

Safety Audit Report Card

Date: October 29, 2007, from 5:00-7:30pm

Area Audited: Christie Pits (Bloor & Ossington) – Ward 19

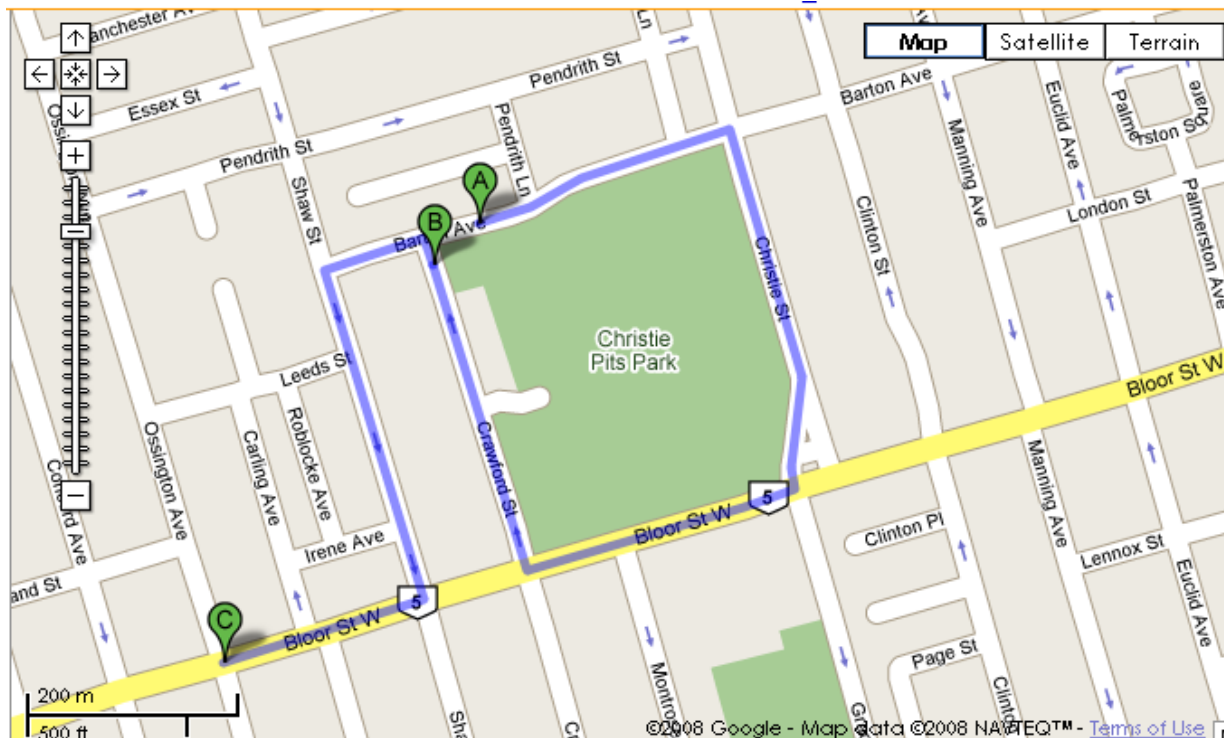
A. OVERVIEW OF SAFETY AUDIT RESULTS – Physical Environment

METRAC's Safety Audit looks at how social and physical environments can make an area safe or unsafe. METRAC defines safety as '*freedom from the threat, fear, and experience of all kinds of violence, oppression, and discrimination.*' The physical environment includes streets, lighting, signs, and parks. These features are so common that people usually don't notice them. But the design of streets, parks, and buildings can impact how safe people feel in their neighbourhoods. Small changes in the physical environment can increase peoples' sense of safety.

Deborah Jules organized a group of local residents to conduct a safety audit of the Christie Pits neighbourhood. Approximately 16 people participated in the safety audit walkabout on the evening of 29th October 2007. The group consisted of women, men, trans people and youth from the area along with a community agency representative.

The audit route is below.

