



## Safety Audit Report Card

**Date:** Thursday, November 13, 2008, 5:30pm – 6:30pm

**Area Audited:** Golden Mile Plaza

Ward 37 Scarborough Centre

Neighbourhood #43, Victoria Village & #119, Wexford-Maryvale

The Community Safety Audit was organized by the Action for Neighbourhood Change (ANC) group, at the Working Women's Community Centre. The audit took place around the Golden Mile Plaza, at the intersection of Eglinton Avenue East and Victoria Park Road. Eleven people participated in the audit, which was done in two break-off groups: one of 6 people, the other of 5 people. Participants included a majority of women ages 25 to 44 years old, along with a few youth and men. There were people of colour, immigrants & refugees, and low income people represented in the audit group. The Safety Audit was conducted by ANC because the site has been suggested as a potential location for the Victoria Village Community Hub, another project that the United Way is considering funding in the area.

The area was farmland prior to World War II when it was developed for factories geared to war production. The area has remained industrial since then, with many big box stores relocating to the area in the past twenty years. The area was named after the "Golden Mile" in London, England and the Golden Mile Plaza was opened in 1958 by Queen Elizabeth II. The area was featured in an article in the Globe and Mail in 2006, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20060728.wreal-architourist0728/BNStory>

(See Appendix B for statistics on the ward's demographics)

### **A.OVERVIEW OF SAFETY AUDIT RESULTS – Physical Environment**

METRAC's Safety Audit examines 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 pathways and side streets, buildings and the overall maintenance of the area. These features are so common that people usually don't notice them. But the design of alleyways and buildings and the overall care and maintenance of the neighborhood can impact how safe people feel. Small changes in the physical environment can increase peoples' sense of safety.

## Audit Route Map



The average rating for each area of the audit is in the table below.

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

The area was generally seen as average in terms of safety; however there were areas in need of improvement. The participants noted the following safety concerns:

### **Security**

It was identified that there was a lack of formal security measures around the plaza (i.e. cameras, security guards). However, the overall sense of safety in the area was average which may indicate that there is not a need for an increase in formal security. In fact, a few participants noted that they felt safe despite the lack of cameras and security guards, since security guards may make many people feel less safe because of their tendency to discriminate against people due to their race, sexuality, and age.

### **Accessibility**

There were issues identified with the physical accessibility of the area for people with physical disabilities. Some of these issues included:

- A lack of ramps into the plaza
- Only two designated handicap parking spots, which are located at one end of the parking lot

### **Signage**

The signage around the plaza is moderately easy to understand, however there are not enough signs identifying details of the area (e.g. street names, building names, etc.). There is also a significant lack of signs indicating what to do in the case of an emergency.

### **Isolation**

As an industrial/commercial area, it tends to be much busier during the day and quite isolated at night. Participants identified the following issues:

- There are not enough public, working telephones
- There are many areas where someone could get trapped
- There are not any safety measures in place if someone was in trouble and screamed for help

## **B. OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT SURVEY**

The group did not fill out the Social Environment Surveys. They are planning to do this at a later date, and will analyze the data themselves.

## C. KEY HIGHLIGHTS and RECOMMENDATIONS

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Comments from participants:

- *“The area didn’t look really safe when I saw it, but after checking, I found it safe.”*
- *“...I wrote down honest opinions about the neighbourhood around us. I, as a teenager, feel safe here.”*
- *“I do not find it safe. There is an abandoned lot in front of the community hub entrance.”*
- *“The area could be ideal for a community hub except that the area needs to be made much safer than it is right now.”*

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, but 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.

However, 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 across 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.

In order for the Golden Mile area to become a welcoming space with a sense of community, it will take some investment from many City departments, businesses, and neighbourhood organizations. There is a significant amount of underutilized space in the area, which could be used to house needed services for local residents, for instance, a youth drop-in recreation centre.

Four notable safety concerns from the audit results were deemed of great importance:

1. A feeling of **isolation**, which is a deterrent to creating a Community Hub.

### **Recommendations:**

- Start a Business Improvement Area Group: How to Start a BIA, [http://www.toronto-bia.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=32&Itemid=47](http://www.toronto-bia.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=32&Itemid=47)
- Contact your City Councillor and other City Departments (including Parks, Recreation and Forestry) to request they invest in making the area more welcoming (i.e. add benches, create a green space, and improve the lighting).

2. The **maintenance of the area** is insufficient.

- The placement of a garbage bin in front of the main entrance creates an unwelcoming environment.
- There are not enough garbage bins for litter and recycling.
- The garbage bins are not well-maintained. There is a lot of litter scattered in the area, and the bins often overflow.
- Trees need to be trimmed to improve sightlines.

**Recommendations:**

- Contact the City Parks and Recreation Department to report the trees.
- Contact Access Toronto to report the garbage bins.

