope of gang problems.

According to the San Francisco Gang-Free Communities Initiative, a **gang** is “a group of three or more persons who have common identifying signs, symbols or name, and whose members engage in or have engaged in a pattern of definable violent criminal activities, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community.”<sup>2</sup> The National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association (NAGIA) defines a **gang** as “a group or association of three or more persons who may have a common identifying sign, symbol, or name and who individually or collectively engage in, or have engaged in, criminal activity which creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. Criminal activity includes juvenile acts that, if committed by an adult, would be a crime.”<sup>3</sup> The Chicago Crime Commission defines a gang as follows:

“A street gang is an organized group that participates in criminal, threatening or intimidating activity within the community. This anti-social group, usually of three or more individual, evolves from within the community and has recognized leadership as well as a code of conduct. The group remains united during peaceful times as well as during times of conflict.”

A **Latino gang** is a gang consisting primarily of one ethnic group: Hispanics/Latinos (that nebulous term often including indigenous Chicanos, Mexicans, El Salvadorans, Cubans, South Americans, and anyone else from a Spanish-speaking country) often residing in the same neighborhood.

A **crew** is a less formalized group than a gang. Crews tend to be neighborhood based rather than national or international in scope. Crew members typically engage in less hard core activities such as writing graffiti in public places.

A **hood** also is a less formalized group than a gang. One GIP youth focus group participant characterized a *hood* as “a pack of people that sell drugs and protect turf.”

**Violent crime** is crime involving force or threat of force. According to the Uniform Crime Reporting Program, violent crime is composed of four offenses: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

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<sup>2</sup> San Francisco Gang-Free Communities Initiative 2002 Assessment Report. Note: According to Omnibus Public Safety Bill 16-247, the City Council of the District of Columbia defines *gang* as “a group of seven or more persons who have common identifying signs, symbols or name, and whose members engage in or have engaged in a pattern of definable violent criminal activities, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation within the community.”

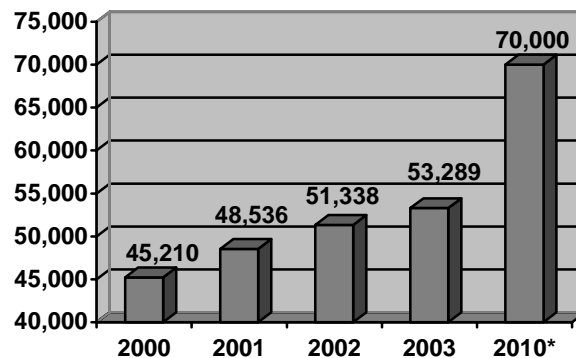
<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Justice Assistance. (2005). *2005 National GangThreat Assessment* (p. 54). Washington, DC: National Alliance of Gang Investigators Association.

## IV. Contexts

### A. District of Columbia Demographics

Latinos constitute the fastest growing ethnic minority in the District of Columbia, as they do in the United States. Today, the District is home to more than 55,000 Latinos. According to the U.S. Census, by the year 2010 the District will have an estimated 70,000 Latino residents. (See Figure 1.) From 2000 to 2003 the number of Latinos in the District increased 17.9%, from 45,210 to 53,289, officially representing 9.4% of the District's 564,326 residents.

**Figure 1**  
**Latino Population in the District of Columbia:**  
**2000 to 2003 and 2010 (Projected)**



\* Projected

**Source:** Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Latinos in the District of Columbia: Demographics*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

It is important to note, however, that the U.S. Census tends to under count Latinos. One reason is that some Latinos, particularly younger males, enter the U.S. without documentation and therefore typically avoid contact with government workers, including Census takers. The Office on Latino Affairs estimates that the proportion of the immigrant community that is undocumented ranges from 5% to 15%. Other individuals, whether documented or not, may fall into the “missed persons” category, sometimes because their residences change and sometimes because they choose not to participate in the Census. For these reasons, the Office on Latino

Affairs estimated that the actual proportion of Latinos in the District of Columbia in 2003 likely was closer to 13%.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1 provides the distribution of Latino and non-Hispanic populations in the District of Columbia in 2003, the most recent year for which figures are available.

**Table 1**  
**District of Columbia Population Estimates by Gender and Latino Origin:**  
**April 1, 2000 to July, 2003**

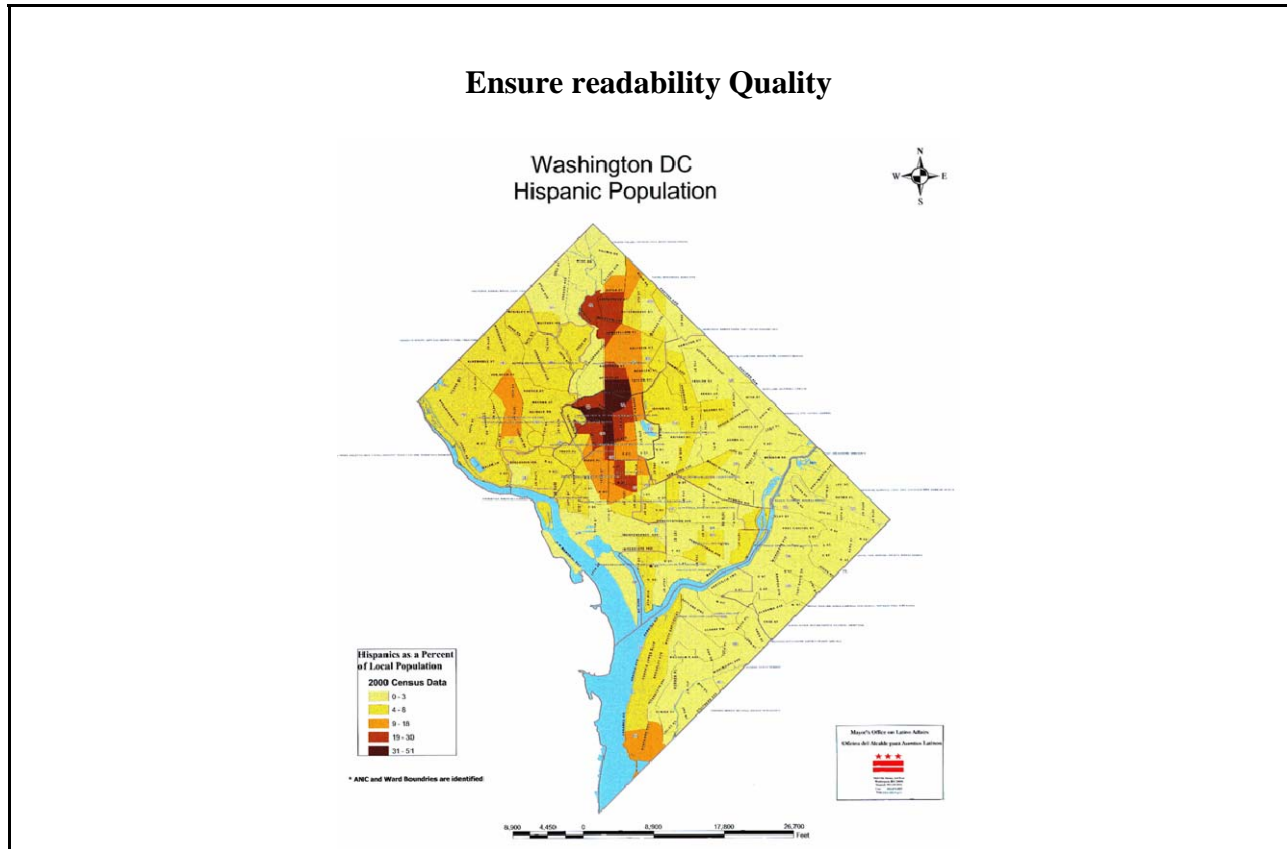
	<b>July 1, 2003</b>	<b>July 1, 2002</b>	<b>July 1, 2001</b>	<b>July 1, 2000</b>	<b>Census 2000 (Base)</b>
<b>Both Genders</b>	564,326	569,157	572,716	571,437	572,059
Not Latino Origin	511,037	517,819	524,180	526,227	527,106
<i>Latino Origin</i>	<b>53,289</b>	<b>51,338</b>	<b>48,536</b>	<b>45,210</b>	<b>44,953</b>
<b>Male</b>	266,076	268,535	269,827	269,170	269,366
Not Latino Origin	237,468	241,258	244,163	245,343	245,699
<i>Latino Origin</i>	<b>28,608</b>	<b>27,277</b>	<b>25,664</b>	<b>23,827</b>	<b>23,667</b>
<b>Female</b>	298,250	300,622	302,889	302,267	302,693
Not Latino Origin	273,569	276,561	280,017	280,884	281,407
<i>Latino Origin</i>	<b>24,681</b>	<b>24,061</b>	<b>22,872</b>	<b>21,383</b>	<b>21,286</b>

**Source:** Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Latinos in the District of Columbia: Demographics*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

As Figure 2 illustrates, certain neighborhoods in the District have high concentrations of Latinos. Almost half (46.3%) of DC Latinos live in Ward 1, which includes the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhood.

<sup>4</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Latinos in the District of Columbia: Demographics*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

**Figure 2**  
**Concentration of Hispanics as a Percent of**  
**Local Population in the District of Columbia (2000)**



**Source:** Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Concentration of Latinos in DC*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

## **B. Characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia**

Latinos in the District tend, on average, to be younger than non-Hispanics, and many are of child-bearing age. The overall median age for DC Latinos is 28.3 years (Latino males 27.9 years and Latina females 28.8 years).

The size of Latino households and of Latino families is greater than the average for the District. Latino married couples are almost twice as likely to have dependent children, the reverse of African-American and White married couples.<sup>5</sup> While the general population of children in the District decreased by 3% between 1990 and 2000, the population of Latino children grew by

<sup>5</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Demographics*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

66%.<sup>6</sup> According to the Office on Latino Affairs, children represented half of the net undercounted population in the District in 1990.

Much of the District's Latino population growth is due to immigration rather than fertility, however. More than one-third of DC Latinos identify their country of origin as being in Central America, the vast majority from El Salvador. In other areas of the United States, by contrast, the Latino population typically originated in Mexico, Puerto Rico, or Cuba.

Gender ratios are disparate for Latinos in the District, with males constituting more than half the Latino population for several decades, and nearly 54% of the Latino population in 2003. During the 1970s and 1980s this disparity may have resulted from a higher differential undercount among Latino males due to the high proportion of Latino males with undocumented status or in "missed persons" categories. In the 1990 and 2000 Censuses, however, the disparity in Latino gender ratios likely reflects the intensification of immigration from Central America, where it is common practice for men to migrate alone and their families to follow at a later time.<sup>7</sup>

In 1997, 337 firms in the District were Latino-owned, employing more than 4,300 workers and generating goods and services valued at more than \$600 million. Yet, today, most Latino workers in the District remain in lower paying occupations, often working part time with no employer benefits or job security.<sup>8</sup>

Housing conditions and lack of access to services also are major concerns for Latinos in the District. Many leaders report that affordable housing is the most serious and overarching threat to the Latino community. The number of DC renter households with incomes below the poverty line exceeds by 16% the number of affordable housing units. In addition, neighborhood gentrification displaces individuals and families living in predominantly Latino Ward 1 neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup>

Latinos in the District of Columbia tend to be poorer, less likely to have health insurance, and less likely to utilize health care services than other District residents. As Latinos acculturate to the American lifestyle, they tend to abandon many healthful practices and do not access preventive health care services. Thirty-eight percent of non-elderly Latinos are uninsured.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Office on Latino Affairs, Latino enrollment in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has almost doubled since the late 1980s and steady immigration to the region continues to transform the racial, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics of neighborhoods and schools. Despite extensive DCPS efforts to reform schools in light of these changes, the Latino

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<sup>6</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

<sup>7</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

<sup>8</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

<sup>9</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

<sup>10</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

community confronts multiple barriers to student success, including under-schooling and limited English proficiency of both parents and students, inconsistent application of language assessment policies, and limited bilingual education.<sup>11</sup> (See Table 2.)

**Table 2**  
**Ability to Speak English by Language Spoken at Home**  
**in the District of Columbia:**  
**Census 2000 Population 5 years and over (539,650)**

Language spoken at home	Total	Speak English "very well"		Speak English "well"		Speak English "not well"		Speak English "not at all well"	
Speak only English	449,240	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Speak language other than English	90,410	52,180	57.7%	17,660	19.5%	14,825	16.4%	5,745	6.4%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	49,460	24,105	<b>48.7%</b>	9,135	<b>18.5%</b>	11,305	<b>22.9%</b>	4,915	<b>9.9%</b>
	539,650*								

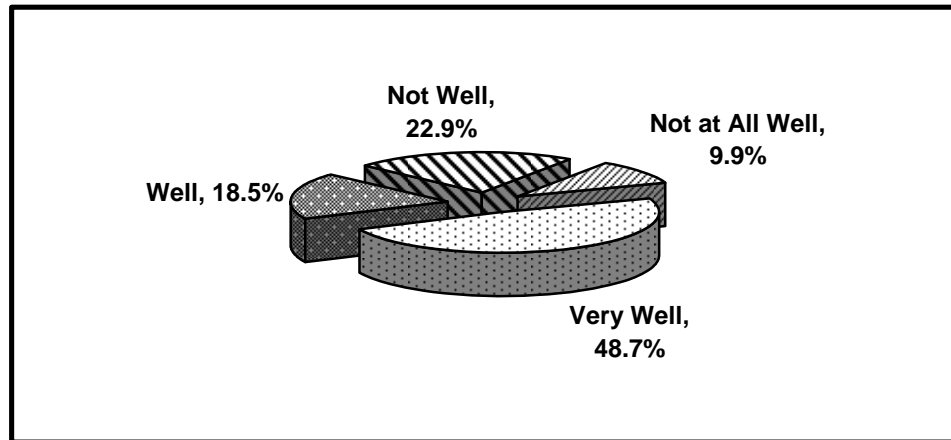
\* Total = English only + Language other than English. Spanish or Spanish Creole is a subset of Language other than English.

**Source:** Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Demographics*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

As Figure 3 illustrates, one of every three Latinos in the District (32.8%) has difficulty speaking English, reporting that they speak English “not well” or “not at all well.”

<sup>11</sup> Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Characteristics of Latinos in the District of Columbia*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

**Figure 3**  
**Percentage of Latinos in the District of Columbia Who Speak English**  
**Very Well, Well, Not Well, and Not at All Well**



**Source:** Executive Office of the Mayor, Office on Latino Affairs. (2005). *Demographics*. Available at <http://ola.dc.gov/ola/cwp/>

### **C. The Columbia Heights/Shaw Neighborhood**

The District of Columbia is divided into eight wards and 37 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions within these wards. The total number of named neighborhoods is 127. Ward 1 includes the neighborhoods of Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Howard University, Le Droit Park, Mount Pleasant, Park View, Pleasant Plains, Reed-Cooke, Shaw, and U Street Corridor/Cardozo (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

The Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods are located in the northwest quadrant of Washington, DC. Columbia Heights is bounded (approximately) by 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW to the west; Spring Road NW to the north; New Hampshire NW and then Sherman Avenue NW to the east; and Florida Avenue NW to the south. Shaw, located just south of Columbia Heights, is bounded (approximately) by Florida Avenue NW to the north; North Capitol Street NW to the east; M Street NW (11<sup>th</sup> Street NW to North Capitol Street NW) and S Street NW (16<sup>th</sup> Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Street) to the south; and 11<sup>th</sup> Street NW (M Street NW to S Street NW) and 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW (S Street NW to Florida Avenue NW) to the west.

Just after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Columbia Heights became part of a middle-class African American enclave in Washington, along with the nearby Shaw and Cardozo neighborhoods and Howard University. It was an upscale residential area, anchored by the ornate Tivoli Theater movie house.

The Shaw region grew out of freed slave encampments in the rural outskirts of Washington City and thrived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as the pre-Harlem center of African-American intellectual and cultural life.



In 1968, following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., riots ravaged the Columbia Heights and Shaw areas, along with many other Washington neighborhoods. Many homes and shops remained vacant for decades.

In 1999, when the Columbia Heights Metro station opened, the city announced a revitalization initiative for the Columbia Heights / Shaw area, which served as a catalyst for the return of economic development and residents. Within five years, the neighborhood had gentrified considerably, although it did not become racially and ethnically homogeneous. Recently, Columbia Heights was described as “arguably Washington’s most ethnically and economically diverse neighborhood, composed of high-priced condominiums and townhouses as well as public and middle-income housing” (<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

Currently, the Columbia Heights / Shaw region is home to a number of Hispanic/Latino organizations. In January 2005, the neighborhood became the first permanent home of the GALA Hispanic Theatre, a theater company dedicated to performing Spanish-language plays. The neighborhood also is home to the Latin American Youth Center on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, the Ecuadorian embassy on 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and the Mexican Cultural Institute and the official residence of the Ambassador of Spain, both on 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **Demographics of the Columbia Heights and Shaw Neighborhoods**

Cluster 2 of the DC Neighborhood Cluster Profile includes Columbia Heights, Mt. Pleasant, and Park View. Demographics for this cluster provide information relevant to the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods, which have a combined population of approximately 46,000. (See <http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/nclusters/>.)

Cluster 2 is predominantly non-Caucasian and has a significant proportion of Hispanic/Latino residents, as indicated by 2000 Census data:

- 30% Hispanic (up from 21% in 1990)
- 53% non-Hispanic Blacks (down from 66% in 1990)
- 3.8% other non-Hispanic minorities
- 13% non-Hispanic Whites (up slightly from 11% in 1990)

Family risk factors are significant in Cluster 2, as demonstrated by the following statistics:

- 26% poverty rate
- 35% of children in poverty
- 9.7% unemployment rate
- 6.8% of Heads of Household on public assistance
- 42% of the population aged 25 or greater without a high school degree

## V. The Problem of Gangs in Columbia Heights/Shaw

### A. What is a Latino Gang?

A *Latino gang* is a gang consisting primarily of one ethnic group: Hispanics/Latinos (that nebulous term often including indigenous Chicanos, Mexicans, El Salvadorians, Cubans, South Americans, and anyone else from a Spanish-speaking country) often residing in the same neighborhood.