CHRISTIE PITS NEIGHBORHOOD AUDIT ROUTE



The average rating for each area of the audit is in the table below. Generally, the Christie Pits neighborhood was seen as average in terms of safety; however, there were several key areas in need of improvement. The main concern was a lack of adequate lighting in the Christie Pits park area and alleyways around the neighbourhood. Participants also expressed concerns about drug-dealing in Christie Pits Park, especially around the baseball diamond and children’s play area.

1. Poor	2. Substandard	3. Ok	4. Good	5. Very good
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Safety Audit Report Card	Scale			
OVERVIEW – overall sense of safety in the area.			3.2	
LIGHTING – the ability to see and be seen clearly.			3.3	
SIGNS AND MAPS - knowing where you are reduces fear of being attacked or getting lost.			3	
ISOLATION - people tend to feel safer when others are around.			3.4	
SIGHTLINES - clear views ahead and all around, not blocked by bushes, walls or fences.			3.2	
MAINTENANCE - dirty and untidy areas make people feel no one cares and no one will come if they need help.		2.5		
ACCESSIBILITY - it is easy to move around the area.			3.3	
SECURITY – there are security systems in place that work and security staff treat everyone the same way.			3	

There were several areas for safety enhancements with regards to physical features, which are:

LIGHTING

Numerous locations with insufficient lighting:

- Crawford & Bloor
- Banton & Crawford
- Alley between Shaw & Crawford
- Crawford and Ossington

TRAFFIC SAFETY

- obstructed view of school crossing sign in a highly trafficked area, concern for safety of neighborhood children
- Potholes in park roads

PUBLIC PAY PHONES

- Need more payphones throughout neighborhood, including Bloor/Ossington area

OTHER SAFETY CONCERNS

- Drug dealing in park by baseball diamond, close to children's play area
- Tension with authority figures (police), discrimination and harassment of street people

B. OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

In public spaces, the safety needs of different groups sometimes overlap and can seem to conflict. For example, youth using a park next to a community centre see it as a safe place to hang out. But homeowners may think the park is unsafe because the youth go there. Dog owners may see the park as a safe area where their pets can run free and get exercise. Parents with young children might not want to go to the park because of potential dog poop and the fear that their kids might get bitten.

But it is important to examine these different safety concerns and see where they are coming from. It's important to remember that all the groups using the park are a part of the neighbourhood and should feel free and safe to use the space. The Safety Audit is a tool that can help people communicate amongst their differences to come to a common place of understanding where everybody's voices are heard and everybody feels safe. A space should not be made 'safer' for some at the expense of others, and safety for the most vulnerable, marginalized people is just as important as safety for the more powerful people.

As the second component of the safety audit, participants filled out the Social Environment Survey. Here are the results:

Incidents of discrimination and harassment have occurred in the area – predominantly on the streets (29%) and in the park (21%), as well as on public transit, at work, at school, at restaurants and bars, and at a drop-in centre. They are targeted towards people of colour, newcomers with accents, women, sexual orientation, gender identity (being transgendered/transsexual), people with disabilities, youth, and class/economic background (homeless, welfare recipient).

Over **65%** of respondents have witnessed or heard about incidents of discrimination and/or harassment.

Over **65%** disclosed personal experiences of discrimination and/or harassment.

The acts of discrimination/harassment were in the following forms: physical assault or injury, phone calls, threats of physical violence, ignoring, glances or staring, verbal comments, being chased or followed, and being discriminated against in a job. The most frequent forms experienced were verbal comments, glances or stares and discrimination against in a job, housing or services.

Of those that told someone about their personal experience of harassment or discrimination, 30% told family or friends, 30% told a colleague or employer, 30% told a community worker or teacher, and 10% told the police. 75% reported a positive outcome from reporting and/or telling someone about the incident.

There are a number of services in the area that are either lacking or needed. They include: increased knowledge of availability of youth services, clothing banks and food banks. The most needed services identified are: housing, youth services (including after school programs and an employment centre), health care centre, police presence, and ethno-lingual services.

