

## Coping With Problems in 'The Park'

Posted by [griff](#) On 01/14/2010

Business leaders in Lexington Park shared information and sought solutions to the problems their community is facing at a Business and Community Association meeting Wednesday, Jan. 13. The [robbery of the Arby's on Great Mills Rd.](#) and frequent problems with loitering, panhandling and harassment became a hot topic for owners of affected businesses.

Bureau of Criminal Investigations' Cpl. Robert Merritt said that while the robbery investigation is still open, they have promising leads and explained the importance of video surveillance for deterring and solving crimes.

Lt. Steven A. Hall of the [St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office](#) said that while crime is down and the county was homicide-free in 2009, violent crimes are still a concern. Hall offered the merchants frank advice, "Follow your gut instinct". He urged reporting or, at least, taking note of anything suspicious, as any bit of information could prove helpful to law enforcement.

Store owners reported experiences with seemingly desperate individuals asking for money for emergencies, offering to work for cash, and intimidating customers. Hall said many repeat-offenders are homeless or suffer from mental or substance abuse problems, but are unwilling to accept help. Regardless of how compelling their sad story may be, he said the Sheriff does not tolerate illicit behaviors and strives to help Lexington Park support a successful business community.

Community Development Corporation President/CEO Robin Finnacom shared the prospect of a "day program" out of [Walden-Sierra's](#) Hope Place and invited the group on a field trip to see Montgomery County's similar facility Feb. 4. Finnacom called attention to the County's commitment to the revitalization project as funding continues to decline, encouraging merchants to thank their commissioners.

The completed and anticipated demolitions of several blighted buildings along the Great Mills Rd. corridor and interest in a "buy local" line of thinking were also discussed.

The next Lexington Park Business and Community Association meeting will be Feb.10 and is open to all business owners and citizens in the area.