Latino gangs have been distinguished from African American and Asian gangs on various dimensions. All three engage in antisocial behaviors, but Latino street gangs tend to be loosely confederated groups, as distinguished from monolithic, well-ordered Asian gangs. Latino gangs are less likely to display colors than are African-American gangs, although there may be some preference for wearing black, brown, khaki, and white attire.<sup>12</sup> As with other gangs, Latino gang members frequently wear tattoos signifying gang membership.

Most gang members (including Latinos) are unskilled, under-educated, and unemployed. As a result, much of the daily life of gang members is unorganized and boring. As one researcher noted:

Stark reality means having no money, no prospects for a job, no opportunities leading to any kind of promise for the future, and a lack of recreational opportunities in the present. There are long days unfilled by work, or school, and hours and hours to whittle away on street corners. ‘Hanging out’ often translates into doing nothing.

When there are drugs and money available, solace and/or escape are the result of getting high, and getting high is simply becoming numb to reality and escaping into oblivion. . .

To create excitement, gang members reported . . . “We get all hyped up. We do a drive-by.”<sup>13</sup>

Once a young person joins a gang, dropping out of school almost always follows. Being a “school boy” is a lifestyle considered “weak, powerless, and cowardly – certainly one that is incompatible with the gang doctrine.”<sup>14</sup> Gang members in general rarely graduate from high school; for Latino youths, the drop-out rate can be as high as 50%.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hallcom, F. (n.d.). *An urban ethnography of Latino street gangs: Latino street gang organization*. Available at <http://www.csun.edu/~hcchs006/intro.html>

<sup>13</sup> Hallcom, F. (n.d.). *An urban ethnography of Latino street gangs: Crimes*. Available at <http://www.csun.edu/~hcchs006/intro.html>

<sup>14</sup> Hallcom, F. (n.d.). *An urban ethnography of Latino street gangs: Drop outs*. Available at <http://www.csun.edu/~hcchs006/intro.html>

<sup>15</sup> Hallcom, F. (n.d.). *An urban ethnography of Latino street gangs: Drop outs*. Available at <http://www.csun.edu/~hcchs006/intro.html>

In the District of Columbia, the drop out rate for Latino students in general climbed from 8% in 2000 to almost 10% in 2003. This drop out rate is the highest of any racial or ethnic group in the District.<sup>16</sup>

## **B. How Gang Membership is Determined in Columbia Heights/Shaw**

The District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) determines that an individual is a gang member if he or she meets at least three of the following criteria:

1. The person admits gang membership.
2. The person represents a specific gang by having a known gang tattoo.
3. The person has been involved in a crime with other known gang members.
4. The person has committed a crime with three or more persons and they are using a name to represent themselves.
5. The person has been identified by a certified special informant as a gang member and other information exists to corroborate that this person is a gang member.
6. The person wears clothing or objects of clothing that represents a gang or is observed making hand signs that represent a gang.
7. The person frequents locations that known gang members are known to frequent.<sup>17</sup>

MPD maintains a gang data base with photographs and biographical information on identified gang members but does not have an inter-agency protocol for transfer or sharing of information regarding gang-involved youth.<sup>18</sup>

Victims and witnesses, without regard for gang affiliation, are eligible for a variety of witness protection services. MPD has its own witness protection program. The United States Attorneys Office provides witness protection services to MPD. In addition, the District of Columbia government provides assistance through the Victims Compensation Program, and the Gang Intervention Partnership Unit provides temporary assistance.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> District of Columbia Executive Office of the Mayor. (2006, February 24). Letter to Mai Fernandez from E. D. Reiskin.

<sup>17</sup> Response to item #1 of GIP Evaluation Project request for District of Columbia law enforcement information/data (received 7-24-06).

<sup>18</sup> Response to items #2 and #3 of GIP Evaluation Project request for District of Columbia law enforcement information/data (received 7-24-06).

<sup>19</sup> Response to item #15 of GIP Evaluation Project request for District of Columbia law enforcement information/data (received 7-24-06).

## **C. Latino Gangs Identified in the District of Columbia**

Several Hispanic/Latino gangs operate in jurisdictions across the United States, although not all prominent Latino gangs have a presence in the District of Columbia. The following are four of the most prominent Hispanic gangs in the U.S.:<sup>20</sup>

- **Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13)** is a primarily El Salvadoran street gang affiliated with the Mexican Mafia. In 2005, MS-13 was present in 31 states and the District of Columbia, including the jurisdictions of 145 law enforcement agencies.
- **Sur 13** originated in southern California and is closely associated with the Mexican Mafia. This group often uses the number 13 in their gangs and tagging, as *M* is the 13<sup>th</sup> letter of the alphabet.
- **18<sup>th</sup> Street**, one of the oldest and largest Hispanic gangs, is composed of individuals with mixed racial backgrounds. The group's acceptance of immigrants and its lack of racial barriers have enabled 18<sup>th</sup> Street to expand substantially. In the Northeast, 22% of reporting agencies indicated the presence of 18<sup>th</sup> Street in 2005.
- **Latin Kings**, also known as the Almighty Latin King Nation, originated in Chicago. Gang membership consists predominantly of Puerto Rican males, although individuals of other ethnicities – including Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and South American – are allowed to become members. Seventy percent of Northeast agencies reporting statistics in 2005 indicated the presence of Latin Kings in their jurisdictions.

Numerous gangs have evolved from or alongside these prominent organizations, including (but not limited to) Street Criminals (STC), Vatos Locos (VL), La Raza (La R), Brown Union (BU), 15 Amigos (1-5), Master Criminals (MC), Latin Crew (LC), and Western Locos (WL-13).

According to GIP, 15-20 Latino gangs have been identified in the District of Columbia, with approximately 1,000 young people identified as involved in or affiliated with these gangs. Twelve DC public schools are known to have gang presence.<sup>21</sup>

Since 2000, the following Latino gangs have been active within the District:

- Street Criminals (STC)
- Vatos Locos (VL)
- La Raza (La R)
- Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13)
- Brown Union (BU)
- 18<sup>th</sup> Street (1-8)
- 15 Amigos (1-5)
- Master Criminals (MC)

<sup>20</sup> Information for the bulleted items comes from this source: Bureau of Justice Assistance. (2005). *2005 National GangThreat Assessment* (pp. 7-10). Washington, DC: National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations.

<sup>21</sup> Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative. (2006). GIP Power Point presentation: "An Overview of the Gang Intervention Partnership: Scope of Latino Gangs in DC."

- Latin Crew (LC)
- Western Locos (WL-13)
- Mt. Pleasant Crew (MTP)
- MS-13 Click Big Time Salvatrucha (BTS)
- Little MS (LMS)
- CLS-17

As of 2006, the Metropolitan Police Department reported that all of these gangs, with the exception of “Brown Union,” continue to have some presence in the Columbia Heights / Shaw area.<sup>22</sup>

### **D. Gang-Related Criminal Activity in Columbia Heights/Shaw**

According to the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), a “gang-related” crime involves either gang-on-gang offenses or a law violation committed by a gang member in which he or she uses gang affiliation in the commission of the unlawful act.<sup>23</sup> MPD determines that a crime is gang related on a case-by-case basis after a member of the Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP) Unit reviews all the circumstances surrounding the case and all possible witnesses have been interviewed.<sup>24</sup> The officer in charge of the GIP Unit makes the final determination of whether a crime is gang related.<sup>25</sup>

Now, as a result of GIP, MPD keeps a list of suspected gang members. The database is used for two purposes: (1) as a tool to locate suspects when a crime occurs and (2) for discussions with GIP police unit members. One officer reported:

*We started documenting gang activity after GIP was created. [We've] seen a decrease in activity since GIP's inception. Many more [gang] members are identified and tracked through the system, and we can support individuals and their families.*

MPD does not permit officers to contact immigration officials if an offense involves an undocumented person. Yet, immigrant children involved in gang activity fall under the auspices of Homeland Security. Within that system, youth often do not have rights. Sometimes they are put in jail for several months and then deported. In this regard, one community worker reported:

*We are positive that if you talk about gangs, you cannot leave behind the immigration issue; everything is interconnected.*

Figure 4 depicts Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods affected by gang-related crimes.

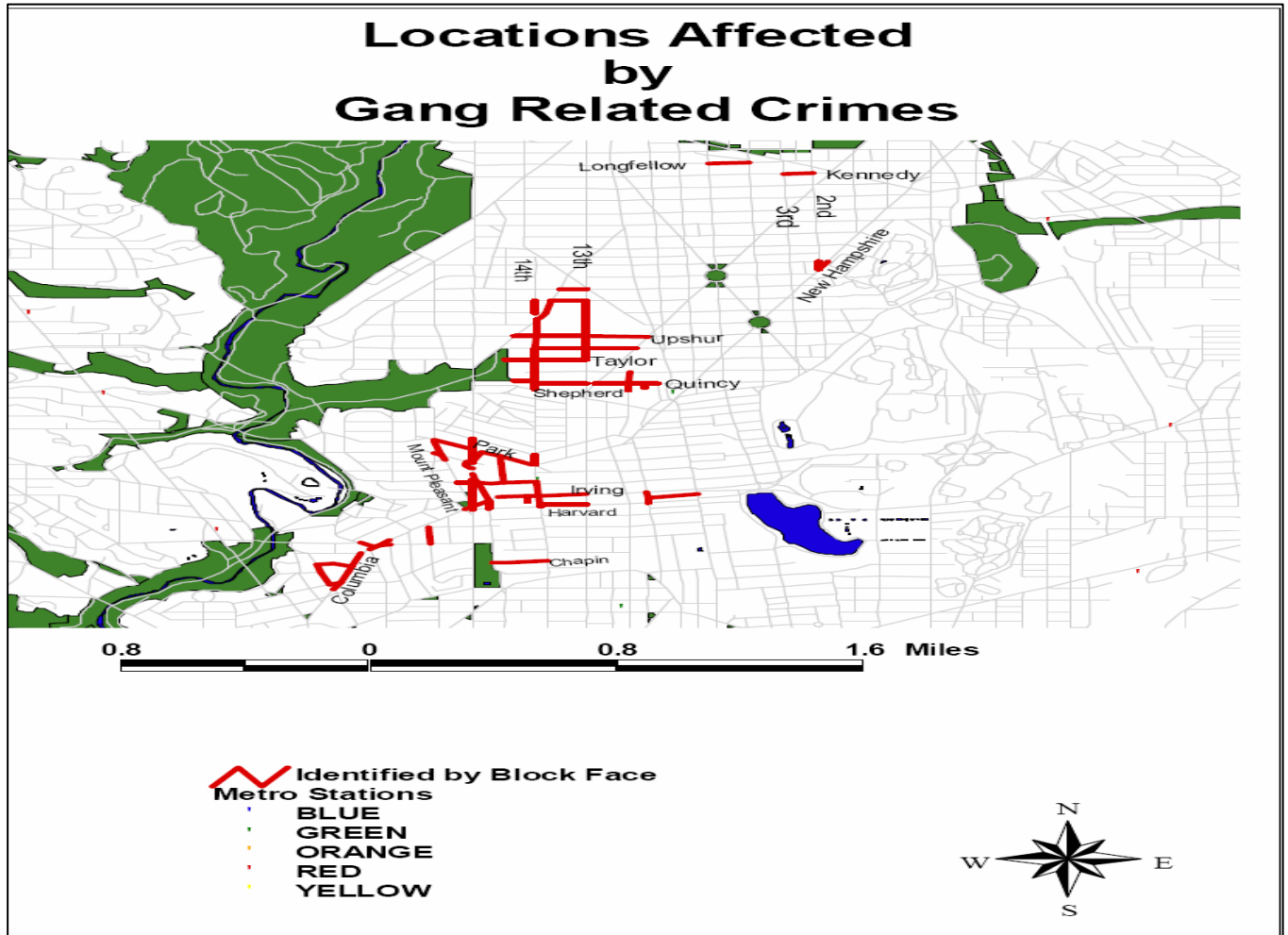
<sup>22</sup> Response to item #13 of GIP Evaluation Project request for District of Columbia law enforcement information/data (received 7-24-06).

<sup>23</sup> Response to item #5 of GIP Evaluation Project request for District of Columbia law enforcement information/data (received 7-24-06).

<sup>24</sup> Response to item #6 of GIP Evaluation Project request for District of Columbia law enforcement information/data (received 7-24-06).

<sup>25</sup> Response to item #7 of GIP Evaluation Project request for District of Columbia law enforcement information/data (received 7-24-06).

**Figure 4**  
**Columbia Heights/Shaw Neighborhoods**  
**Affected by Gang-Related Crimes**



**Source:** Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative. (2006). GIP Power Point presentation: “An Overview of the Gang Intervention Partnership.”

**E. Chronology of Gang Problems in Columbia Heights/Shaw**

Appendix B provides a comprehensive chronology of the gang problem in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods and the establishment of the Gang Intervention Partnership.

Table 3 provides an overview of significant events leading to the establishment of GIP.

**Table 3**  
**Chronology of Events Leading to Establishment of GIP**

Time Period	Event(s)	Response(s)
<b>Summer 1999</b>	Gang-related shooting in front of the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) left one staff person injured and four young people grazed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emergency meeting of more than 100 community-based stakeholders</li> <li>▪ Increased police and federal presence in weeks following shooting</li> <li>▪ Columbia Heights / Shaw Collaborative and LAYC and OLA organize a series of youth development initiatives</li> <li>▪ One FBI agent assigned to work exclusively on local Latino gangs in DC</li> </ul>
<b>Fall 1999 – Spring 2000</b>	Nine persons killed in gang/crew-related shootings on/near the 1400 block of Girard, two blocks away from LAYC and other locations where previous shootings and violent incidents had occurred.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DC Government earmarks funds for LAYC gang intervention initiative</li> <li>▪ Community-based efforts led by Collaborative, LAYC, and community groups initiated</li> </ul>
<b>Summer 2000</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ US Department of Justice designates Columbia Heights as a Weed and Seed site, under the Collaborative’s leadership.</li> </ul>
<b>April 2001</b>	Collaborative and Bell Multicultural High School create the Task Force on Truancy/Substance Abuse/Youth Violence: (See Appendix for further description)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fundamental multi-agency relationships established in Task Force that eventually formed foundation of the GIP two and one-half years later.</li> </ul>

Time Period	Event(s)	Response(s)
<b>October/November 2001</b>	String of violent, gang-related incidents occur near and around Bell and Lincoln schools and Park Road/Hiatt Place corridor; incidents include disappearances of two young women, non-fatal shootings, and young people expressed reluctance in returning to school for fear of future violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Task Force “Increase the Peace” campaign launched.</li> </ul>
<b>December 8-12, 2001 – February 2002</b>	Three young persons killed on Park Road/ Hiatt Place corridor approximately three blocks from Bell and Lincoln schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Under auspices of the Collaboratives Task Force and CHSFSC establishes the school based forum to create a mechanism of communication and coordination among schools in order to reduce gang activity in and around schools.</li> </ul>
<b>March/April 2002</b>	Series of gun battles and drive-by shootings involving multiple Latino gangs and African American crews occurs in a two-week period. The most serious incident involved 6 young men injured in drive-by shooting in the Garfield Terrace community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mayor Williams calls an emergency youth violence meeting. Funding provided to establish multi-agency summer youth employment initiative targeting gang/crew-involved youth from Ward One, that evolves into Pro-Urban Youth</li> </ul>
<b>May 2002</b>	Latino gang-related shooting on Lincoln Middle School basketball court immediately after school resulting in several non-students being injured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Task Force convenes emergency meeting and sets weekly meetings to review and monitor ongoing “beefs” among gangs involved in shootings.</li> </ul>



Time Period	Event(s)	Response(s)
<b>October 2002</b>	Latino gang-related shooting on Roosevelt Senior High School football field results in death of one young man and several injuries due to retaliatory shootings immediately following the homicide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Task Force implements emergency protocol.</li> <li>▪ Several arrests made during spring 2003; trial and sentencing occur in early 2005, with several maximum sentences.</li> </ul>
<b>February 2003</b>	Young Latina with known gang past is stabbed in the neck.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Critical incident emergency protocol implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>April 3, 2003</b>	Shooting in Cardozo Senior High School library injures one young man.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordination between school and outreach workers to plan strategy for students returning from detention/suspension.</li> </ul>
<b>July/August 2003</b>	<p>Two well known African American young people from Columbia Heights neighborhood killed in two separate shootings one week apart.</p> <p>Well known Latino young adult with gang connections killed in front of Latin American Youth Center and offices of Columbia Heights / Shaw Collaborative on July 30. Homicide sets off immediate series of retaliatory shootings.</p> <p>A few days later, a 21-year-old man killed three blocks away from July 30 homicide. Within days, two more homicides and several shootings occur, one involving an infant caught in the crossfire of a drive-by shooting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community organizations rally to support families and promote community peace.</li> <li>▪ CHSFSC and community partners organize Peace March/Vigil with more than 200 participants.</li> </ul>
<b>August 5, 2003</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Gang Intervention Partnership established</b> by MPD Chief Charles Ramsey, Councilmember Jim Graham, and Mayor Williams.</li> </ul>

## **F. Risk Factors for Gang Membership in Columbia Heights/Shaw**

Answering the complex question of what causes youth to join gangs is beyond the scope of this evaluation. Authorities on the topic generally agree that the most common risk factors for gang membership include the following<sup>26</sup>:

- Living in an economically distressed neighborhood, often one that is urban;
- Minority status;
- Living in a single-parent family and/or in poverty;
- Unemployment;
- Absence of meaningful jobs in the community;
- Inadequate opportunities for constructive out-of-school activities;
- Weak social controls;
- Limited opportunities for success in legitimate activities;
- Frequent association with delinquent peers coupled with infrequent interaction with prosocial peers; and
- Low expectations for educational attainment and/or low commitment to school.