Participants of the audit identified safety issues regarding the harassment of street people in the area as well as problems with authority figures (the police) and discrimination in their interactions with community members. Participants simultaneously suggested that a stronger police presence (increased patrolling) was needed due to drug dealing and prostitution in the park. Possible means to address these issues include:

- 24 hour social services in the immediate area;
- Homeless drop-in with food (coffee, snack packs, vitamins, etc.), basic items (tampons, toothpaste, etc.), showers, laundry, clothing;
- Late night drop in (till 6 a.m.) for women;
- Harm Reduction services need extended hours;
- Education/sensitivity training for police
- Building a strong and open dialogue between all community members and the police.

The places the majority of participants felt uncomfortable entering were parks and on the street.

C. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Ongoing issues with regards to the large public park in the neighborhood, crowded sidewalks, theft of small businesses and unsafe alley-ways, as well as abandoned buildings have impacted everyone's sense of safety in the area, particularly park areas where multiple issues exist and overlap. Addressing the verbal comments and discrimination facing street people, youth, people of colour, newcomers with accents, women, sexual orientation, gender identity (being trans-gendered/transsexual), people with disabilities, and class/economic background (homeless, welfare recipient) is a key safety concern, with 80% of participants stating they feel unsafe in the neighborhood.

The main physical design safety issues raised were: lack of lighting around the local businesses and alleyways between buildings as well as in Christie Pits Park. People's sense of safety in the park and on the street is very low.

There is a need to address safety and communication issues between residents of the neighborhood and the police. Experiences of racism and discrimination are common place for newcomers, street people and youth. Incidences of discrimination and harassment have increased from 5 years ago, according to participants responses. Key recommendations include:

- Addressing the discriminatory attitudes of police, business owners, housing and the health care centre medical professionals
- Businesses and community services that would provide assistance to poor people (i.e. left over food, etc.)
- Addressing police officers assumptions and stereotypes made of street-involved people.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for enhancing the physical safety features of the Christie Pits neighborhood based on the safety audit results include the top 4 priority concerns expressed by the participants:

TOP SAFETY CONCERNS	IDEAS FOR CHANGE/ACTION	FOLLOW-UP
<p>Priority 1: Christie Pits Park</p> <p>a) Inadequate lighting of basketball court (Crawford & Bloor)</p> <p>b) Potholes in park roads</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhanced lighting on basketball court ✓ To have lights regularly checked and replaced, and to provide telephone numbers of who to call if lights appear to be broken or malfunctioning on signage in area ✓ Report potholes and request a crew be sent to make the repairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Councillor Joe Pantalone's office ✓ Report burnt out or flickering lane lighting to Toronto Hydro at 416-542-3195 ✓ City of Toronto's Transportation Division at 416-599-9090, x 164
<p>Priority 2:</p> <p>c) Drug dealing in park by baseball diamond, close to children's play area (Banton & Crawford)</p> <p>d) Tension with authority figures (police), discrimination and harassment of street people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase Social Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Drop in centre and soup kitchen ✓ Harm reduction open late ✓ Women's specific services ✓ Provide police with sensitivity training and education ✓ Initiate an advisory board for the community center, and encourage community involvement and participation in regards to feedback and input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sistering Drop-in Centre at 962 Bloor Street West (416) 926-1946 ✓ Contact the Community Police Liaison to register for free Community Mobilization Workshop and create open line of communication. ✓ If unsuccessful, contact Councillor Joe Pantalone's office.
<p>Priority 3:</p> <p>e) Inadequate lighting in alleyways (Bloor & Crawford to Ossington) (Shaw & Crawford)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Alleyways poorly lit – motion detectors helpful ✓ Install more lights and enhance lighting at intersections and in alleyways ✓ Install cameras, making the alleyways more accessible by increasing visibility, decreasing areas where entrapment might occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Councillor Joe Pantalone's office ✓ Contact local BIA to install lights around businesses and near alleyways
<p>Priority 4:</p> <p>f) Bent school crossing sign, invisible to motorists (Banton & Crawford)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Report the street sign needs repair ✓ Call Transportation Services at 416-338-9999 option 2, option 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ call the City of Toronto's Transportation Services ✓ if no results within a reasonable amount of time, contact your councillor's office

E. CONTACT INFORMATION

Appendix A lists other contact information for city repairs.

