

October report to constituents

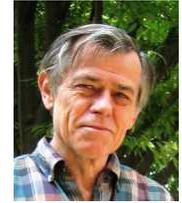
Here is news of the **October 3 ANC meeting**, and other happenings in Mount Pleasant. At this meeting, the ANC:

- Requested a clarification of the boundaries of the Neighborhood Investment Fund program;
- Asked that the District Council postpone consideration of the new DC Comprehensive Plan by six months, to give us more time to evaluate this Plan for Mount Pleasant;
- Advised that DCRA be the sole agency in charge of permits for work on the alley next to Heller's, to better coordinate efforts to develop that location;
- Advised the BZA to grant a zoning use variance to permit a financial institution to operate inside the Woodner Apartments;
- Endorsed Councilmember Graham's effort to initiate public meetings to consider traffic problems in this area, as the Columbia Heights development proceeds towards completion;
- Agreed to accept an offer by CM Graham to provide office space in the Reeves Center, to be shared by the four Ward One ANCs.

ANC 1D03 NEWSLETTER #50

Jack McKay, October 25, 2006

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Do you want to keep these newsletters coming? Do you think I'm doing okay as your representative? Then **on November 7**, in the general election, **vote for Jack**, for another term

The next ANC meeting is on Tuesday, November 14, 7:00 pm, La Casa Community Center, 3166 Mt Pleasant Street. For an agenda, see <http://anc1d.org/>.

Violent crime is quite rare in our neighborhood, especially west of 18th Street. But two vicious incidents have occurred here recently.

On September 28, a house guest of a **Walbridge Place** resident was accosted by a man demanding the keys to his car. The resident reports that his guest "refused and began to walk towards the house steps when he was suddenly attacked by four additional people--three male and one female. The brunt of the attack was delivered by one male who repeatedly beat him in the head and body with a baseball bat until he was nearly unconscious. Then while he lay on the ground, they took his wallet and walked away. He managed to crawl up the house stairs covered with blood where his wife found him barely conscious at the door step. . . . he was taken by ambulance to GW Hospital and remained in the emergency room all evening. He was released the following evening. The doctors estimate he received three blows to the head and another five plus to the body. His head and face were badly beaten and he has two fractured ribs. We all feel very fortunate though because at this point it appears he will have no permanent damage and he could easily have been killed."

Inspector Burke offers this advice: he "would encourage anyone in this type of situation to comply with the demands of the bandits. A life is more important than any property." In fact, this little gang of thugs may have wanted only to take his car to get home, on an afternoon that had suddenly turned to heavy rain. What is puzzling is why they turned up on Walbridge Place.

On the night of Sunday, October 8-9, thugs in two cars set a trap on **Ingleside Terrace**. One car blocked the road, and when a taxi driver stopped for the blockage, shortly after midnight, he was rammed from behind by another car. He got out of his car, thinking that this was an innocent accident, whereupon men from the two cars assaulted and robbed him, then fled.

Our neighborhood has become so comfortable that we residents may be becoming unwary. But we're only a few blocks from some tough neighborhoods, and young thugs come from there to do burglaries and robberies here. As Chief Ramsey said, no neighborhood today is truly safe, because criminals are becoming ever more mobile. Mount Pleasant is a relatively safe neighborhood, but it's not so safe that you can be inattentive to the possibility of danger.

While we must be alert to trouble, there's no need to live in fear. Mount Pleasant does *not* have high rates of violent crime:

- Mount Pleasant's robbery rate is *half* that of the Dupont Circle, Adams Morgan, and Logan Circle areas
- Mount Pleasant's robbery rate is *half* the average for the District as a whole
- Mount Pleasant's robbery rate is just *one-fourth* that of Columbia Heights, right on the other side of 16th Street.

Two-thirds of Mount Pleasant's robberies occur on or east of 17th Street, so the rate on the "west side" of Mount Pleasant is even lower. Incidents such as these on Walbridge Place and Ingleside Terrace are rare, so rare that we can easily be lulled into a sense of total safety.

But even west of Rock Creek Park, isolated from the poverty populations of the District by the Park, violent crimes occur. Robberies these days can happen anywhere, and can too easily turn violent, even murderous. Be careful out there.