In a study comparing stable and transient gang youth, researchers reported that the strongest predictor of sustained gang affiliation was association with delinquent peers.<sup>27</sup>

When the above factors occur -- and particularly when they co-exist -- gangs become magnets for youth looking for a place to belong:

Gangs as youth groups develop among the socially marginal adolescents for whom school and family do not work. Agencies of street socialization take on increased importance under changing economic circumstances, and have an increased impact on younger kids.<sup>28</sup>

This description applies to the Columbia Heights/Shaw area as well. When asked why youth join gangs in the neighborhood, one law enforcement officer responded, “*Same as anywhere else. They want to be part of something. [They’re] not getting attention at home. The gang becomes a family.*” A school principal echoed this opinion: “*To have a feeling of belonging, to belong to a group. They’re not finding that in other places. [In a gang] you’re a member no matter what.*”

It is important to note, though, that despite the strong pull of gangs, most youth avoid gang life, both in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area and in other neighborhoods as well. As one researcher noted:

[I]t is not sufficient to say that gang members come from lower-income areas, from minority populations, or from homes more often characterized by absent parents or reconstituted families. *It is not sufficient because most youths from*

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<sup>26</sup> Esbensen, F-A. (2000, September). *Preventing Adolescent Gang Involvement*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

<sup>27</sup> Battin-Pearson, S. Guo, J., Hill, K. G., Abbott, R., Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. D. (1997). Early predictors of sustained adolescent gang membership. Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

<sup>28</sup> Moore, J. S. (1991). *Going down to the barrio* (pp. 137-138). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

*such areas, such groups, and such families do not join gangs.*<sup>29</sup> (Emphasis added)

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<sup>29</sup> Klein, M. W. (1995). *The American street gang* (pp. 75-75). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

## VI. The Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP)

### A. Purpose

The Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP) was established to stem the tide of Latino gang-related violence, including homicide, in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods. GIP was not designed to focus on violent behaviors in isolation. Rather, the Partnership was organized to work through a collaborative network that addresses the complicated issues which create environments that facilitate violence among young people.

### B. Core Partners

As Figure 5 shows, GIP involves strategic partnerships among gang-involved youth, governmental agencies, and community partners:

**Figure 5  
GIP Strategic Partnership Relationships**

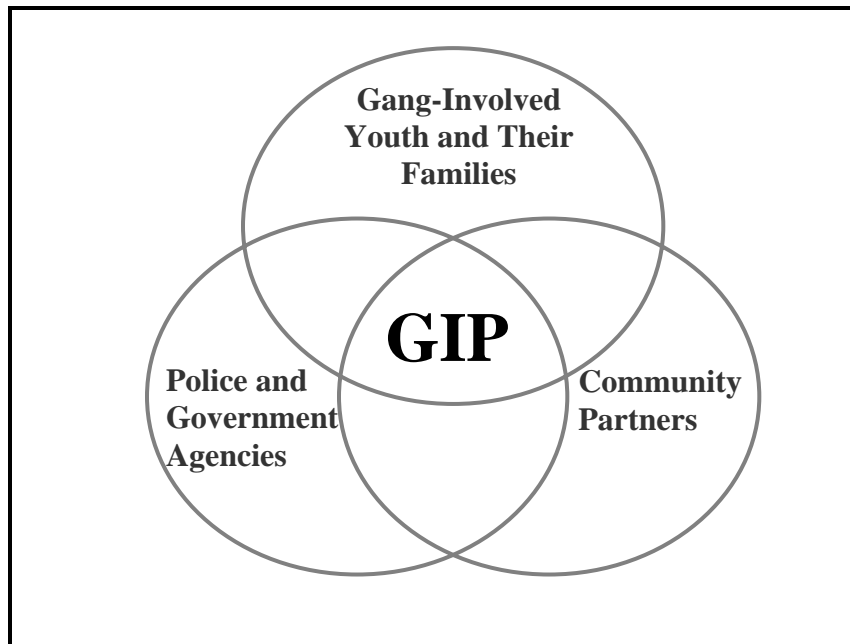
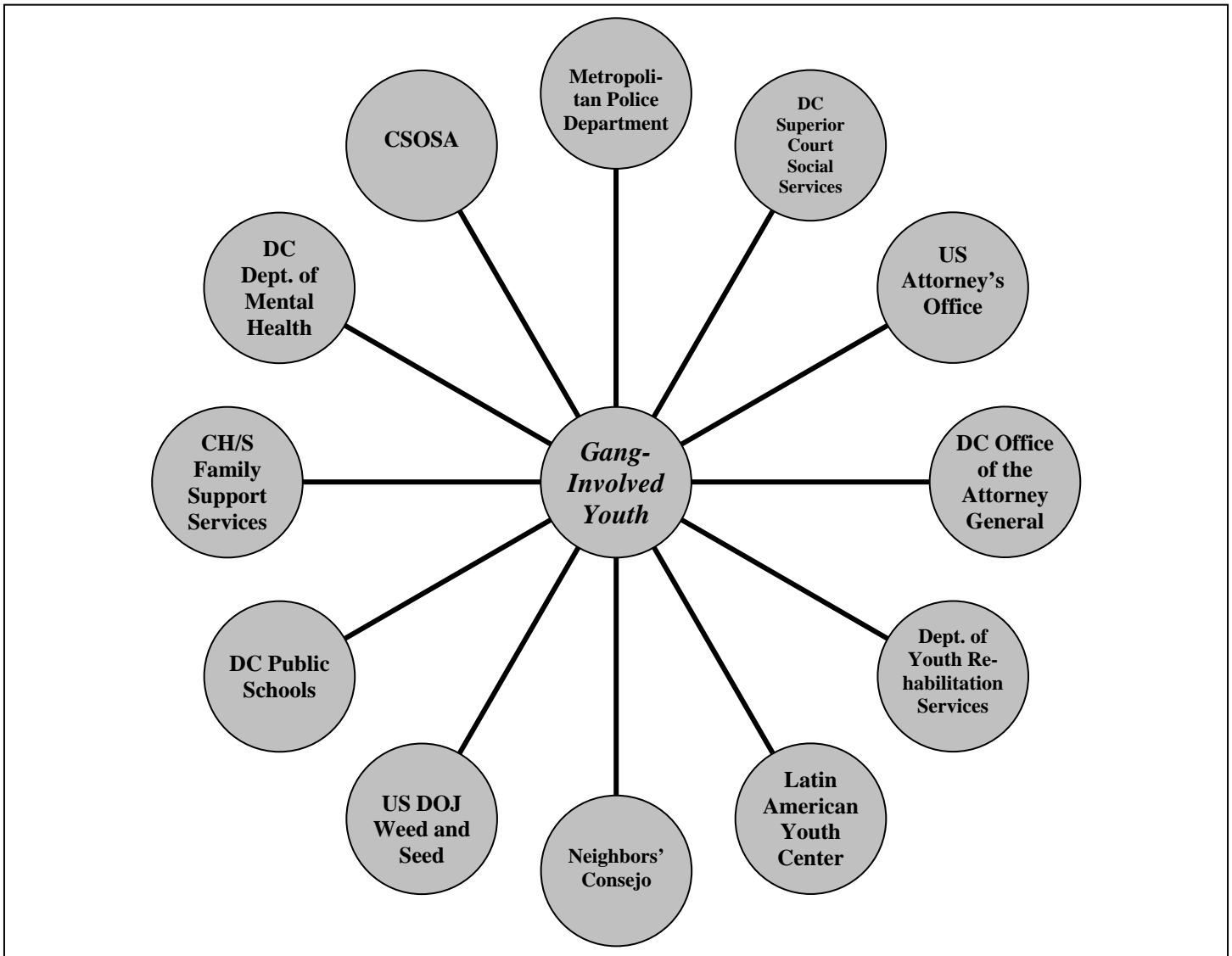


Figure 6 depicts the government agencies and community partners that individually and collectively impact gang-involved youth through the Gang Intervention Partnership.

**Figure 6**  
**GIP Network of Support Services for Gang Involved Youth and Their Family**



GIP stakeholders include the Metropolitan Police Department (Gang Intelligence Unit and Latino Liaison Unit), US Attorney’s Office, Office of the Attorney General, District of Columbia Superior Court Social Services, Court Services Offender Supervision Administration (CSOSA), Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services, DC Public Schools Gang Task Force, Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, Columbia Heights Weed and Seed, Latin American Youth Center, Neighbors Consejo, DC Public Schools (Bell Multicultural High School, Wilson High School, Lincoln Middle School, and school resource officers from targeted schools), and District of Columbia Department of Health, and DC Council members from Wards One and Four. Appendix A provides the contact person for each agency and outlines each partner’s specific role(s) in the GIP project.

## **C. Goals**

GIP's primary goal is to eliminate or significantly reduce gang-related homicides and other forms of gang-related violence in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods. Specifically, GIP's goals are to:

1. Reduce incidence of gang-related violence in Ward 1;
2. Decrease gang-membership and stop the proliferation of new gangs operating in the target area;
3. Reduce the number of gang-related suspensions in targeted schools; and
4. Increase the involvement of at-risk youth in recreational and other productive activities.

## **D. Background**

The Gang Intervention Partnership was formally established in August 2003 by Metropolitan Police Department Chief Charles Ramsey in partnership and collaboration with the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative and community partners involved in the

Columbia Heights/Shaw Weed and Seed Task Force on Truancy/Substance Abuse/Youth Violence, in particular the Latin American Youth Center and Bell Multicultural High School. The Partnership, supported in part by special funding through the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA), provides a comprehensive, holistic approach to reducing youth violence in the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods. The Partnership consists of multiple community partners, neighborhood schools, public agencies and a special MPD Gang Intelligence Unit that works out of the 750 Park Road. police sub-station.

## **E. Core Strategies**

The Partnership was founded on five core strategies:

1. ***Conduct intensive and targeted police work and build strong police/community partnerships.***

The Metropolitan Police Department has dedicated significant resources to this effort, establishing a Latino Gang Unit that is highly specialized in youth outreach, gang intervention, and suppression, as well as intelligence gathering efforts. Members of the unit are highly skilled in what might be perceived as non-traditional areas such as youth engagement and conflict mediation. All officers work for the Unit full time, with special assignments out of the Unit occurring only on rare occasions.

Unit officers maintain a consistent street presence. Officers are committed to both prevention and suppression of criminal activity, which has made them both a trusted source of support and a respected force of accountability at the street level.

The Unit operates 24 hours per day, 7 days a week and holds a weekly in-person meeting with the core community and city-agency GIP partners. The Unit also maintains daily contact with the neighborhood Collaborative. In addition, members of the Unit

participate in community meetings, attend family-based meetings, visit targeted schools, and conduct educational presentations on a regular basis.

2. ***Provide targeted outreach to gang-related youth and their family members.***

The purpose of targeted outreach efforts is to break through the isolation of critical populations, build positive supportive relationships, and help individuals connect to ongoing services and/or extend their personal support networks. This approach is based on the premise that the relative isolation of gang-involved youth from positive adult relationships and mainstream youth-serving institutions consolidates the power of the gangs. In order to reduce gang influence, this isolation must be penetrated. Thus, the goals of the outreach strategy are engagement, informal assessment, one-to-one or small group educational sessions, and providing linkages to services.

The Latin American Youth Center and Neighbors' Consejo have led GIP's outreach effort, focusing on three target populations: (1) gang-involved youth and young adults, (2) parents and family members of gang-involved youth; and (3) incarcerated and detained gang-involved youth. Strategies for each group focus on key milieus: street corner and other community gathering points; middle and senior high schools; public housing complexes and other low-income, multi-family dwellings; the juvenile detention center and halfway houses; and, when possible, DC Jail. In cases involving substance abuse, aggressive efforts are made to place individuals into treatment.

3. ***Educate parents and community members.***

Community education efforts are designed to build awareness regarding youth gangs and encourage community members to volunteer in positive youth development efforts. Parent education programs are used to motivate parents of known gang-involved youth to take early action whenever they suspect gang involvement on the part of their sons or daughters.

The Columbia Heights/Shaw Collaborative has taken the lead in communicating with parents and community members. This communication effort includes focused media efforts, presentations, workshops, and community discussions designed to reach faith-based organizations, labor unions, support groups, and other civic groups.

The Collaborative conducts individual and small group information sessions with potential referring sources. Neighborhood partners are invited to refer parents for engagement and additional parents are identified through community outreach activities. Depending on the specific situation, staff visit families at home, make contact with parents at the referring organization, or invite parents to a support group, workshop, or community event focused on the gang issue.

4. ***Improve and expand access to services critical to diversion and family strengthening.***

GIP has introduced a family-centered model to the intervention process, engaging parents and extended kin networks in critical cases and strengthening collaborations among

existing agencies at the case level. The community had a number of strong youth-serving programs before GIP emerged, but until the Partnership focused on collaborative strategies, very few agencies sufficiently targeted gang-involved youth; as a result, existing youth-serving programs rarely served as powerful diversion tools.

Since GIP's establishment, several community partners have made concerted efforts to address gang issues and to prevent gang activity, particularly among Latino and Latina youth. For example:

- Wilson Senior High School has hired more staff who speak Spanish or who are Latino and has educated staff on gangs and crews.
- Bell Multicultural High School has developed a prevention program staffed by three professionals who conduct home visits, intervene in “skipping parties,” meet with families, conduct community meetings, and provide wraparound services to address the problem of youth violence.
- The Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative has educated parents about gangs and gang activities, truancy, and how to advocate for their children in legal and school systems. It has helped to foster community dialogue about gang issues and connected families to resources.
- Mary's Center has provided preventive services (health-related and other) and helped clients to identify and connect with other community resources to help “cool down” gang-related situations.
- The Latin American Youth Center has implemented a gang outreach and prevention program staffed by three professionals devoted to making contact and establishing relationships with all young people involved with or at risk for involvement with gangs. Staff participate in direct street outreach at “hot spots,” and provide tutoring services and recreation opportunities. They provide a drop-in center open until 8:00 pm during the school year and 9:30 pm during the summer. Staff also participates in mediations to resolve “beefs” and disputes.
- Neighbors' Consejo has implemented a gang outreach team of two full-time staff persons dedicated to identifying and engaging current and former gang members who are 18 – 25 years old. In many cases, the young adults are older siblings or relatives of the young people engaged by the LAYC outreach team. Neighbors' Consejo makes referral for inpatient and outpatient substance abuse and alcohol treatment programs as well as employment readiness trainings. Neighbors' Consejo and LAYC Outreach Teams coordinate outreach strategies in monthly meetings convened by Collaborative staff.

##### 5. *Build capacity.*

Maximizing service network responses to gang activity requires broad, ongoing capacity-building efforts. GIP uses several capacity-building strategies.

First, the Columbia Heights/Shaw Collaborative has coordinated the “Cool Down Group,” a group of youth workers drawn from community and public agencies in Northwest DC. The Cool Down Group provides intensive training and group supervision



for youth workers who engage in deep intervention with gang-involved youth. Specifically, the Cool Down Group has five purposes: (1) To provide intensive training for youth outreach workers; (2) to provide mutual support and care to members in order to help them process the challenges and emotions (including trauma) experienced by youth outreach workers; (3) to share information on street-level gang activity and coordinate intervention strategies when necessary; (4) to develop and sponsor programs and activities for youth that are alternatives to gang activity; and (5) to identify additional training and capacity-building among the Group.

Second, GIP focuses on training in the areas of youth development, gang intervention and conflict mediation for key community and faith-based volunteers and non-profit and public agency frontline staff.

Third, GIP maintains a documentation and tracking system to assess and measure the impact of community interventions on gang issues.

Fourth, GIP partners work to establish relationships of trust between the MPD GIP Unit and young people and their families. Through this effort, GIP increases awareness so community members stay informed and act quickly when addressing gang concerns.

Fifth, GIP partners employ a rapid response network of services that support young people and their families during crises and help build family capacity to address ongoing issues.

## **F. Implementation**

GIP partners meet weekly and work collaboratively to provide services to gang-involved youth and/or their families. The strength of the partnership resides in the level of trust and communication that has developed among members over several years, including the years prior to GIP's establishment as a formal entity in August 2003.

Five activities have guided GIP's implementation:

### **1. *Weekly Meetings***

GIP meets weekly to confidentially review information concerning the current gang climate and to develop a holistic, comprehensive prevention and intervention strategy to address each individual circumstance. GIP meetings are co-convened by Sgt. Juan Aguilar of the Metropolitan Police Department and Collaborative staff. All members are instructed to observe a strict code of confidentiality. The team identifies "hot spots" for increased intervention and targeted outreach and tracks gang-related graffiti.

### **2. *Outreach Teams***

Outreach teams managed by the Latin American Youth Center and Neighbors' Consejo coordinate responses to critical incidents. They also provide ongoing monitoring of emerging gang issues (or "beefs") and monitor evidence of evolving gang climates by keeping track of schools affected, preferred hang-outs, colors, and graffiti/taggings. Through this effort, GIP police unit maintains an ongoing confidential profile of individual gangs and membership. The profile includes: (1) names, colors, and

graffiti/taggings associated with gangs; (2) membership and leadership; (3) preferred locations/hang-outs; (4) current involvement with courts and other supervisory relationships; and (5) mapping of “beefs” with other DC-based or regional gangs. Through this process GIP regularly updates the profile of each gang. As new persons and locations are identified, the appropriate Outreach Team is instructed to engage the young person on the street, at school, or at any other location where a positive relationship can be established.

### 3. *Use of a Critical Incident Emergency Protocol*

GIP established the Emergency Meeting Protocol in order to address critical incidents that require immediate attention from key GIP partners and other relevant stakeholders. The Protocol includes the following components:

- Identify involved persons/gangs;
- Identify key partners with relationships to those involved;
- Ensure the coordination of supportive services to victim(s);
- Develop and implement intervention strategy to reduce chance of retaliatory incidents; and
- Monitor progress and adapt support/intervention strategies as necessary.

Each incident requires a minimum of two to three weeks of intensive coordination of services, broad outreach, and targeted interventions with key persons.

### 4. *Cool Down Group*

The Cool Down Group, an ad hoc group of Youth Outreach Workers from several neighborhoods that meets regularly, is pivotal in “cooling down” the anxiety, grief, and anger of young people in general and gang members in particular. This group helps police and youth-serving organizations identify the most vulnerable young people who may be involved in retaliatory incidents and who require immediate intervention. The Cool Down Group is essential to identifying persons and situations that require community-based interventions and to reducing escalation of low-level violent incidents.