City Councillor Name: Joe Pantalone – Ward 19 Trinity-Spadina

Address: CHIN Building - 622 College Street, Ground floor
Office Hours: Saturdays between 9-11am, by appointment only
Phone: 416-392-4009
Fax: 416-392-4100
Email: councillor_pantalone@toronto.ca
Website: www.joepantalone.org

MPP Name: Rosario Marchese, MPP (Trinity—Spadina)

Address: 854 Dundas Street West Toronto ON M6J 1V5
Phone: 416-603-9664
Fax: 416-603-1241
Email: rmarchese-co@ndp.on.ca

Local Police Branch: 14 Division (near the intersection of Dundas Street West and Dovercourt Road)

Address: 150 Harrison St., Toronto, ON , M6J 2A4
Phone: 416-808-1400
Fax: 416-808-1402
Email: 14division@torontopolice.on.ca
Website: <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/d14/>
Community Relations Officer: Constable Jim McFedries, (416) 808-1508

Local Community Services:

Sistering Drop-in Centre

Address: 962 Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON, M6H 1L6
Phone: 416-926-1946
Hours of Operation: call for details
Email: general_info@sistering.org
Website: <http://www.sistering.org>

Sistering's Drop-in Centre provides basic services to women who are homeless or under-housed, living in poverty, or are otherwise marginalized and need a safe and welcoming place to go during the day.

Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre Drop-In

Address: 854 Bloor St W, Toronto, ON, M6G 1M2 (Ossington Avenue and Bloor Street West)
Phone: 416-534-8941

*Information and referral * shower and laundry facilities * haircuts * legal support * Internet access * phone access * workshops * community kitchen and gardening * Homeless Education and Action Team (HEAT) * recreation and social activities * community gatherings, field trips, art programs **

St. Christopher House

Address: 248 Ossington Avenue, Toronto, ON, M6J 3A2

(North West Corner of Ossington and Dundas St. West)

Phone: 416 532-4828

Email: info@stchrishouse.org

Website: www.stchrishouse.org

Can meet a woman at any Toronto-area shelter or agency for counseling and support services. Violence against women programs (King & Shaw location), immigrant and refugee services and harm reduction drop-in (Queen & Bathurst location), drop-in services, counseling, supportive housing project (homeless prevention). A staff member is at the Sistering drop-in centre every Wednesday at lunch. These services are available to any Toronto resident.

Access Toronto: (for information on who to contact for any service needs)

Phone: 416-338-0338

Email: accesstoronto@toronto.ca

Local Area BIA (Business Improvement Area): Bloorcourt Village BIA

Address: 827A Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON, M6G 1M1

Phone: 416-537-7698

Website: <http://www.toronto-bia.com>

F. STRATEGIES FOR FOLLOWING UP ON RESULTS

Here is a list of possible follow-up actions in response to the Safety Audit results:

- **Local Politician** – Because the audit was done on public property, following up with the local City Councillor should be done. A copy of this report card will be sent to Joe Pantalone’s office but it may be a good idea to hold a meeting and invite them to discuss the results. Let them know what needs to be done to make the area safe for everyone.
- **Municipal Services** – If your group has identified things that need fixing in your neighbourhood, try contacting your municipal office.
 - Lights and litter in park: contact Parks, Forestry and Recreation at 416 392-1111.
 - For streetlights, contact Toronto Hydro at 416-542-3195.
 - Contact your local City Councillor to advocate on your behalf.
 - Toronto Municipal office: 416-338-0338
 - If your complaints go unheard, then you can consider contacting the Toronto Star’s The Fixer Column. They are interested in hearing about what’s broken and damaged in your neighbourhood. Go to www.thestar.com/thefixer, and click on the *Submit a Problem* link. Or call them at 416-869-4823.
- **Other strategies** – if the safety issues are important enough, then the community group may have to take matters into their own hands. The group may have to do whatever it takes to make sure that their safety issues are heard. Here are some possible actions:
 - Starting a safety committee in your area
 - Contacting the media
 - Making presentations at governments-initiated consultations
 - Holding community forums
 - Organizing workshops in the community
 - Holding community events
 - Surveys and opinion polls

APPENDIX A: City of Toronto Contact Information for Community Repairs

http://www.toronto.ca/services/pdf/whose_job_is_it.pdf