3. **Physical accessibility** of the area is very poor.

- Overall, the building is not physically accessible, particularly for people using wheelchairs.
- There is only one ramp into the building; there should be ramps into each section of the building.
- There are not enough handicap parking spots; there should be additional parking spots spread throughout the lot (especially close to the proposed Community Hub location).

**Recommendations:**

- Contact the mall administration and business owners to request that they improve the accessibility of the mall and parking lot. They are required to follow the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)  
[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_05a11\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_05a11_e.htm)  
[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws\\_src\\_regs\\_r07429\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/source/regs/english/2007/elaws_src_regs_r07429_e.htm)  
<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/accesson/business/envir onment/>
- Check out these websites for ideas on how to improve accessibility of an existing building:
  - <http://www.wbdg.org/design/accessible.php> (Whole Building Design Guide)
  - <http://www.ada.gov/reg3a.html#Anchor-Appendix-52467> (ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Standards for Accessible Design)
  - <http://www.ada.gov/rachek.pdf> (ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal)

4. The **lighting** is poor.

- There are many areas that are poorly lit, including:
  - Around the fence of the parking lot
  - The parking lot
  - Around trees and garbage bins
  - Mall entrances
  - Bus stop across the street

**Recommendations:**

- Contact the mall administration and/or business owners in the mall and request that they improve the lighting to create a more welcoming & safe atmosphere
- Contact Toronto Hydro to report any public lighting that needs repairs and/or to request they increase the lighting

It will be necessary to engage the municipal government and business owners in addressing many of the physical changes that are needed; it will also be helpful to engage the general public around the social safety of the area. Some ideas on how to do so can be found in *Section E: Strategies for Following-up on Results*.

## **D. CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Appendix A lists other contact information for city repairs.

### **1. City Contacts**

**City Councillor: Michael Thompson**

City Hall, 100 Queen Street West Suite B24, Toronto ON, M5H 2N2

Phone: 416-397-9274 | Fax: 416-397-9280

Email: [councillor\\_thompson@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_thompson@toronto.ca)

**Toronto Police Services, Division**

2222 Eglinton Avenue East, Toronto ON, M1K 2M2

Phone: 416-808-4100 | Fax: 416-808-4102

Website: <http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/d41/>

- Community Relations Officer: Constable Sue Mundy, 416-808-4108

**Scarborough Community Council**

Scarborough Civic Centre, 150 Borough Drive 3rd Fl, Toronto ON, M1P 4N7

Office phone: 416-396-7288 | Fax: 416-396-4301

Email: [scc@toronto.ca](mailto:scc@toronto.ca)

Responsibilities include making recommendations to City Council on local planning and development issues such as traffic plans, parking regulations and exemptions to certain City bylaws

**Access Toronto:** (for information on who to contact for any services in the city government)

Phone: 416-338-0338

Email: [accesstoronto@toronto.ca](mailto:accesstoronto@toronto.ca)

**City of Toronto Transportation Services**

Phone: (416) 338-9999

Website: [www.toronto.ca/transportation](http://www.toronto.ca/transportation)

**Toronto Hydro** (for streetlights)  
Phone: 416-542-3195

**City of Toronto Solid Waste Management**

Customer Service: 416-338-2010  
Community Clean Up Program: 416-338-0338

- Report a "litter hot spot" - e.g. an overflowing bin or basket, or an unusually dirty street or sidewalk by calling 416-39-CLEAN (392-5326)

**2. Parks, Forestry and Recreation:**

**City of Toronto Parks and Recreation, Scarborough District**

Office phone 416-392-1111 | Fax 416-396-4957  
Email: [parks@toronto.ca](mailto:parks@toronto.ca) | Website: [www.toronto.ca/parks](http://www.toronto.ca/parks)  
• Lights and litter in park: 416-392-1111

**Brian Chase, Parks Supervisor – Ward 37**

Phone: 416-396-5130

**Rob Burridge, Facility Supervisors – Ward 37**

Phone: 416-338-1932

**Brad Eyre, Policy Officer for Parks Service Improvement Coordinator**

Phone: 416-392-0359

**3. Local Community Services:**

**Canadian Centre for Women's Education and Development**

2296 Eglinton Avenue East Unit 2, Toronto ON, M1K 2M2  
Phone: 416-285-6881 | Fax: 416-285-1514  
Email: [ccfw@bellnet.ca](mailto:ccfw@bellnet.ca)

Community development focus \* form filling including applications for subsidized housing \* family and individual counselling \* counselling for abused women and children \* court accompaniment \* drop-in for newcomers \* information and referral \* outreach \* youth programs \* seniors activities \* community gardening \* volunteer opportunities