### 5. *Reduce Gang-related School Suspensions*

High school staff members have developed and are implementing multifaceted prevention / intervention programs that address a variety of root causes of gang involvement (e.g., difficult family situations and schools not having sufficient after-school activities). Staff members educate students and families about gangs and intervene before youth actually become involved in gang activity. In addition, staff members participate in a variety of interventions including home visits, disruption of “skipping parties,” and meetings between families and school personnel, counselors, community workers, juvenile justice professionals, and law enforcement. Prevention program staff members understand that the problems faced by youth often involve

complex social problems that cannot be easily remedied. In this regard, one school professional provided this poignant example:

*I have really young kids who are parents living in a locked room within an apartment. Rats smell the breast milk and come up to find out what's happening. . . So we have very big and deep social problems that are at the root of this gang violence. We have generations of disenfranchised people and we have virtually no affordable housing and the school system is in dire need of upgrades in infrastructure and programs. It's hard! And we're just piecing it together.*

In addition, GIP law enforcement engagement supports the efforts made in the schools by focusing on three components:

1. Intelligence, which includes identifying individuals involved in gangs, monitoring gang-involved individuals, and conducting surveillance at locations gang members are known to frequent;
2. Enforcement, which involves locating and arresting wanted gang members, coordinating efforts with lead detectives in criminal investigations, and patrolling locations known to be gathering places for Latino gangs; and
3. Intervention and Prevention, which involves educating school staff, administration, and students about how to prevent gang-involved violence in their schools; maintaining contact with School Resource Officers; and instructing officers in targeted schools to notify the unit when information about gangs arises in the school (e.g., skipping parties, gang initiations, and after-school fights).

## VII. Evaluation of the Gang Intervention Partnership

### A. Research Design

We employed both quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluating GIP.

#### 1. Quantitative Methods

Quantitative methods included analysis of descriptive statistics regarding population demographics, education, crime rates, and gang involvement in the District of Columbia, as well as analyses of changes in these variables over a 5-year period. Raw data for these analyses, with no identifying information attached, was obtained from law enforcement agencies and school personnel whose participation had been invited by the Mayor of the District of Columbia.

We also requested information and data from law enforcement personnel (see Appendix C).

In addition, we requested data from school personnel regarding gang-related suspensions. Bell Multicultural High School provided useful information.

#### 2. Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research methods are useful in capturing in-depth descriptions of diverse life experiences (Jarret, Roy & Burton, 2003). We conducted a series of focus groups, a method particularly useful for obtaining information in an understudied area (Morgan, 1997). In addition, focus groups can be empowering for people who have experienced discrimination or less power in society because participants realize that the role of researchers is to learn from their experiences rather than the researchers themselves being experts on the topic of conversation (Morgan & Kruger, 1993).

- a. Participants. To be selected for the study, we required that potential participants: (a) live or work within the geographical boundaries known as the Columbia Heights or Shaw neighborhood in Washington, DC; (b) were members of one of the identified target groups; and (c) consented to participating in this investigation. We required both parental consent and youth assent for youth participants.
- b. Participant recruitment. Staff of the LAYC and the Columbia Heights-Shaw Family Services Collaborative assumed responsibility for recruiting community residents, youth, and GIP partners. The Latin American Youth Center was selected as the primary site for youth focus groups because of its leadership in both the community and the GIP program, and because LAYC has excellent rapport with youth in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods.

- c. Focus group procedures. We paid particular attention to procedures for conducting focus group research with predominantly Latino communities (Umaña Taylor & Bámanca, 2004). Specifically, these procedures call for a more casual environment, where time for socialization and trust development can occur naturally prior to the beginning of any formal discussion.

One week prior to the focus groups, staff of the LAYC and Columbia Heights/Shaw Collaborative contacted participants and thanked them for their willingness to participate in the study. At that time and again at the start of each focus group, we reminded participants of the purpose and relevance of the study as well as their conditions of participation (e.g., that they could choose to not answer questions, that they could terminate their participation at any time). Staff also provided an explanation of supports available to participants (e.g., child care, meals). Two days prior to the implementation of the focus group, staff again contacted participants to explore any unexpected barriers to participation and to finalize logistic details.

We planned each focus group with an over-recruiting criterion of 100% in order to maintain adequate group sizes. We selected this strategy because high rates of over-recruitment have proven to be successful in focus groups with Latino participants (Umaña Taylor & Bámanca, 2004).

On June 16, 2006 we conducted a total of four focus groups, each ranging in size from four to eight participants: (1) GIP partners, (2) male youth ages 18 years or older, (3) female youth ages 14-18 years, and (4) parents. We held the first three group sessions in either the board room or the library of the LAYC; the parent focus group, conducted in Spanish, was held at Centro Nía, a neighborhood community agency. A member of the evaluation team facilitated each discussion, which lasted approximately 90 minutes.

We conducted an additional six focus groups via telephone conference calls from August 18<sup>th</sup> through August 29<sup>th</sup>. These groups included a total of 16 staff members from the Metropolitan Police Department, the District of Columbia Attorney General's office, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, CSOSA, Wilson Senior High School, Bell Multicultural High School, the Latin American Youth Center, the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, and Mary's Center (a health and social services agency) affiliated with GIP.

To protect anonymity, we neither audiotaped nor videotaped the focus groups. While we made no verbatim recording of the focus group discussions, we took extensive notes and extracted verbatim quotes and themes from the focus group sessions. A copy of the focus group questions is available in Appendix D.

## **B. Focus Group Themes**

Several themes emerged from focus groups and interviews of individuals:

- 1. It can be difficult to define what constitutes a “gang” and to identify which gangs exist in a particular area.**

There is no widely accepted understanding of what constitutes a “youth gang,” which makes it difficult to determine the level and prevalence of gangs in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods. In fact, one of the members of the GIP partnership noted that earlier in the month, the District Council and the Mayor had been debating the number of youth needed to constitute a gang: “The traditional definition has been three [people]; the Mayor is moving to seven.”<sup>30</sup>

Youth participants noted that there is not an abundance of gangs, but rather a collection of “crews” and “hoods” that were viewed by adults as gangs. Youth focus group participants offered the following definitions to distinguish the three terms: *Hoods* are “packs of people that sell drugs and protect turf.” *Crews* are less hardcore and could generally be defined as “graffiti geeks.” *Gangs* are more organized and more likely to exhibit behaviors that violate societal norms.

There was general reluctance to name existing gangs, and youth, understandably, were particularly reticent to mention specific gangs. We interpreted their closed body language and unwillingness to maintain eye contact with the facilitator during this portion of the focus group session as indications of their discomfort with this question. Respondents noted that while MS 13 does exist in the District, this gang has been unable to establish an organizational structure in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods, suggesting that MS 13 takes root in neighborhoods where the semblance of order is lacking.<sup>31</sup> Several youth also expressed the opinion that MS 13 is “too crazy.” On this point, one male youth noted: “*Kids here are more loyal to their community and hoods than to their nations.*” A GIP partner observed, “*Gangs have become more organized by neighborhood or block by block.*” Another noted that “*New gangs are not as tightly organized. More chaotic. More of a social club.*”

Members of the GIP consortium noted that there may be a greater number of known youth gangs in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods now than there were previously: “*We started with about 2 gangs. Now they are coming out almost on a weekly basis.*” However, respondents also noted that the number of gang *members* appears to have decreased.

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<sup>30</sup> Some focus group participants expressed the concern that it was difficult to define the term *gang*. However, GIP partners agreed upon a widely accepted definition, and the debate between the Mayor and the Council did not shift how GIP identified gangs. Ultimately, the debate between the Mayor and the Council ended in adoption of the national definition that a gang consists of three youth who meet the inclusion criteria.

<sup>31</sup> GIP partners noted that while MS 13 does not have a stronghold in the District, this group does have a significant presence in Maryland and Virginia

In addition, the currently operating gangs have devolved from highly organized groups into less structured collections of youth. Respondents described many of the newly recognized gangs as “spin-offs of larger gangs” that are less likely to be in conflict with one another. Also, some respondents reported that they were former gang members who have retired and who are no longer associated with gangs. They acknowledged their previous involvement in gang life, but noted that they now are focusing their energy on talking to younger youth about the realities and dangers of gang life.

## **2. Youth gangs cannot be eradicated—only managed.**

While there is wide disparity among the GIP partners, youth, and families regarding the number of gangs that exist in the District of Columbia, and more specifically, within the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods, participants agreed that youth gangs cannot be entirely eliminated; they can only be managed. The following two quotes exemplify the perspectives of youth and youth-serving professionals on this topic:

*When GIP was created, we came up with one understanding. You will never get rid of a gang. You work to control and identify a gang. Gangs have been here long before us, and will be here long after us. (GIP partner)*

*It would be better to get to 0, but it's never going to stop. It's been going on for so many years, before we were born. There are gangs that have been here longer than when I was born. And they're still going to be here when I ain't here no more. (male youth)*

## **3. Violent activity among youth gangs in the Shaw/Columbia Heights neighborhoods has decreased markedly.**

Focus group members agreed that violent activity among youth gangs in the neighborhoods had decreased markedly as a result of GIP. A community worker noted:

*We no longer have emergencies every five minutes. We've gone a long time without any homicides or people being seriously beaten up. During the last year or so there have been hardly any problems. [This progress] has a lot to do with the GIP team and communications.*

A law enforcement officer said:

*Prior to GIP there were about seven Latino homicides. Since GIP there has been one additional homicide (October 9, 2003), and that was closed within 12 hours. There's been no homicide since then. Now the closure rate is probably 99% within 24-48 hours. . . And one particular Hispanic gang left DC because it was “too hot [for them].”*

One school official commented:

*Gang activity has been reduced significantly. There were zero incidents during the last school year. There's much less graffiti, too.*

Another community worker observed:

*Youth are not involved in violent activities as they were before GIP. People feel more safe and trust the police and other agencies more. We are replacing negative things – violence, drugs – with positive things. We focus on early prevention, so we don't see graffiti. We provide painting projects and clean up graffiti from buildings. There is a fine for graffiti. There are soccer leagues and such activities.*

Focus group members attributed this decrease in violent activity to three factors:

a. Presence of the GIP unit in the community:

Many youth (and families) have come to recognize, trust, and turn to several law enforcement professionals for advice, guidance, and information about signs of gang membership. One parent noted, for example:

*The community has become more aware of what gangs are, how kids come in and out of gangs, and more efforts to inform parents about signs of gangs. Law enforcement has made an effort to work with parents.*

A community worker observed:

*Once GIP was in place, it became a great avenue for parents to trust and provide communication about what is really going on in the community. . . Now we can hear the parents say, "Can I talk to Officer X?" . . . They know the GIP people can help them.*

The following quotes, provided by youth, offer insight into the levels of trust that have been established among youth and GIP partners:

*They [staff and leaders of the Latin American Youth Center] are good people. They keep you out of trouble. They talk to us. They do things with and for us. (male youth)*

*(We're more likely to . . . talk to cops who come here [to the LAYC]. (female youth)*



*When we get in trouble with other cops, we tell them we want to talk to Officer [name deleted] 'cause we know he listen to us. He'll hear our side and help us if he can. (male youth)*

*Law enforcement presence. I only know 2 [law enforcement officers] [Names one officer]. He tries to help us; he talks to us. He tries to let us know what is going on before things are going down so we can avoid hot spots. He's watched us grow up and keeps us out of trouble rather than getting into trouble. (male youth)*

b. School officials alerting law enforcement agencies of planned or ongoing “skipping parties” in the neighborhood:

GIP partners recognized that skipping parties still exist in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods, but noted that they generally have moved to Prince Georges County. One school official said:

*We've seen a significant drop in “skipping parties.” We go out and break them up and bring the students back to school.*

A youth facility administrator noted:

*Prior to GIP there were skipping parties. Lots of young ladies were getting assaulted there. Lots of underage drinking. We don't hear too many instances [of skipping parties] since GIP.*

Youth also acknowledged this change. For example, one youth said:

*Back then, there were a lot more skipping parties. Schools are calling now to stop the skipping parties. Police are checking up.*

c. Law enforcement promptly closing gang-related cases, thereby reducing retaliatory crimes between youth gangs, “crews,” and “hoods.”

One law enforcement officer reported that approximately 98% of gang-related cases are closed within a 48-hour period. Prior to August 2003, four Latino gang-related homicide cases had not been closed. Within the first six weeks of the GIP initiative, all four cases were closed. This ability to resolve cases quickly is seen as an important deterrent to further violence. In this regard, one participant noted:

*Failure to close is, in itself, a feeder to violence. It moves justice and retribution into the community and contributes to further violence.*

A community worker added:

*I work a lot with police and others involved in GIP. Because of the GIP team and open communication, we can deal with the crime and divert kids so they don't get into trouble. Police officers inform us ahead of time if families are stressed so we can intervene before kids get into trouble. That has been really, really helpful.*

Youth attributed the decrease in gang activity to three other specific factors:

- a. The demands of parenthood, learning their lesson/growing up, or just getting tired of gang life;
- b. The availability of safe alternatives (primarily those offered by LAYC); and
- c. Law enforcement's increased presence in the community.

GIP partners also suggested that the decrease in youth gang activity in the community is partially due to the number of individuals who have been found guilty of serious acts of violence or gang-related crimes and who are now incarcerated.

#### **4. Neighborhood gentrification has resulted in increased law enforcement presence and attention to gang activity in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods.**

Participants in all groups noted that new developments are increasing the number of non-Hispanic white, upper middle class residents in the neighborhoods. This change in demographics, in turn, increases the demand for law enforcement and attention to the eradication or reduction of nuisances in the neighborhood, such as teens "hanging out," noise, graffiti, and illegal drug sales. Respondents reported that gentrification has both positive and negative effects on the dynamics and realities of life in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods.

With regard to the positive effects of gentrification, participants offered the following observations:

*[The] building that is going on is good. It will mean more stuff to do. More restaurants and things. More to do. (It) will bring more people into the neighborhood. More ethnicity/diversity. (female youth)*

*All the building is going to increase safety because of law enforcement presence. But they will look at teens differently. Teens will be looked at with greater suspicion. (male youth)*

Negative reactions to gentrification included the following:

*Large numbers of students and families have had to relocate due to the cost of higher rent. (school official)*

*One recreational center drew lots of youth [before gentrification]. It went away since the community has been developed. There's a 6-8 foot iron fence around the community, so it's less welcoming now. (GIP partner)*

*Why are they building all that stuff over there? It's trying to make the community better. There's controversy about it. People who hang out there at the metro and other places means that there will be increased law enforcement presence, but no place to hang out. (male youth)*

*It's for the rich, not for us. (parent)*

*We can't qualify for these new developments. It will force us to leave. We won't be able to afford living here. (parent)*

*Residential dynamics are changing. Affordable housing is becoming renovated. Gentrification is resulting in the displacement of low income and minority populations. (GIP partner)*

*Gentrification is a horrible thing! If you look at housing – it's absolutely atrocious. Families want to stay in DC, but they're getting forced out. That kind of disruption in families' lives is awful. The "powers that be" don't seem to care. (community worker)*

The increased presence of law enforcement, as well as the increased use of undercover law enforcement agents deployed to "hot spots" has sent a visible message to youth that gang activity will not be tolerated in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area.

**5. Community members, other than GIP partners, generally do not understand or know about the GIP partnership or multi-collaborative bodies that have been involved in reducing gang activity in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods.**

Parents and youth both had difficulty identifying agencies or youth professionals involved in the GIP initiative. In this regard, GIP partners reported that the team intentionally has stayed "below the radar" while building community awareness and consciousness about gangs, early warning signs of gang involvement, and community / police resources available to address gang issues.

Parents also appeared to be unaware of the programs that exist at the Latin American Youth Center for youth of all ages. During their focus group, parents asked for additional information on the types of programs available at the LAYC. Several of the participants appeared to be surprised that programs were available for older, as well as younger, youth. One GIP partner substantiated this viewpoint, stating:

*Outside of LAYC, there are very few things for youth 15 -24. Most is for younger children and families. Reentry programs are growing, but nothing for those who are not in the system. [There is] very little for youth in the system.*

In contrast, youth stated that LAYC staff members have traditionally tried to engage youth in multiple ways to talk about youth violence and gang awareness, as well as to provide them with alternatives to gang life. The following quotes from youth are examples of the ideas expressed:

*Good people, LAYC. Keep you out of trouble. They talk to us. They do things with and for us. (male youth)*

*There's no other program like LAYC. They talk to us. They need to build more LAYCs. It's packed in here. (male youth)*

*LAYC gives you something to do. (female youth)*

This important finding, however, should be interpreted with some caution, though, as all of the youth who participated in the focus groups were engaged in various programs with LAYC.

## **6. The Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods need more programming and alternatives for youth.**

Participants in all four focus groups articulated the need for more programming and alternatives for youth in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods. GIP partners noted that there were few green spaces where youth could safely assemble for sports or recreation programs:

*With Latino youth, sports (soccer and baseball) need to be places of investment for Latino youth. One of the few green areas that once were available for soccer/baseball was lost to development. (GIP partner)*

*Important to have a balanced allocation of resources between law enforcement and community-based service provision aimed at intervention and prevention. Those are equally important in deterrence in a long term perspective. This creates the sea change in life view and comfort. (GIP partner)*

*Strong rec[reation] centers that were once present are no longer present. You go to rec centers now and you tend to see younger children. Some rec centers that do exist are not welcoming of older youth. (GIP partner)*

Youth also felt additional options were merited, especially for older youth (specifically those between the ages of 15 and 18). The following comments exemplify some of the strategies and desired alternatives as expressed by youth and parents:

*Get younger people to join activities, summer school, work, not hang around in the streets. (male youth)*

*Build a big rec center where they [community youth] can all fit. Include basketball courts, weight rooms, gym. Things where everyone can fit in. Computer rooms, art rooms, tutoring. All that stuff. (male youth)*

*More recreation programs. (female youth)*

*More programs created for after school and weekend to engage them. (parent)*

*Educational activities about drugs, more help for youth who come to the US/DC. (parent)*

*Programs that keep them involved rather than watching television. (parent)*

*Jobs. Even if part time, it's better than leaving them under-supervised or free. (parent)*

## VIII. Analysis of the Gang Intervention Partnership

### A. Has GIP Achieved its Goals?

In a word: *Yes*.