An awful tragedy occurred on October 16, when a Salvadorean resident of the Argyle, José Villatoro, was **murdered in Southeast DC**, as he innocently worked at his landscaping job. He was shot four times by a man who was known to be psychotic, yet was carrying a handgun. His wife, Carmela, refused to believe what the police officers at her door told her that morning. She “shouted at the agents that maybe they were mistaken, and maybe this was about some other person”, Carmela’s sister told the Washington Hispanic newspaper. But they showed her his identification papers, found on his body.

Mr Villatoro, 34, a US resident for 17 years, leaves behind his wife and two very young daughters, Vanessa, 7, and Estéfani, 2. He used to take them out into Lamont Park to play.

The family needs help to get through this tragedy. Donations (tax-deductible) can be made out to, and sent to, Mary’s Center for Maternal and Child Care, 2333 Ontario Rd. NW, Washington DC 20009. Note on your donation that it is “for the Villatoro family”.

A hot **police pursuit** passed through our neighborhood around 6 pm on October 19. The object of the pursuit was a man charged with assaulting a police officer in the Fourth Police District (just to the north of us). Evidently he raced down Park Road at high speed, then tried to take Klingle across Rock Creek Park. In the Park, where Klingle becomes Porter Street and passes over Klingle Road, his car crashed across the median and into the guard rail on the eastbound side of the road. Porter was closed in both directions for some time.

District policy is quite strict about allowing such pursuits only with good cause, because bystanders can too easily be killed by the speeding cars. I’m glad that this one turned out all right.

DDOT has rebuilt a number of our sidewalks, using that very nice beige-sandstone color. The south side of Ingleside Terrace didn’t get new sidewalk, evidently because the existing sidewalk is in good condition. But I pointed out to DDOT that **the Ingleside sidewalk lacked the usual “leads” connecting the sidewalk to the curb at every residence.**

DDOT agreed that there should be those leads, and now there are.



The **Latino Festival of Washington** returned to Mount Pleasant on Sunday, October 1. An estimated twelve to fifteen thousand people visited the Fiesta, which featured musical stages on the north and south ends of Mount Pleasant Street, booths lining the street, and a midday parade celebrating the various nations of origin of Washington’s many Latinos.

I thought this was a marvelous event, not only colorful and entertaining and fun, but offering opportunities to Mount Pleasant Street businesses, as opposed to shutting them down for the day, as other events have done. La Paz Restaurant, in particular, must have sold more food from their booth in this single day than they do in a month in their little sit-down restaurant. Some businesses were left out, if only because they didn’t know what they had to do to participate, and there will be a better effort next year to help them join in.

I put in a special effort to control the loudness of the music, with the cooperation of the sponsors, and the MPD, to minimize the disruption for the nearby residents. Parking, of course, was severely impacted, throughout the neighborhood. After the event, we suggested that arrangements in the future be made for the use of parking lots elsewhere, with shuttle buses to ferry people to the fiesta.

In recent years, this DC Latino Fiesta has been at Cardozo High School. I think the sponsors were very pleased to have this Fiesta in Mount Pleasant, in the heart of the Latino community of Washington – “the barrio” – and were happy with the warm welcome they received from the neighborhood. I hope that they’ll be back next year, and we’ll see if we can do better at including our neighborhood businesses, controlling the loudness of the musical performances, and limiting the impact on parking.

Since my June newsletter, I’ve been warning of **a wave of burglaries** in our neighborhood. Our “normal” count of three or four in a month jumped to 11 in June, 11 in July, 20 in August, 11 in September, as one or a few burglars focused their efforts on our neighborhood.

The Metropolitan Police heard my alarm – yes, they had also noticed the sudden rash of burglaries – and put a special squad of four plain-clothes officers on patrol. On October 2, responding to a call from an alert resident, they arrested one Wayne Anthony Riley, of “no fixed address” who will be charged with at least one burglary. On October 9 they stopped a man seen prowling behind residences on Brown Street and Park Road, who turned out to have a police record of 18 arrests in Mount Pleasant, for various crimes. They had no grounds to hold him, but they no doubt made it clear to him that they are watching him very closely.

Since October 9, burglaries in Mount Pleasant are way down. As I write this newsletter, we’ve had just two burglaries in fifteen days. That’s our “normal” rate, and is far below our previous unhappy pace of five to ten burglaries in the same amount of time.

The Metropolitan Police are to be congratulated for having responded promptly and effectively to our complaints.