Since its inception, the Gang Intervention Partnership has had tremendous success in stemming the tide of Latino gang violence. The best indicator of this success can be stated succinctly:

*There has been no Latino gang-related homicide in the District of Columbia since October 9, 2003.*

This is a remarkable accomplishment.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, GIP has been successful in achieving each of its four primary goals:

#### 1. Reduce the incidence of gang-related violence in Ward 1.

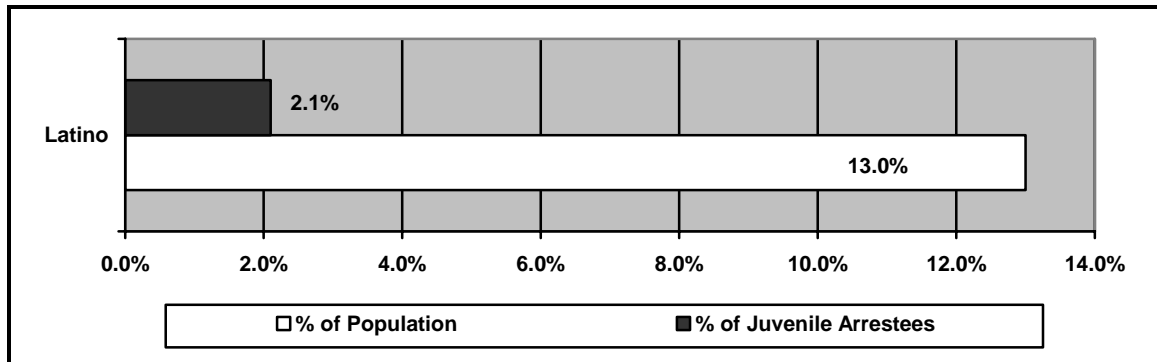
As Figure 7 shows, as of 2005, Latino youth comprised 13% of the District's juvenile population, but only 2.1% of the city's juvenile arrestees.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> It should be noted that one young man who had lived in the District was killed in a suspected gang-related shooting in El Salvador on August 10, 2006, four months after his parents sent him to Central America following a series of gang-related incidents in the District.

<sup>33</sup> Letter from Edward D. Reiskin (Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice) to Mai Fernandez (Chief Operating Officer of the Latin American Youth Center). (2006, February 24).

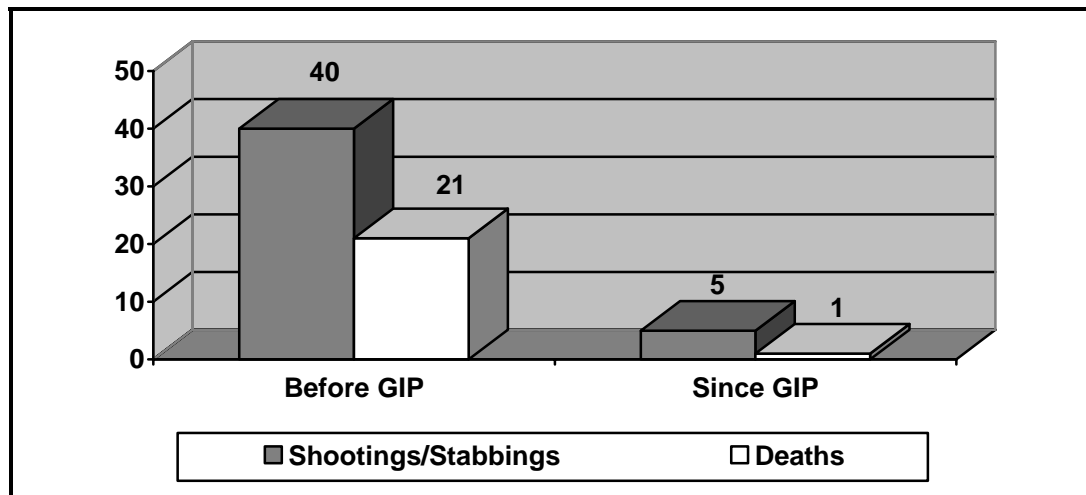
**Figure 7**  
**Percentage of Latino Youth in the District of Columbia:**  
**Juvenile Population versus Juvenile Arrestees, 2005**



**Source:** Reiskin, E. D. (2006, February 24). Letter to Mai Fernandez, Chief Operating Officer, Latin American Youth Center.

Data on violent crimes present an equally impressive picture. According to GIP internal records, during the four-year period before GIP was established (Summer 1999 – Summer 2003), more than 40 youth were shot or stabbed; 21 of these young persons died as a result of the violent attacks. In contrast, during the three years since GIP’s inception (August 2003 – August 2006), there have been five shooting/stabbing incidents in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods; MPD closed each of the shooting cases (one resulting in loss of life) within 48 hours. These facts, illustrated in Figure 8, represent a significant reduction in the incidence of gang-related violence in Ward 1.

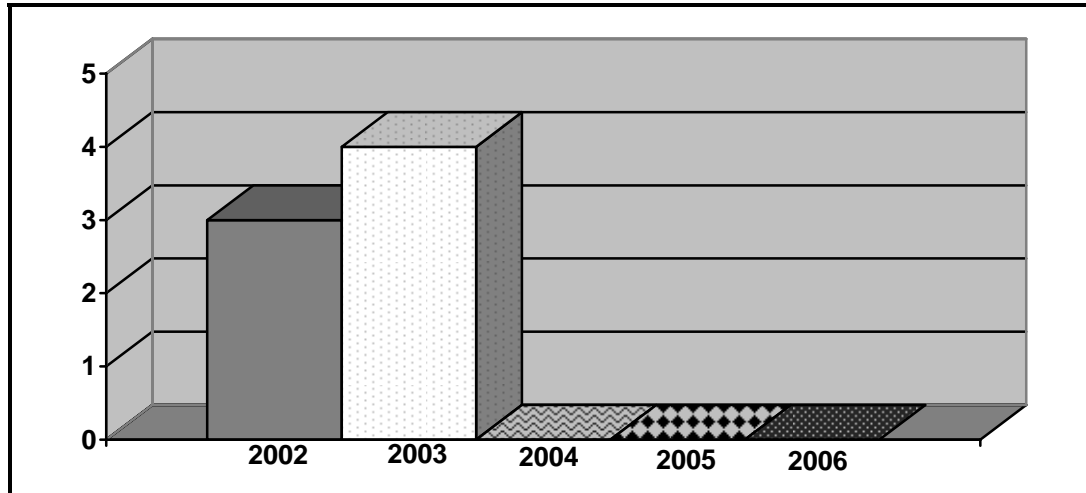
**Figure 8**  
**Shootings/Stabbings and Deaths:**  
**4 Years Prior to versus 3 Years Since GIP Inception**



**Source:** Urquilla, M. (2006). *Gang Intervention Partnership Chronology: Timeline of Key Events 1999 – 2005* (see Appendix B).

Recent Metropolitan Police Department records provide additional data showing the reduction in Latino gang-related crimes since GIP's establishment, as Figure 9 shows:

**Figure 9**  
**Latino Gang-Related Homicides by Year:**  
**2002 - 2006**



**Source:** Sgt. Aguilar, GIP Unit, Metropolitan Police Department: "Latino Gang Related Crimes."

In addition, for the violent incidents that did occur, GIP intervened successfully, thus preventing further violence, as the following examples illustrate:

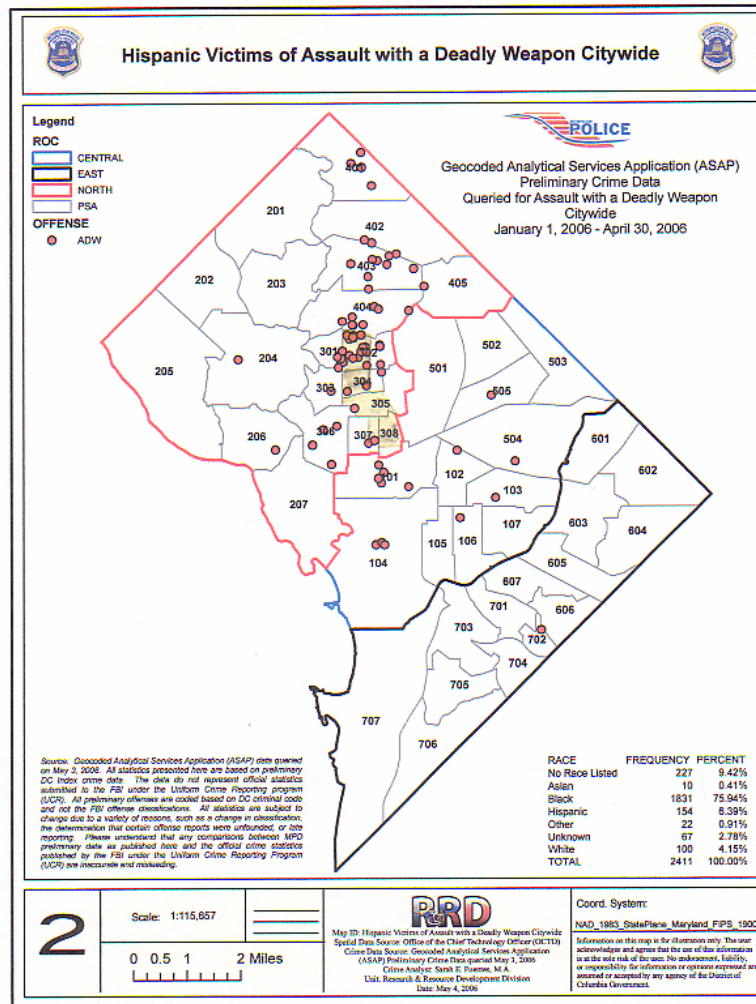
- In July 2004, GIP held an emergency meeting to address a shooting that injured a gang-affiliated young man. Upon visiting the young man in the hospital, outreach workers learned of a potential retaliation plan. Social workers and outreach workers visited the home of young persons planning retaliation and communicated the victim's wish that the retaliation plan be stopped. No further violence ensued.
- During the spring of 2005, a serious outbreak of violence occurred during a two-three week period. Violence included fights, shootings, and a Molotov cocktail being thrown at a house. Many of the young people involved had significant relationships with one or more GIP community partners. The young man responsible for shooting turned himself in to police following a counseling session with a staff person from LAYC. GIP has supported and tracked this case, and has held mediations between key individuals to resolve non-legal issues. Since the original series of incidents, the level of gang activity has been minimal to low.

GIP's work is not done, however. Metropolitan Police Department data provided by the Latino Liaison Unit shows that a significant number of Hispanics were victims of assault with a deadly weapon in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area from January 1, 2006 through April 30, 2006, as Figure 10 illustrates. Of course, these victimization data provide no



information on perpetrators, so there is no way to know from these data whether assailants were Latino, juveniles, or gang-related. All that we can conclude from this information is that additional work must be done in order to make the Columbia Heights/Shaw area safe.

**Figure 10**  
**Hispanic Victims of Assault with a Deadly Weapon Citywide**



**Source:** Geocoded Analytical Services Application (ASAP) data queried on May 3, 2006.

**Note:** Columbia Heights/Shaw area is highlighted in yellow (gray).

**2. Decrease gang-membership and stop the proliferation of new gangs operating in the target area.**

Members of the GIP consortium noted during focus group sessions that, in fact, there may be a greater number of known youth gangs in the Columbia Heights and Shaw

neighborhoods now than there were previously. However, partners also noted that the number of gang *members* actually has decreased.

Perhaps more importantly, the currently operating gangs have devolved from highly organized groups into less structured collections of youth. GIP partners describe many of the newly recognized gangs as “spin offs of larger gangs” that are less likely to be in conflict with one another.

In large measure, these outcomes have resulted from intensive community outreach:

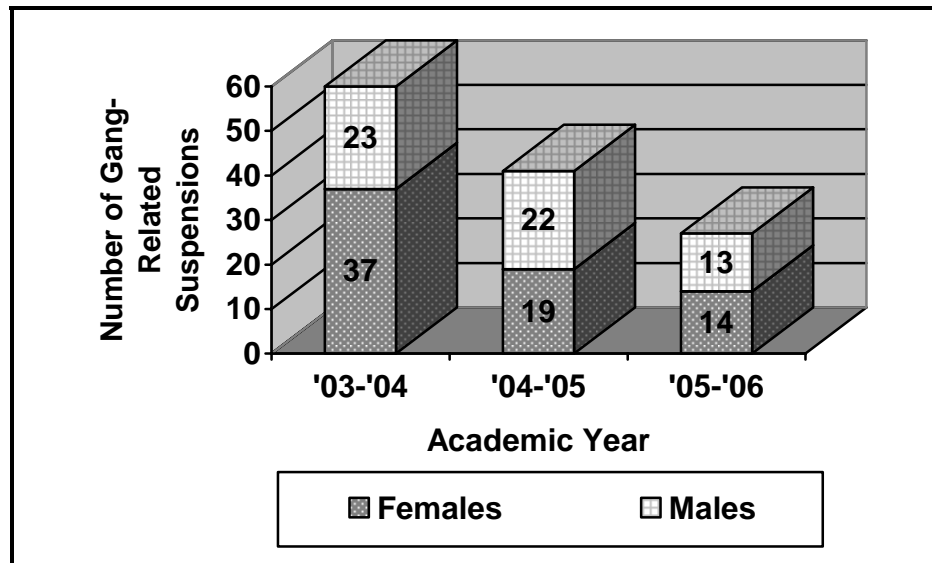
- The Collaborative has averaged 2-3 community presentations and/or radio/TV appears per month. The Collaborative’s Parent Coordinator worked with GIP partners to strategically identify churches, community groups, and civic organizations most appropriate for this purpose.
- The Collaborative’s Parent Coordinator made 13 joint presentations with MPD GIP Unit to churches, community groups, and civic organizations during 2005.
- Literally thousands of community residents have heard presentations by the Collaborative’s Parent Coordinator, who participated in 15 radio and television programs during 2005. These programs encouraged community members to call in and discuss concerns related to youth and gangs; several radio shows included listeners who called in from El Salvador. Concerns discussed included: Condition of the schools; lack of bilingual language capacity among DC government agencies; and the impact deportation has on all communities, particularly on family members of gang-related youth.
- More than 200 parents of young people have benefited from the parent outreach initiative. The Collaborative’s Parent Coordinator identified, contacted, and established relationships with approximately 200 parents of young people. The strategy employed focused on the most isolated parents – that is, those not already connected to support systems in schools, faith-based organizations, or after-school programs. The Parent Coordinator referred parents to existing parent support programs, tenant groups, leadership development activities, and opportunities for regular meetings offering peer support. In many instances, the “gang issue” came up as a secondary issue, raised only after families described facing other challenges such as under-employment, unemployment, domestic violence, tenant-landlord disputes, and education and immigration issues.
- More than 50 parents/families benefited from intensive intervention, including development of intervention plans and provision of continuing support. The Collaborative, LAYC Outreach Team, and multiple GIP partners coordinated support services for each family from multiple community partners and public agencies.

**3. Reduce the number of gang-related suspensions in targeted schools.**

GIP has built strong relationships with five schools (Garnett Patterson, Lincoln and MacFarland Middle Schools, and Bell and Wilson Senior High Schools) in order to reduce chronic suspension and truancy among gang-involved youth people. GIP offers family support services and case management to families when a pattern of chronic truancy and suspension develops.

As a result of these collaborations, gang-related violent incidents resulting in suspension declined 56% from 2003-2004 to 2005-2006 at Bell Multicultural High School, as Figure 11 illustrates. Interestingly, gang-related incidents resulting in suspensions were significantly *higher* for females (37) than for males (23) in 2003-2004, but essentially equal (14 for females and 13 for males) in 2005-2006. Female gang-related suspensions decreased 62% during the three-year period, while male gang-related suspensions declined 43%.

**Figure 11  
Reduction in Gang-Related Suspensions  
at Bell Multicultural High School:  
2003-2004 to 2005-2006**



Source: Bell Multicultural High School suspension records.

The following examples illustrate GIP’s success in achieving the goal of reducing gang-related suspensions from school:

- Twelve young women were suspended simultaneously. The Collaborative, the Latin American Youth Center, and police officers from the Fourth District worked closely with the families and young people during the suspension period of 10

days, and beyond. Many of the young women became involved in the Girls Leadership Group at LAYC, where they continue to be involved today. LAYC and the Collaborative assisted one family in transferring their daughter to a new school. Following the suspension period, the parents of the young women became more involved in the school and have begun to develop more effective relationships with school staff through parent support groups and the Parents as Partners trainings.

- Six young men were suspended from a high school for gang-related “tagging” on school grounds. GIP held several meetings with the young men and their parents to offer intensive intervention and parent education. Four of the six successfully returned to school following the suspension and participated in the PROUrban Youth program. The other two youth, unfortunately, continued to engage in gang-related activity in and around the school and have dropped out of school. Nonetheless, GIP intervened successfully in two-thirds of these cases.
- GIP intervened with a young woman who had increasingly become involved in gang-related activities and who had more than 90 unexcused absences from her high school. The school had not reported the truancies to either the young woman’s parents or to Family Court. The Collaborative worked closely with the Children’s Family Services Agency and the Court in supporting the young person and the family on multiple family issues that were causing the young woman to engage in risky behaviors.

One school administrator commented:

*Definitely, beyond any doubt, we attribute successes at [our school] to GIP.*

#### **4. Increase the involvement of at-risk youth in recreational and other productive activities.**

GIP’s targeted outreach strategy, designed to reach the most active gang-involved and affiliated young people, has been a key component of success in this area.

A variety of recreation programs and activities have been instrumental in providing young people “safe houses” for after-school and summer activities. The following examples illustrate GIP’s successes in achieving this goal:

- Approximately 1,900 youth (35-40 young people per week) participated in the Alliance for Concerned Men’s programs at the Park Morton Kids’ House. During the summer months, the Alliance enrolled 33 young people in the PRO-Urban Youth program, more than doubling their enrollment from 2004. In addition to ongoing youth programming, Kids’ House also offers a range of literacy and work readiness trainings for adults. The Collaborative has worked closely with the Alliance in building capacity in their computer-learning center.
- More than 200 youth participated in the Youth Night Out “Drop the Beef” party held at All Souls Church in March 2005, an event coordinated by youth from Outreach Teams and the Cool Down Group.

- LAYC and Neighbors' Consejo engaged approximately 410 young people in direct one-on-one contacts and special occasion events. In addition, these organizations provide ongoing classes and activities including employment training seminars, substance abuse support groups, school-based outreach programs, Youth Men's Group, and Girls Leadership Group.
- Seven of 12 young women suspended from McFarland Middle School for alleged gang activity participated in an Alternative Suspension Center at the Latin American Youth Center with "*remarkable results.*" Many of the young women joined the Girls Leadership Group. Several improved school attendance; others transferred to schools with less gang presence.
- Keel's Boxing Program reported enrolling substantial numbers of young people, although it has been difficult to confirm their statistics. The Collaborative has worked with Keel's to develop a comprehensive, strategic approach to prevention and intervention.

The Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods have experienced other positive outcomes as well: Partners report a drastic reduction in "gang-on-gang" violence and "skipping parties" as well as an increase in the rate of prosecution of gang-related violent incidents. In addition, convictions have been handed down in the Latino gang-related *Vats Locos* conspiracy case.

These positive indicators are particularly striking because they are occurring while gang violence has continued to rise elsewhere in the region.

## B. What Makes GIP Successful?

GIP's impressive record is the result of a constellation of several factors rather than any single component. These factors include:

1. ***The commitment of the District of Columbia Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA) to securing the funding, personnel assignments, and inter-governmental advocates necessary to create an effective and comprehensive network of communication, coordination, and strategy development among multiple partners.***

Without the initial funding and human resource support provided by the Mayor's Office, the work of the Partnership could not have gone from the planning stage to the streets, and the successes experienced would not have occurred.

2. ***The multi-agency, holistic approach to gang intervention developed and required by GIP that focuses on partners communicating with one another in a detailed fashion on a frequent and regular basis.***

Because court, probation, prosecution, school, and direct service representatives are present at GIP meetings on a weekly basis, coordinated and timely action occurs on a regular basis. This rapid-response, comprehensive approach to intervention is key to the Partnership's successes.

The MPD Latino Gang Unit and community workers meet on a weekly basis to monitor and address recent gang activity, and members of the Collaborative staff maintain daily phone contact with the Unit and provide emergency response coverage 24/7.

The results have been impressive. Situations among youth that before would have exploded in violence are identified early, diffused and monitored. “Beefs” are not left to smolder. Crimes that do occur are solved more quickly, cutting down on the incidents and opportunities for retaliation. Witnesses are identified and, where necessary, protected – as are the victims. Support services are also offered to the family of the young person suspected in the case and immediate steps are taken to measure risk of potential retaliations from all sides.

**3. *The commitment of the Metropolitan Police Department Latino Gang Unit to providing stable, visible and highly specialized youth outreach, gang intervention and suppression, and intelligence gathering efforts on a 24 hour per day, 7 days per week basis.***

Using this approach, young people who are likely targets or perpetrators of violence become a “knowable universe” – in other words, they are not an anonymous, faceless group of individuals. Instead, Unit officers learn about young persons’ relationships and the ties that form an intricate web of friendships and rivalries that can be understood – and interrupted when they are likely to result in violent actions.

Likewise, the GIP officers are visible in the community. They become known to the youths and their families. This helps open communications between and among the MPD officers and the community. The GIP gang unit officers are perceived more positively by youth, and not always as the enemy.

**4. *The dedication of the Columbia Heights/Shaw Collaborative in providing program management, direct services and technical assistance in ensuring the effective delivery of the various components of the partnership.***

The importance of this education/outreach initiative cannot be over-estimated. Much of youth violence is tied to familial and other personal experiences of violence, poverty, discrimination, and lack of resources. GIP has found that the level of unresolved trauma experienced in their homelands by many neighborhood youth and families is staggering. For the cases in which it has been possible for the Partnership to provide a deeper level of mental health or pastoral counseling and intervention, the results have been impressive. Such intervention could not happen without the Collaborative’s intensive work.

**5. *The commitment of neighborhood youth-serving agencies to serving a crucial role in intervening with gang-involved youth.***

Leaving a gang and the gang lifestyle is a complicated process that requires significant support from both family members and community resources. Even with emotional support, however, the process cannot be successful if after-school and summer programs either are not available or do not spark youth interest. The work of agencies such as the

Latin American Youth Center, Neighbors' Consejo, Bell Multicultural High School, Wilson High School, Lincoln Middle School, Mary's Center, and Keel's District Boxing Center is vital to helping youth exit gangs. These organizations provide "safe houses" for youth and programs that build character; teach employment, mediation, and life skills; and offer productive alternatives to "hanging out" on the streets.

**6. *GIP's coordinated and rapid response to all levels of incidents and monitoring of situations to prevent flare-ups.***

In a charged environment where violent response is the norm, even a small incident (such as an accidental shove) can explode into a potentially deadly situation. GIP tracks low-level incidents, and police now respond forcefully to incidents that might have been overlooked before the Partnership was established. This kind of response is essential because it serves as a deterrent to escalation. GIP partners have the opportunity to "talk down" the conflict or to intervene before potentially lethal retaliation occurs. GIP then tracks and monitors such incidents to ensure that any remaining tensions do not erupt at a later time.

**7. *The recognition that "gentrification" causes problems as well as solving problems.***

Columbia Heights and the Shaw neighborhoods are neighborhoods in transition. Old homes are being refurbished. Buildings that cannot be rehabilitated are being torn down and new ones built in their place. New businesses are moving in. The tax base is increasing and new people paying higher rent are moving in. They demand more and better services from their city government. As a result, streets are better lit. Trash is picked-up. The police are more visible.

On the other hand, as the rents go up, there is less middle and low income housing available. Families have to relocate and oftentimes family members are separated from one another. Parents have to commute further to work, or take on additional jobs to help support their families. This can result in parents having less involvement with their children.

Thus, gentrification is both a solution and a source of trouble. To recognize the two-edged aspect of this urban reality prepares GIP to better deal with the negative consequences of this process.

**8. *A commitment to intolerance of continued violence as a way of life in the neighborhood.***

One individual we interviewed mentioned that public leadership had failed in the past in accepting youth and gang violence as an unwelcome fact of life in contemporary urban America. Civic leaders believed that the best that could be done was to minimize violence, but that it would always be here. GIP has engendered the attitude that violence is not acceptable on any level. GIP has restored a commitment to a better way of resolving conflicts. It has "raised the bar" in the neighborhoods and schools where it has operated. GIP partners expect to be successful.

## C. Remaining Challenges

Without a doubt, GIP has achieved impressive successes; however, there still is work to be done. Focus group participants and individuals interviewed described the primary challenges that remain:

### 1. *GIP is understaffed and has insufficient resources.*

One community worker noted:

*There is not enough response sometimes from the police when they are called when something is going on. When [partners] call 311 to say they need some help, they are not being taken that seriously. [The partners] are stepping forward, but when they make that phone call, they are not taken that seriously. There are not enough workers to follow up. [GIP is] very short staffed.*

Another echoed this view:

*I can call all the numbers in my cell phone and they're all busy. I'm hoping Chief Ramsey will "step it up."*

A third person commented:

*The GIP team needs technology (e.g., cell phones) so we can communicate with them. Sometimes they don't answer the phone because it's a personal phone. I strongly suggest they get a work cell phone so we can reach them.*

In addition, resources need to be available for evaluation of team members:

*[We need to] make sure there's a way to evaluate the effectiveness of each of the GIP members. Are they the most effective members? We need to evaluate the individual members of the team to make sure they not only believe in the mission of the team but actually are the ones who are the most effective to do the work.*

### 2. *The District of Columbia Public Schools is not providing high level support for GIP, and specifically is not yet requiring all DC public schools to participate in the GIP initiative.*

A GIP partner said:

*One big challenge is bringing the District of Columbia Public Schools administration to the table.*

A community worker offered:

*We could broaden GIP – more schools, other districts. [We] could involve Cardozo and Roosevelt.*



Several individuals interviewed commented that GIP should be extended down into middle schools and elementary schools because, as one school administrator noted, “*patterns become established then.*”

Others suggested hiring additional guidance counselors.

**3. *GIP team members are not known to all community partners.***

One partner commented:

*I don't know all the players on the GIP team, so that is of concern to me. As much as possible, we need to create a level of trust with police. What we share cannot be used against the families. How can we make that workable for all of us?*

Another recommended:

*I would suggest that somehow we get to know each other. . . If at all possible, partners should know the GIP team members. They need to know what we do and what our concerns are.*

Through this process, GIP team members need to provide information to youth and families about their rights when interacting with the police.

**4. *Communicating with other police jurisdictions regarding gang-related issues is difficult.***

A community worker noted:

*Another problem is gangs from Virginia, Maryland, and [other parts of] DC. People come from different places and there are difficulties communicating with other districts. There is no regional collaboration. So it's hard to follow up if a family is outside of our neighborhood.*

Another said:

*We need better coordination with other districts.*

**5. *Alternatives to lock-up are inadequate.***

A social service professional said:

*We're in a cool down period – so the team needs to be equipped to become the “friendly cops” of the neighborhood.*

Another commented:

*[We need] more outreach workers on streets and more halfway houses.*

Others suggested establishing “safe houses” for youth in danger, creating re-entry strategies for youth leaving gangs, increasing funding for well-supervised after-school activities, and expanding therapeutic services. One partner noted:

*We're good at data gathering, but actively managing the cases by pursuing other alternatives – we need to get better at that.*

- 6. New gangs with younger members are being established. Violence has been reduced, but often it is just below the surface.***

One community worker summarized this point as follows:

*New memberships with other gangs – that is really, really worrisome. We don't know what to expect, what is next.*

Another stressed:

*I don't want to say it's a powder keg, but [violence is] right underneath the surface.*

A third warned:

*My observation is that we don't have the intensity of violence of 2003, but there are things under the surface, and with younger kids too. . . It may be larger than any of us think.*

- 7. Deep social problems such as poverty, disenfranchisement, affordable housing, and deteriorating schools must be addressed, and prevention work must be extended beyond the most horrific actions to the more mundane. Also, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and alcohol abuse are increasing among gang-involved youth.***
- 8. Prevention work and street outreach strategies that focus on youth development principles need to be enhanced.***
- 9. Youth are not yet adequately engaged as GIP team members. Partners need to explore ways to engage youth and their families in GIP-related events.***
- 10. Coordinate communications among agencies and families in order to build awareness of regional, national and international components of gang activity.***

## IX. CONCLUSIONS

Law enforcement and school data, as well as feedback from community residents interviewed during focus groups held in June and August 2006, clearly demonstrate that the Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP) offers the District of Columbia and the nation a model for how multiple agencies can – and *must* – work together to successfully stem the tide of youth violence. As one school partner noted:

*My experience with GIP has been like a breath of fresh air. . . . I can do better as a professional [because of GIP].*

GIP has created, and is sustaining, a comprehensive network that successfully addresses the complicated contexts that contribute to young people’s engagement in violent behaviors. This network, involving prevention and intervention initiatives alongside intelligence gathering and enforcement efforts, has resulted in significant penetration into Latino gang networks in the District.

Now, GIP learns of critical incidents in record time – often through multiple sources. Latino gang-related crime – from graffiti to homicide – has been dramatically reduced. Since GIP’s establishment as a long-term entity, there has been *no* Latino gang-related homicide in the District of Columbia. When altercations have occurred, GIP has intervened to prevent retaliation, thus stemming further violence. Hundreds of parents and community members have been educated about gangs. “Skipping parties” have been disrupted and youth returned to school. Out-of-school and summer youth programs have been established to help youth leave gangs and engage in prosocial activities, life and job skills training, and recreational programs

These remarkable achievements should be recognized and celebrated!

The work of the Partnership is not done, however. Unfortunately, violence continues to be a daily reality for too many communities in general and young people in Washington, DC in particular. As one GIP partner noted:

*It will require a lot more from us to move individuals and institutions to a mind set that violence and murder are not normal or inevitable in a city once known as the “murder capital of the world.” We need to create new expectations for ourselves. We need to create a public sentiment of zero tolerance for violence. We must change the attitude that certain lives are expendable.*

Moreover, Latino gangs still operate in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhoods. School “skipping parties” still occur. Complex social problems such as poverty and discrimination still fuel violent acts in the neighborhoods.

For these reasons, GIP must be continued and should be expanded.

## **X. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. Funding**

1. Provide continued funding to sustain the Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP).
2. Provide new funding to expand capacity-building efforts within the Columbia Heights / Shaw neighborhoods (such as intensive pastoral and mental health interventions with families of gang-involved youth).
3. Provide expanded funding to allow GIP to operate effectively in all neighborhoods within the District of Columbia.
4. Provide new funding to allow GIP to create mentoring partnerships so the successful GIP model can be shared with other districts throughout the region and across the United States.

### **B. Partnership Development and Enhancement**

1. Obtain support for GIP from top administrators in the District of Columbia Public Schools.
2. Ensure that GIP is operational in *all* schools in the District of Columbia, both public and private.
3. Provide a retreat experience for GIP team members so trust can be built and renewed.
4. Develop training and support programs to provide intensive pastoral and mental health interventions with families of gang-involved youth.
5. Provide training in conflict resolution and mediation models.

### **C. Tracking and Reporting Data**

1. Create and use a more aggressive truancy reporting/pre-suspension protocol, particularly when working with gang-involved youth.
2. Maintain an accurate accounting of truancy among all students, and particularly among Latino/a students.
3. Use consistent boundaries (such as Wards, Districts, or neighborhoods) for crime statistics so that crime in a given area can be accurately tracked across time.
4. Develop and apply a workable set of definitions for critical concepts such as “gang,” “crew,” “hood,” and “gang-related crime.”

## **D. Communications**

- 1. Create frequent opportunities for GIP team members and community members to come together to learn about one another's concerns, accomplishments, and activities.**
- 2. Establish and use a protocol for communicating with neighboring jurisdictions so cases can be tracked through the system seamlessly.**
- 3. Establish and use a protocol for sharing information between and among all of the GIP partners that protects confidentiality, supports professionalism yet supports and advances the work of the GIP team.**

## **E. Opportunities for Youth**

- 1. Assist existing programs (such as the Latin American Youth Center and Mary's Center) to develop and implement comprehensive, strategic approaches to prevention and intervention with gang-involved and at-risk youth.**
- 2. Provide opportunities for meaningful involvement of youth with the GIP team.**
- 3. Create "safe houses" for youth in danger.**
- 4. Improve re-entry programs for youth leaving gangs or returning to the community following detention or incarceration.**
- 5. Establish programs to assist young people to leave gangs.**

## **F. Evaluation**

- 1. Assess and evaluate individual GIP team members to ensure that the most effective individuals and agency representatives are serving the Partnership.**
- 2. Complete comprehensive evaluations, with planning from project inception. It is time for GIP to move beyond its current role of responding to emergencies; GIP now must mature into an organization that identifies evaluation criteria *before* new initiatives are implemented and then accurately measures the variables specified.**

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## **APPENDICES**

**A: GIP Stakeholders: Agencies, Contact Persons, and Roles**

**B: Gang Intervention Partnership Chronology: Timeline of Key Events 1999 - 2005**

**C: Request for Information/Data from Law Enforcement**

**D: GIP Focus Group Questions**

## APPENDIX A

### GIP Stakeholders: Agencies, Contact Persons, and Roles

Agency/Law Enforcement	Contact Person	Role
<b>Metropolitan Police Department</b>	<b>Sgt. Juan Aguilar</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-convenes GIP meetings</li> <li>Carry out Law Enforcement strategy related to Gang violence</li> <li>Builds rapport with gang members</li> <li>Shares intelligence with other partnership participants</li> <li>Participates in intervention efforts conducted through community organizations</li> <li>Offers community presentation on GIP model</li> </ul>
<b>MPD Latino Liaison Unit</b>	<b>Officer Aristy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informs and coordinates with the partnership around LLU outreach activities</li> <li>Provides limited intelligence</li> </ul>
<b>US Attorney's Office (USAO)</b>	<b>Albert A. Herring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides legal consultation to the partnership</li> <li>Has conducted trainings for GIP partners around DC and federal laws</li> <li>Prosecutorial body of DC government for adults</li> <li>Provides information on cases being investigated and prosecuted by USAO</li> <li>Witness / Victim's Protection Program for adult cases</li> </ul>
<b>Office of Attorney General (OAG)</b>	<b>Andy Zirpoli</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The agency responsible for the prosecution of youth in the District of Columbia</li> <li>Provides legal consultation for the partnership</li> <li>Provides information about cases being investigated and prosecuted by the OAG</li> <li>Has provided training to the partnership around DC laws concerning youth</li> <li>Witness / Victim Assistance program for juvenile cases</li> </ul>
<b>DC Superior Court Social Services (CSS)</b>	<b>Jorge Nava</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides supervision and court services prospective to the partnership</li> <li>Provides court ordered and PINS supervision to youth in the community who are involved in the Juvenile Justice System</li> <li>Provides intelligence around youth on CSS's caseload</li> </ul>
<b>DC Government Officials</b>	<b>Councilmember Graham Office; Councilmember Fenty Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides Policy and Funding consultation to the partnership</li> <li>Acts as a liaison between the partnership and the city council</li> <li>Brings constituent concerns to the attention of the partnership</li> </ul>

Agency/Community Based	Contact Person	Role
<b>CSOSA (Court Services Offender Supervision Administration)</b>	<b>Daniel Spantafora</b>	Provides court ordered supervision to adults Provides intelligence on adults on CSOSA's caseload Provides information about the release of incarcerated adults back into the community Provides information to the partnership on CSOSA prevention efforts
<b>Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services (DYRS)</b>	<b>Christian Muñoz</b>	Provides Supervision to youth reentering the community from Oak Hill Operates the Oak Hill Detention Center Provides intelligence around youth on DYRS caseload
<b>DC Public Schools Gang Intelligence Unit</b>	<b>Anthony Hinnant</b>	Performs outreach to gang involved youth Vital role in prevention and intervention activities within the schools Has relationships with members of a variety of gangs Can provide intelligence for law enforcement activities
<b>Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative (CHSFSC)</b>	<b>John De Taeye/Florence Michel</b>	Co-facilitator of GIP Meetings Coordinate prevention and intervention strategies Co-convene Critical Incident Emergency Meetings Provide comprehensive Family Support as needed
<b>Latin American Youth Center (LAYC)</b>	<b>Raul Archer/Anita Friedman</b>	Works directly with youth at risk of joining and involved in gangs Provides programming and alternative activities for youth Vital as a active participant in the partnerships prevention and intervention activities Provides a vital intelligence function Provides focused street outreach activities
<b>DC Public Schools</b> <b>Bell High School</b> <b>Wilson High School</b> <b>Lincoln Middle School</b>	<b>Maximo Barrera</b> <b>Jean Marie Hansen</b> <b>Ofc. Lopez</b>	Central locations where gang involved youth interact Essential to prevention and intervention activities Essential to law enforcement and intelligence gathering activities

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Gang Intervention Partnership Chronology: Timeline of Key Events 1999 - 2005**

#### **Summer, 1999**

Shooting in front of the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) leaving one staff person injured and four young people grazed. The shooting was determined to be a gang related shooting. An emergency meeting of over 200 community based stakeholders and residents was immediately convened to address growing concerns of gang presence and open air drug sales near and around the Youth Center, Bell Multicultural High School, neighborhood parks and other neighborhood locations. The LAYC had occupied their new site at 1420 Columbia Rd. NW for only one year when the shootings occurred.

The organization was in the implementation phase of designing internal administrative communications and protocols. The lines of communication and authority within LAYC were still being established and formalized in their new home. Initially, the cooperation, communication and coordination between LAYC and community partners with police and other members of the law enforcement community were tense and at times “hostile”. Senior members of the LAYC staff were threatened with “obstruction” charges for not releasing names of suspected young people and general access to young people in question. In some cases, when young people were willing to cooperate, the US Attorney’s Office and DC Superior Court were unable to ensure juvenile witness protection for the young persons and their families. No arrests were ever made in the shooting.

#### **Summer, 1999**

Youth Development programming and an increase in police presence and federal presence are implemented in weeks following the shooting. Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative and LAYC organize a series of youth development initiatives including: four Outreach Workers, with pagers, were hired to establish positive relationships with gang involved youth in non-traditional settings and after hours; a soccer league and tournament for young persons of all ages was also established. DC police provided special attention to the Columbia Heights neighborhood for the remaining summer months. Additionally, two FBI agents were assigned to work exclusively on local Latino gangs in Washington, DC. LAYC also began to formalize policies and procedures ranging from requiring name badges for all staff and youth; metal detectors at the front doors; emergency protocols and management changes.

#### **Late Summer, 1999**

LAYC and community partners contact the US Department of Justice to explore possibility of becoming a Weed and Seed site. Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative (CHSFSC) identified by community partners as lead agency in developing the community process to develop the strategy for the public safety initiative. Major focus of Weed and Seed

strategy outlines comprehensive, multi-agency approach to developing a wide ranging set of gang prevention and intervention initiatives.

### **Fall, 1999 – Spring, 2000**

Nine persons killed in gang/crew related shootings on and near the 1400 block of Girard and immediate vicinity around Girard St Playground, two blocks away from the LAYC and other locations where previous shootings and violent incidents had occurred.

### **Spring, 2000**

LAYC received earmark from DC Government to strengthen and expand gang prevention and intervention capacity. LAYC develops staff training on young women's involvement in gangs and the extensive work on the implications and trauma of the "jumping in" process.

### **Spring, 2000**

Community based effort led by CHSFSC, LAYC, community residents and churches advocate for closing of Girard St. playground and abandoned government properties. Community demanded that the DC government begin an immediate community based design process leading to a new playground. A series of community based design activities was initiated by community in partnership with DC Department of Parks and Recreation, National Endowment for the Arts and local architectural firm.

### **Spring - Summer, 2000**

CHSFSC submits Official Recognition Application to the US Department of Justice to designate key Columbia Heights neighborhoods as Weed and Seed site. Official Recognition granted in the summer of 2000. Official opening of Columbia Heights Weed and Seed site occurred in January, 2001. John De Taeye hired as Weed and Seed Site Coordinator.

### **April, 2001**

Latino Task Force on Truancy/Substance Abuse/Youth Violence was formed. The Task Force was organized in order to consolidate the multi-agency relationships and partnerships addressing youth violence issues and playground renovation efforts into one combined working group. 40 persons attended the first planning session of the Task Force. Representatives participating in the meeting included: DCPS Superintendent's Office, school administrators, law enforcement, city agencies, community based organizations, health professions, youth/adult supervision agencies, elected officials and community residents and youth. Four Areas of immediate action were identified:

- *Parental Call to Action* - help improve parents/guardians abilities to relate to gang/crew involved youth. Create a public education campaign to educate parents/guardians on their responsibilities regarding school attendance, early warning signs of substance abuse and gang involvement and strategies to help foster improved communication with their children;
- *Alternative Youth Programming* - improve existing gang/crew diversion programs through enhanced outreach efforts to most vulnerable young people who are resistant to center-based youth services. Create a network of youth outreach workers in order to coordinate information sharing, provide ongoing mutual support and create alternative programming.

- *Deepening Collaboration between Youth Serving Agencies* – build a safety net for youth and their families by developing and sustaining network of support, communication, information sharing and resource sharing between schools, community based organizations. Provide immediate direct services to victims of random violence and establish a protocol in which immediate, preventative measures can be taken in order to reduce chance of retaliatory incidents.
- *Law Enforcement* – integration of an “enforcement” strategy with a “prevention” strategy.

The Task Force continued to meet throughout the year and has consistently met monthly since 2001. The Task Force has consistently sponsored and supported throughout the four years, activities and events for students, parents and community residents to rally around the theme “Increase the Peace”.

### **Spring, 2001**

LAYC publishes handbook on the Juvenile Witness Protection program.

### **June, 2001**

Series of Parent Focus Groups held with parents from Bell Multicultural High School and Lincoln Middle School. Parents help identify areas of concerns in schools and surrounding neighborhoods. Also identify media as key instrument in which Latino parents can access important information and connect with other parents experiencing similar challenges.

### **August – Fall, 2001**

The Mayor established the Blue Ribbon Commission on Juvenile Justice to initiate systemic change in the Juvenile Justice system. The Blue Ribbon Commission requested that the Task Force organize a bi-racial focus group of 26 young women and men to meet with members of the Commission. This group led to the formation of the Black/Brown Young Men’s Coalition which was sustained through CHSFSC and CentroNia through 2004. Initial funding for this effort was through the 4H. Members of the Commission also met with the Task Force as a whole. Issues addressed with the Commission included:

- Need to build community based continuum of care that helps decrease alarming numbers of youth being committed and detained at Oak Hill;
- Need for capacity building and shifting “culture” of existing staff of Youth Services Administration (now Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services) to a more youth focused, youth development approach;
- Need to increase capacity of existing diversion programs;
- Dedicated Executive Branch level agency that addresses Youth Services;
- Increase number and capacity of substance abuse programs for youth before their involvement in juvenile justice system;
- Increase bilingual capacity of YSA staff;
- Need to bring DCPS to table;
- Promote Youth Development training among all agencies working with youth.

**September 11, 2001**

Task Force partnerships and relationship building with police is impacted by September 11 attacks. Level of police deployment in other parts of the District reduces presence in critical gang locations. Spike in incidents is immediately felt. Ability to coordinate multi-agency services also suffers.

**October, 2001**

String of violent, gang related incidents occur near and around Bell and Lincoln schools and Park Rd/Hiatt Pl corridor. Incidents include two young women who have disappeared; non-fatal shootings and young people expressing fear in returning to school for fear of future violence. Task Force takes steps to plan “Increase the Peace” event.

**November, 2001**

First “Increase the Peace” Rally was held on Lincoln – Bell Campus. Rally was youth led and organized to address issues of violence and substance abuse among youth. In addition to students and parents from both schools, participants included MPD, school officials and elected officials. A series of “Increase the Peace” events were held throughout the following year and since then. A banner and bumper sticker promoting the theme of “Increase the Peace” was widely distributed throughout the neighborhood.

**December, 8 –12, 2001**

Three young persons killed on Park Rd/Hiatt Pl corridor approximately three blocks from Bell – Lincoln schools. Homicides suspected to be related to drug market near school.

**February, 2002**

Task Force and CHSFSC established the School Based Forum by convening a meeting of DCPS Central Administration, school administrators and front line staff from 12 key public schools and public charter schools. The purpose of the School Based Forum was to create a mechanism of communication and coordination among schools in order to reduce gang activity in and around schools, before and after school. A plan to develop a strategy calling for a “Moratorium on Youth Violence” was initially discussed. A “Skipping Party Intervention Response Team” (SPIRT) was also established among the participating schools, MPD and DPR Roving Leaders. Skipping parties had been widespread and key in gangs’ recruiting and initiation efforts. The SPIRT team worked collaboratively in order to identify disrupt and intervene on skipping parties during school hours. A SPIRT protocol was drafted in order to ensure immediate contact between Attendance Counselors, outreach workers and police when a skipping party was identified or in its early planning stages.

**March – April, 2002**

A series of gun battles and drive by shootings involving multiple Latino gangs and African American crews occurred in a two week period. An emergency youth violence meeting was called by Mayor Williams in which members of the Task Force presented work to date. The most serious incident involved 6 young men being injured in drive by shooting in the Garfield Terrace community.

**April, 2002**

As a result of the shootings, Mayor Williams and Councilmember Jim Graham announce funding to establish multi-agency summer youth employment initiative targeting gang/crew involved youth from Ward One. Funds would be administered by the Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs and the CHSFSC. PRO-UrbanYouth (Positive Resources and Opportunities for Youth) was established and provided summer youth employment and life enrichment experiences for approximately 300 young people in the Columbia Heights, Shaw, Mt. Pleasant neighborhoods. The PRO-Urban Youth summer program has been sustained and has grown substantially over the last four summers.

**May, 2002**

Latino gang related shooting on Lincoln Middle School basketball court immediately after school resulted in several non-students being injured. An emergency meeting of Task Force members was held the same evening. A range of issues were discussed and assignments were made to the persons representing multiple agencies. Some of the measures that rested with community based partners included:

- provide assistance to young persons injured and their families;
- coordinate prevention steps that would reduce risk of retaliatory incidents;
- provide "intelligence" in order to assist MPD with investigation;
- arrange for and offer counseling services in schools (both Bell and Lincoln students affected);
- organize and sustain alternative events after school to create positive presence.

The Task Force convened weekly meetings to review and monitor areas of work and intensive surveillance of ongoing "beefs" among gangs involved in shootings.

**Summer, 2002**

Recreation Center embedded in Lincoln Middle School is closed; partially in anticipation of the demolition of the old school and the recent series of shootings.

**Summer, 2002**

New gang, LC, is becoming more active and pervasive in community. Originally, young group was engaged with the Young Men's Coalition mentioned above. Members of LC would later become involved in string of robberies, car-jackings that would lead to significant time in jail; some young men were charged as adults based on the frequency of arrests and violent nature of crimes.



**October, 2002**

Latino gang related shooting on Roosevelt Senior High School football field resulted in death of young man and several injuries due to retaliatory shootings immediately following the homicide. The Task Force convened an emergency meeting of Task Force members, elected officials and school officials the same night. The Protocol was once again implemented. Multi-agency, community based effort completed measures outlined in protocol.

**November, 2002**

Original version of Critical Incident Protocol was adopted by Task Force members.

**November, 2002**

Emergency meeting of School Based Forum members was held to review truancy issues and potential collaboration with Third District Police Commander to host community based Truancy Center at the District Headquarters. Truancy among gang involved youth becoming an increasing problem and an alarming gateway to youth violence and gang/crew recruitment.

**January, 2003**

Initial contact with DC Jail and Oak Hill, the DC Youth Detention Center, is established to begin visitation with incarcerated gang members. Visitation is to help facilitated more effective re-entry of young persons as well as assist with mediation efforts on the outside.

**February, 2003**

Young Latina with known gang past and possibly current gang affiliations is attacked and stabbed in her neck by person who ran up to her while she was a passenger in a moving car. Protocol implemented.

Newly appointed US Attorney, Roscoe Howard, through Weed and Seed, requests meeting with Latino leadership to discuss gang related issues. Issues to be discussed: alternative sentencing; implementation of Youth Act; more effective access to Witness Protection Program.

**April 3, 2003**

Shooting in Cardozo Senior High School library injures one young man. Shooting is a result of known "beef" between two young men that had been diffused for several months while student served long term suspension at different school. Upon the first day of the student returning to Cardozo, the shooting occurred. Shooting raises many issues of multi-school coordination, parent involvement/notification of critical incidents and pro-active, multi-agency communication with Roving Leaders, MPD and other supportive teams.

**April 6, 2003**

Eight members of LC are arrested for robberies and car-jackings and used Maryland hotel to distribute money. Two 16 year olds charged as adults in case.

**Spring, 2003**

Several arrests are made in homicide that occurred in October at Roosevelt Senior High School. Trial and sentencing occur in early, 2005 with several maximum sentences. Cooperation of key witnesses, with gang affiliation, assisted in prosecution.

**July, 2003**

Two well known African American young people from Columbia Heights neighborhood were killed in two separate shootings one week apart. Community residents and community organizations rally to support families and promote community peace.

**July 17, 2003**

High profile MS-13 case in Virginia reveals that a key government witness is killed while in the Witness Protection Program run by the US Marshals Office. The Brenda Paz case created a watershed of resources made available to federal law enforcement officials in Virginia to address MS-13 and other gang issues.

**July 30, 2003**

Well known Latino young adult, with gang connections and strong, positive connections with community organizations and multiple gangs, was killed in the heart of the community on the 1400 block of Columbia Rd. NW, in front of LAYC and offices of Columbia Heights/Shaw Collaborative. The homicide sets off an immediate set of retaliatory shootings.

**August, 2003**

Two or three days later, a 21 year old man was killed three blocks away from July 30 homicide. Young man was suspected to be involved, or a member of the gang responsible for the previous homicide.

Columbia Heights/Shaw Collaborative and community partners organize Peace March/Vigil connecting two locations of homicides. Over 200 people participate in the Vigil that stretches through Columbia Heights neighborhood. Parents of both victims consider participating in the Vigil but at last moment, consider it too dangerous.

CHSFSC coordinates police and community coverage at both funerals.

Within days, two more homicides and several shootings occur. One incident involved an infant caught in the crossfire of a drive by shooting.

**August 5, 2003**

Chief Charles Ramsey, Councilmember Jim Graham and Mayor Williams request meeting with convene with Task Force members to establish the Gang Intervention Partnership. GIP originally designed as a six-week, emergency detail of police officers to work closely with Task Force members and other critical partners to end violence. The 12 member team would consist of 5 – 6 representatives from MPD, the US Attorney's Office, Office of Corporation Counsel and a selection of Court Services and 5 – 6 representatives from key community based organizations, schools and youth serving organizations. Community partners named preferences for leadership from the law enforcement side. The requests were granted by Chief Ramsey. The MPD GIP Unit was embedded in the Special Operations Division of the MPD.

The initial GIP six-week strategy included:

- Intervention/Apprehension
  - MPD/US Attorney's Office/Office of Corporation Counsel;
  - Guarantee witness protection for all witnesses including "questionable";
  - Publicize bilingual tip line information;
  - Inform community of arrests, hearings, and releases;
- Conflict Resolution/Mediation
  - Deploy MPD/Task Force/Youth Outreach Workers to offer conflict resolution among key, identified persons;
  - Consistency of MPD officers working on gang related cases;
  - Deploy team of mediators to DC Jail to help reduce tensions among incarcerated gang members and to invoke their support in getting word out for peace;
- Communication/Intelligence
  - Build common understanding of current situation;
  - Design containment strategy:
    - Single public message;
    - No loitering signs;
    - Establish 72 hour drug free zone in key locations;
    - Provide family/community support with most affected families and communities where shootings took place through Dept. of Mental Health and community based organizations.

### **August 9, 2003**

First meeting of Youth Outreach Workers from multiple community organizations engaged in intensive conflict resolution/mediation with most vulnerable young people and personally, deeply affected by the outbreak of violence. The Youth Outreach Workers met with a team from the Dept. of Mental Health to assist with processing the wide-ranging emotions the workers were dealing with themselves as well as help provide them with necessary skills to assist the young people they are meeting. The group becomes known as the Cool Down Group and their focus is four-fold:

- Provide mutual support and care for each other as Youth Outreach Workers;
- Share critical information concerning gang related youth and potential gang activity and coordinate appropriate interventions;
- Develop and coordinate alternative activities that create a safe space for multiple gang affiliated young people to gather;
- Identify areas of professional training that is desired to help deepen the impact of the individual workers as well as the group.

Because the shootings occurred at the end of the PRO-Urban Youth summer youth employment programs, the Cool Down Group organized a schedule of daily activities, field trips and other events that would help keep the peace until the beginning of school.

The Cool Down Group has met regularly since 2003 and has organized frequent “Youth Night Out” events as well as retreats for themselves.

**August 11, 2003**

First of a series of newspaper articles describing “new breed of DC gangs” appears. Articles raise concerns among GIP and Task Force members on how media’s coverage. Chief Ramsey agrees to call emergency meeting with media outlets encouraging them to tone down coverage to protect investigations and community at large. Meeting is held on November 6, 2003.

**August 27 – 29, 2003**

Consultant from Los Angeles is brought to DC by MPD and CHSFSC to help prepare groundwork and assessment for future visit of larger team. Lead consultant meets with community partners, police, incarcerated gang members and Youth Outreach

**September, 2003**

A four-member team of consultants from Los Angeles was brought to DC by CHSFSC to assist with the ongoing design of the community-based approach to working with young people with gang/crew affiliations. The four day, intensive visit included:

- Mass meeting with students in key schools;
- One on one visits and group meetings with incarcerated gang affiliated youth and young adults in DC Jail and Oak Hill;
- Meeting with MPD officers;
- Full day training with Cool Down Group;
- Community Dinner with Young Men’s Coalition and other youth groups;

**September, 2003**

Arrests are made in three of the four homicides.

**October 9, 2003**

Members of the GIP team interrupted a skipping party at approximately 1:00 pm. A mixed group of young people and young adults were present at the party. The young people identified as school aged were taken to the DCPS Truancy Center. The young adults, some with gang affiliations, were dispersed. Two hours later, a gun battle across 16<sup>th</sup> St. erupted between two rivaling gangs. A bullet struck a bus driver on 16th St and a young man was killed.

**October 10, 2003**

Chief Ramsey and Councilmember Graham called an emergency meeting of the GIP. A range of immediate, short term and long term recommendations are made. Some of the immediate steps to be taken included:

- Extension of GIP for at least until the end of the year. (The Chief announces in the spring of 2004 that GIP would be permanent)
- Immediate high police visibility in key locations identified by GIP members;
- Targeted outreach to families and communities most affected by incident;
- Deploy Cool Down Group members to engage key youth who are most affected;
- Continue outreach in DC Jail and Oak Hill;

- Community walk through by Mayor, Chief, Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs and Councilmember and community members.

Short-term and long-term recommendations included:

- Continued involvement with Latino inmates in adult and juvenile systems;
- Increase resources for trauma teams at Dept. of Mental Health and community organizations;
- Memorandum of Understanding with DCPS on sharing key information, resource development and capacity building with key staff;
- Reform of Youth Service Administration and implementation of recommendations made in Blue Ribbon Commission;
- Increase resources for bilingual substance abuse counseling and treatment;
- Expanded funding for parent education, street outreach and alternative education opportunities for gang involved youth.

### **October, 2003**

Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative engages public research/education campaign firm to help develop public education initiative focusing on Central American families and experiences with war and immigration issues. QMRI establishes group Asi Somos "This Is Who I Am". Focus group meets for ten consecutive weeks to unearth experiences from Central American and how they impact family in this country. Foundation for future public education campaign, "You Don't Have to Walk Away".

### **November 15, 2003**

Washington Post columnist Colbert King writes article on young woman who was a witness at one of the homicides in August. Article exposes entire family to an increased level of concern given that the young woman was already suspected by many in the community as cooperating with the US Attorney's Office. Councilmember Graham, Bell High School counselor and CHSFSC staff meet with family and young woman in her home to make arrangements for leaving the community. GIP, CHSFSC and USAO immediately enrolls family in witness protection program. The USAO and GIP members write letters of concern and protest to the Washington Post.

### **December, 2003**

GIP and CHSFSC are asked by Prince George's County Attorney's Office to assist with relocation of family involved in high profile MS-13 gang related murder case. This case is our first real coordination with a regional partner.

### **December, 2003**

Dedicated funding from the Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs is identified to address areas of long-term recommendations made in October. Comprehensive strategy involves multiple community partners with CHSFSC having administrative and program management responsibilities for the implementation of the strategy. Community partners and scopes of work were identified in collaboration with Councilmember Graham's office and the Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs. The strategy addresses the following areas of work:

- Reducing gang/crew related incidences of violence;
- Dedicated team of street outreach workers identifying and building relationships with gang/crew involved young people;
- Connect gang involved or former gang involved young adults between ages of 16 – 25 to substance abuse counseling; rehabilitative and employment training programs;
- Expand opportunities for gang/crew involved youth through employment training, recreation and one-on-one mentoring;
- Community education initiative to help community better understand the range of underlying issues related to gang/crew through a variety of presentations in churches, media, schools and community forums;
- Engage parents of gang involved and vulnerable young people in parenting classes, peer support/advocacy programs that help reduce isolation and reinforce parent involvement with their children.

Partners include:

- *Alliance of Concerned Men* – Recreational and mentoring programs;
- *Bell Multicultural High School* – Parenting and Community Education Initiatives;
- *CHSFSC* – Parenting and Community Education initiatives;
- *Keely's Youth Boxing Center* – Recreational and mentoring programs;
- *LAYC* – Youth Outreach Workers and School Based Groups;
- *Neighbors' Consejo* – Outreach Work with young adults;

### **December, 2003**

Young woman who was kidnapped by MS-13 in Prince George's County is able to escape and goes directly to GIP police officers in DC. Young woman was repeatedly raped and required immediate medical attention. GIP contacted community partners to assist. The young woman was referred to the US Attorney's Office Victim's Services Program. The lack of cultural competency and several instances of mishandling the confidentiality of the case by the USAO on this case, and other cases, has caused concerns among many GIP community partners. A meeting with USAO to address the issues/concerns and possible solutions was held without conclusion. Mary Lou Leary of the US Attorney's Office and BB Otero, Director of CentroNia and original member of City-Wide Weed and Seed Steering Committee facilitate the meeting.

### **January 7, 2004**

GIP members and community partners hold emergency meeting to address homicide that took place in Maryland the night before. In meeting, it was learned that the victim's girlfriend was a client of one of the partnering organizations. Immediate contact and support was provided to both families. Through this incident, the GIP police officers begin to build relationships with regional law enforcement communities in Maryland and Virginia to more effectively track and monitor gang activity.

### **January, 2004**

Cool Down Group holds three-day retreat to rejuvenate and develop next steps for trainings, coordination and communication protocols. Representatives from Department of Mental Health and professional Youth Development organizer assisted with the retreat.

**July, 2004**

Girl's Leadership Group is formed at LAYC. Young women with limited and extensive gang affiliations forms summer youth employment oriented program. Program is so successful, same group of girls continue to meet throughout year. Leadership group has been nationally recognized by CNN and has received distinguished awards from a variety of national groups.

**July, 2004**

GIP members hold emergency meeting to address shooting that injures a gang affiliated young man. Young man and family had open case with several community partners. Upon visiting the young man in the hospital, outreach workers and social workers learn of potential retaliation plan. Victim agrees to stop retaliation. Social workers and outreach workers visit the home of young persons planning retaliation to communicate the victim's wishes.

**August, 2004**

John De Taeye and community partner, Quality Management Resources Institute, present GIP model and public education campaign initial findings at Prince Georges County Public School Orientation for High School and Middle School Counselors.

**August, 2004**

Sgt. Juan Aguilar and Marian Urquilla present GIP model at Washington Area Council of Governments Gang Summit held in Alexandria, VA.

**September 21, 2004**

Washington Post publishes series of articles identifying Latino gangs in region and particularly in Virginia. Map is published of specific hangouts of DC local gangs.

**September 30, 2004**

Principals and staff members of twelve elementary, middle and high schools participate in orientation to gang prevention and intervention initiatives and the Gang Intervention Partnership. The schools were identified by CHSFSC and GIP officers as key to more effectively addressing Latino gang issues. GIP officers provided information to the schools on the level of gang activity in their schools and the most volatile groups. Names of gangs, colors and samples of graffiti/taggings were shared with school officials. Police provided documentation of 14 skipping parties that occurred within a six month period involving students from an assortment of the twelve schools. Police estimated approximately 175 students, most of them with gang affiliations, were in attendance at the skipping parties. School Based Teams were identified in each school and a series of follow-up meetings were held with each school team. School Based Teams regularly report activity and ongoing issues to the CHSFSC and GIP.

**Fall, 2004**

Opening of the LAYC Evening Reporting Center and initiation of a juvenile re-entry project has substantially increased young person's successful return to community from juvenile detention centers. The two coordinators from both programs participated in the weekly GIP meetings to help monitor activities and coordinate interventions when necessary.

**Fall, 2004**

Initial discussions held with Deputy Mayor of Children, Youth Families and Elders, MPD and US Attorney's Office to replicate GIP model in other parts of the District of Columbia. Use Weed and Seed and Collaborative model as foundations for framing work in communities East of the River. Subsequent meetings have led to additional funding to support efforts to create a Violence Intervention Partnership (VIP).

**December 29, 2004**

DC jury convicts three on conspiracy charges for homicide in Roosevelt High School homicide and other weapon charges. Sentences for each of the three exceeded 100 years / or lifetime sentences. Eight fellow gang members were able to plea reduced sentences by providing key information on the cases to prosecutors. Subsequent efforts to help secure their safety in jail and as they were released from prison was coordinated by the Gang Intervention Partnership.

**February, 2005**

Twelve young women are suspended from McFarland Middle School for alleged gang activity. 7 of the 12 young women participate in an Alternative Suspension Center at LAYC with remarkable results. Many of the young women joined the Girl's Leadership Group. Others have improved school attendance or have transferred to other schools where there is less of a gang presence. Suspensions and chronic truancies are often indicators of larger problems within the school, home and student. The Alternative Suspension Center and engagement with students and parents as part of an intervention led to greater insights into larger issues at the school.

**Spring, 2005**

Sgt. Juan Aguilar and Jeremie Greer present GIP model to doctors, nurses, social workers, trauma unit staff at the Children's National Medical Center. Follow-up with Washington Hospital Center MedStar Trauma Unit will take place in December, 2005. Director of MedStar had met with Marian Urquilla to establish direct relationship between the hospital and GIP community members.

**Spring, 2005**

Comprehensive Critical Incident Communications Protocol updated and approved by community partners and GIP. Protocol addressed range of critical incidents with detailed procedures for all partners based on severity of incident.

**Spring, 2005**

A serious outbreak of fights, shootings and a significant incident involving a Molotov cocktail being thrown at a house occurred during a two – three week period. Many of the young people involved had significant relationships with one or more GIP community partners. Mediations between key individuals were held to resolve the non-legal issues. Other legal cases are moving forward. Since this series of incidents, the level of gang activity has been minimal and low level. Young man responsible for shooting turned himself in to police following a counseling session with LAYC staff person. Case has been supported and tracked by GIP.



**Spring – Summer, 2005**

With the increasing Latino gang presence in Virginia and Maryland, the federal government is increasing their use of Homeland Security funding in general and Immigration issues as a tool for prosecutions. Level of violence and frequency of violence in region exceeds the levels currently in DC. Chief Ramsey, the GIP police unit and GIP community partners to date had successfully held back the federal immigration pressure. However, we are increasingly feeling that pressure locally with the implementation of Operation Shield and other efforts such as the Minutemen Project.

**November, 2005**

CHSFSC convenes series of meetings with principals and administrative staff from Lincoln Middle School and Bell Multicultural High School as the two schools prepare to open a brand new combined campus known as the Columbia Heights Education Campus. The focus of the work has been developing a campus “culture” of respect and a commitment to promote Youth Development in all programs and policies of the schools. The schools will also develop a uniform gang policy between both schools and a positive, Youth Development After School program that will engage students of all ages and interests.

**December, 2005**

Cool Down Group holds retreat with representatives from the MPD GIP Unit. Cool Down Group members identify successes in reducing high and low levels of violence and reduction of gang involved incidents. Cool Down Group members cite increase levels of trust and communication between community partners and police as being key to success. Members express concerns that they are observing an increasing need for positive, youth development trainings in order to engage gang affiliated young persons on a different level. Noticeable increase in gang involved young men and women are having children and dropping out of school to support their children.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Request for Information/Data from Law Enforcement**

#### ***Gang Intervention Program Evaluation* District of Columbia Law Enforcement Information/Data Requested**

##### **Questions:**

1. How does your agency determine whether a particular individual is a gang member?
2. What information/records does your agency keep with regard to individuals identified as gang members?
3. Is there an inter-agency protocol for transfer or sharing of information regarding gang-involved youth? If so:
  - a. What is the protocol?
4. In your agency, what are the consequences for an individual being identified as a gang member?
5. What is your agency's definition of a "gang-related" crime?
6. How is the determination of "gang-related crime" made by your agency?
7. Who in your agency determines whether a particular crime is gang related?
8. Are potential sanctions different in your agency for crimes that are gang-related as opposed to non-gang-related?
9. Are potential sanctions different in your agency for gang members who commit crimes as compared with individuals who are not gang affiliated who commit crimes?
10. Specifically, how does your agency determine race (e.g., Caucasian, African-American, Native American, Asian-American)?
11. Specifically, how does your agency determine Hispanic ethnicity (i.e., Hispanic/Latino versus non-Hispanic/Latino)?
12. Who determines race and ethnicity for an individual who comes into contact with your law enforcement agency?
13. Which gangs have been active in your agency's jurisdiction since 2000?
  - a. Which of these gangs still are active in 2006?
  - b. Which of these gangs does your agency consider to be Latino or Hispanic?
14. Has your agency engaged in any programs or activities specifically in response to gang-related activity? If so:
  - a. Which programs and/or activities? Please describe.

- b. Are any of these activities/programs specifically related to the Columbia Heights or Shaw neighborhoods? If so, please describe.
15. Does your agency offer a witness protection program for gang-involved youth? If so:
  - a. What is the program?
  - b. Who is eligible for the program?
16. Has your agency kept data on school attendance, suspension, skipping parties, and gang involvement? If so:
  - a. Please provide these data.
  - b. Have you calculated correlations among these variables?
17. Has your agency participated in the Skipping Party Intervention Response Team (SPIRT) program? If so:
  - a. What has been your involvement?
  - b. What has been the result?

**Data Requested:**

1. FBI index crimes by gender, race, Hispanic ethnicity, and zip code for youth ages 12-24 years and calendar years 2001-2006 in the Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods.
2. FBI index crimes by gender, race, Hispanic ethnicity, and zip code for youth ages 12-24 years and calendar years 2001-2006 in neighborhoods contiguous to Columbia Heights and Shaw.
3. Skipping parties held in your district for the years 2001-2006:
  - a. Number of parties
  - b. Number of individuals attending
  - c. Gangs represented
4. Incidents of “gang-on-gang” violence in your district for the years 2001-2006.
5. Rate of prosecution of gang-related violent incidents for the years 2001-2006.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **GIP Focus Group Questions**

#### **1. Perceptions of the Columbia Heights / Shaw area today:**

- a. Tell us about the Columbia Heights / Shaw area today.
- b. Tell us some good things about living in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area.
- c. Tell us about school services for youth living in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area.
- d. Tell us about non-school-related services for youth available in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area.
- e. Tell us about the quality of government services in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area (e.g., police, housing, safety, garbage, etc.)
- f. Tell us some not so good things about living in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area.
- g. Do you have any fears about living in the Columbia Heights / Shaw area? If so, what are they?
- h. Do you believe the problems, if any, existing in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area are the same as or different from those in other areas of the District?
  - i. If different, how?

#### **2. Neighborhood changes during the last 4-5 years:**

- a. Has the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed during the last 4 or 5 years? If so, tell us how.
  - i. Are more people moving in/out of the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
    1. Who?
    2. Why?
  - ii. Has the ethnic composition of the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed?
    1. How?
    2. Why?
  - iii. Has the racial composition of the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed?
    1. How?
    2. Why?
  - iv. Has the quality of housing in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed? If so, how?
    1. Are there more/fewer vacant/abandoned houses?
    2. Are more/fewer houses being built?
    3. Are more/fewer houses being renovated?
    4. Are home prices increasing/decreasing?
    5. Are there more/fewer apartments or houses for rent?
    6. Are rents going up/down?
    7. Other
    8. Why do you think these changes are taking place?
  - v. Has business activity in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed? If so, how?
    1. Are there more/fewer businesses?
    2. Have the types of businesses changed? If so, how?

3. Is the economic condition of the neighborhood better/worse?  
Why?
4. Are there more/fewer jobs in the area?
5. Are the jobs in this area better or worse than they were 4-5 years ago?
6. Other
- vi. Have services for youth in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed during the past 4 years?
  1. Which ones?
  2. How?
  3. Why?
  4. Has there been any organized effort to change/improve services for youth? If so, please explain.
- vii. Have government services to the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed? If so, which ones and how?
  1. Are streets in better or worse shape?
  2. Are there more or fewer safety features (e.g., street lights, number of police)
  3. Are garbage services better or worse?
  4. Is police responsiveness better or worse?

### 3. Crime in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area:

- a. Tell us about crime in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area today.
  - i. Violent
    1. Murder
    2. Rape
    3. Assault
    4. Robbery
    5. Home invasion
  - ii. Drug-related
  - iii. Prostitution
  - iv. Gang-related
    1. What do you consider to be a gang-related crime?
  - v. Other
- b. Has crime in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area changed during the past 4-5 years?
  - i. How?
    1. Types of crimes
    2. Number of crimes
    3. Severity of crimes
    4. Gang-related crimes
  - ii. Why?
  - iii. When were you first aware that the nature or scope of crime in the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhood had changed?

### 4. Gangs

- a. What is your definition of gangs?

- b. What distinguishes a “Latino gang” from other gangs?
- c. Can someone be in more than one gang at the same time?
- d. What evidence tells you that someone is a gang member?
- e. Can a youth stay out of a gang and be safe in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?

**5. Gangs in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area:**

- a. Which gangs operate in the Columbia Heights / Shaw area?
  - i. Which ones are Latino?
- b. What activities do gang members in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area engage in?
- c. How many gang members would you estimate operate in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
- d. Which emotions best describe how you feel about the gangs and gang members operating in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
- e. Why do youth join gangs in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
- f. In what ways does gang activity affect the quality of life in the Columbia Heights / Shaw area?
- g. To what extent does gang activity affect the quality of life in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
- h. In what ways has gang activity affected your life?
- i. During the past 4-5 years, has gang activity changed in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
  - i. How?
  - ii. Have any new gangs started operating in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area since 2003?
    - 1. Which ones?
    - 2. Why did that happen?
  - iii. Have any gangs left the Columbia Heights/Shaw area since 2003?
    - 1. Which ones?
    - 2. Why did that happen?
- j. Are there gangs from other neighborhoods that visit the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
  - i. Which ones?
  - ii. How often?
  - iii. Why?

**6. The Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP)**

- a. Do you know what the *Gang Intervention Partnership (GIP)* is?
  - i. Tell us what you know about GIP.
  - ii. When did you first become aware of GIP?
  - iii. What has GIP done in the Columbia Heights / Shaw area?
  - iv. How has GIP affected your life?
  - v. Generally speaking, how effective would you say GIP has been in reducing gang-related crime in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?
  - vi. What evidence supports your opinion about GIP’s effectiveness or lack of effectiveness?

- vii. What else should GIP do to reduce gang-related crimes in the Columbia Heights / Shaw area?
- viii. Other than GIP, what could be done to reduce gang-related crime in the Columbia Heights/Shaw area?

**7. Recommendations**

- a. What recommendations do you have for reducing the problem of gang violence?
    - i. Generally
    - ii. In the Columbia Heights/Shaw area
- 8. What else would you like to tell us about the Columbia Heights/Shaw neighborhood, or about crime and/or gangs in the neighborhood?**