**Operation Springboard Resource Room -- Aris Kaplanis Centre for Youth**

2568 Lawrence Avenue East, Toronto ON, M1P 2R7  
Phone: 416-615-0788 | Fax: 647-436-7741  
Website: [www.operationspringboard.on.ca](http://www.operationspringboard.on.ca)

Walk-in job search centre \* resource materials, job banks and labour market information \* access to computers, CD-ROM tutorials, Internet, fax, telephone \* employment and skills development workshops \* referrals

### **Scarborough Youth Resource Centre**

Phone: 416-296-7154 | Fax 416-296-9408

Email: [info@syc.tropicanacommunity.org](mailto:info@syc.tropicanacommunity.org) | Web site: [www.tropicanacommunity.org](http://www.tropicanacommunity.org)

Youth drop-in centre \* information and referral \* health information, parenting support, prenatal classes for clients 13-21 years \* homework club, tutoring, volunteering \* job postings \* participates in CAP (Community Access Program) -- free Internet access \* Scarborough Youth Council \* recreation and discussion groups

### **Scarborough Youth Council**

300 Borough Drive, Scarborough Ontario, M1P 4P5

Phone: 416-296-7154 x51 | Fax: 416-296-9408

Email Website: <http://www.syc.home-page.org>

The council serves to empower young people to strive for positive change through meaningful dialogue and effective action plans. Provide youth with the tools, which will enable them to participate meaningfully in the development of public policy. Take an active role against oppression and discrimination on the basis of age, sex, class, different abilities (mental, psychological, and physical), education, ethnicity, language, lifestyle, religion, sexual orientation, or spirituality.

### **Scarborough Women's Centre**

2100 Ellesmere Road Suite 245, Toronto ON, M1H 3B7

Phone: 416-439-7111 | Fax: 416-439-6999

Email: [ed@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca](mailto:ed@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca) | Website: [scarboroughwomenscentre.ca](http://scarboroughwomenscentre.ca)

Educational courses and workshops \* mentoring/tutoring volunteers for women in transition -- divorce, relocation, newcomer women wishing to practice conversational English or improve literacy skills \* case management/counselling services \* outreach for young women 15-20 years \* outreach to women with disabilities \* community action \* information and referral

### **Useful Web Links**

- <http://www.toronto.ca/parks/torontofun/index.htm> (List of all services offered at City of Toronto recreation centers)
- <http://www.211toronto.ca> (search engine for community services in Toronto)

## **E. STRATEGIES FOR FOLLOWING UP ON RESULTS**

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

1. **Municipal Services:** Contact your municipal offices to report any public infrastructure that need repairs. (See the *City Contacts* information above). Set up a meeting with the City Councillor to discuss concerns and share ideas for changes to make the area safer.
2. **Community Services:** If your group has identified social concerns (*i.e. discrimination*), connect with community services & organizations in the area to build partnerships to increase the overall sense of community that is lacking. Organize a public meeting with representatives from various groups and talk about how you can work together to address the local safety issues. See the contact information above to find some possible connections.

**Sometimes the formal systems are not adequate enough to address our concerns and protect our right to safety & equity. When these avenues fail to solve the problem, it is important for communities to organize together to use their collective political, economic and social power.**

3. **Media:** If your complaints to the city go unheard, consider taking your story to the media. You can get the media involved for an event or simply if the conditions in your neighbourhood are exceptionally dangerous. This would work especially well if it is used with a demonstration or picket or any visual display of community organizing.
  - Send a **press release** and call your local newspapers and TV & Radio news stations. The press release should be simple, accurate and brief. On the top of the page write: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE or PRESS RELEASE, the headline of the event, and the date. Then give a brief description of what you want a reporter to cover; include who, what, where, when, why, and how. Make sure to do a follow-up call after you send out the press release. Editors see hundreds of press releases and you want to make sure that yours is memorable.
  - **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](http://www.thestar.com/thefixer) and click on the Submit a Problem link. Or call them at 416-869-4823.
4. **Petition:** A simple way to show that your community is organized and cares about the issues at hand is to present the city with a signed petition of all the problems and demands stating what you would like the city to do (*i.e. build more shelters & affordable housing so people don't have to sleep in parks*)

## 5. Other Strategies:

- Starting a safety committee in your area
- Starting a violence prevention group in your neighborhood
- Conducting letter writing campaigns
- Town Hall Meetings
- Holding community forums & events
- Organizing workshops in the community
- Holding community events
- Surveys and opinion polls

### **Resources for Community Organizing**

#### **United Way, Action for Neighbourhood Change Resources**

<http://unitedwaytoronto.com/whoWeHelp/neighbourhoodStrategy/resources.php>

**The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Building Community**, published by the Vancouver Citizen's Committee

<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/>

**Basics of Organizing** by the (U.S.) National Training and Information Center

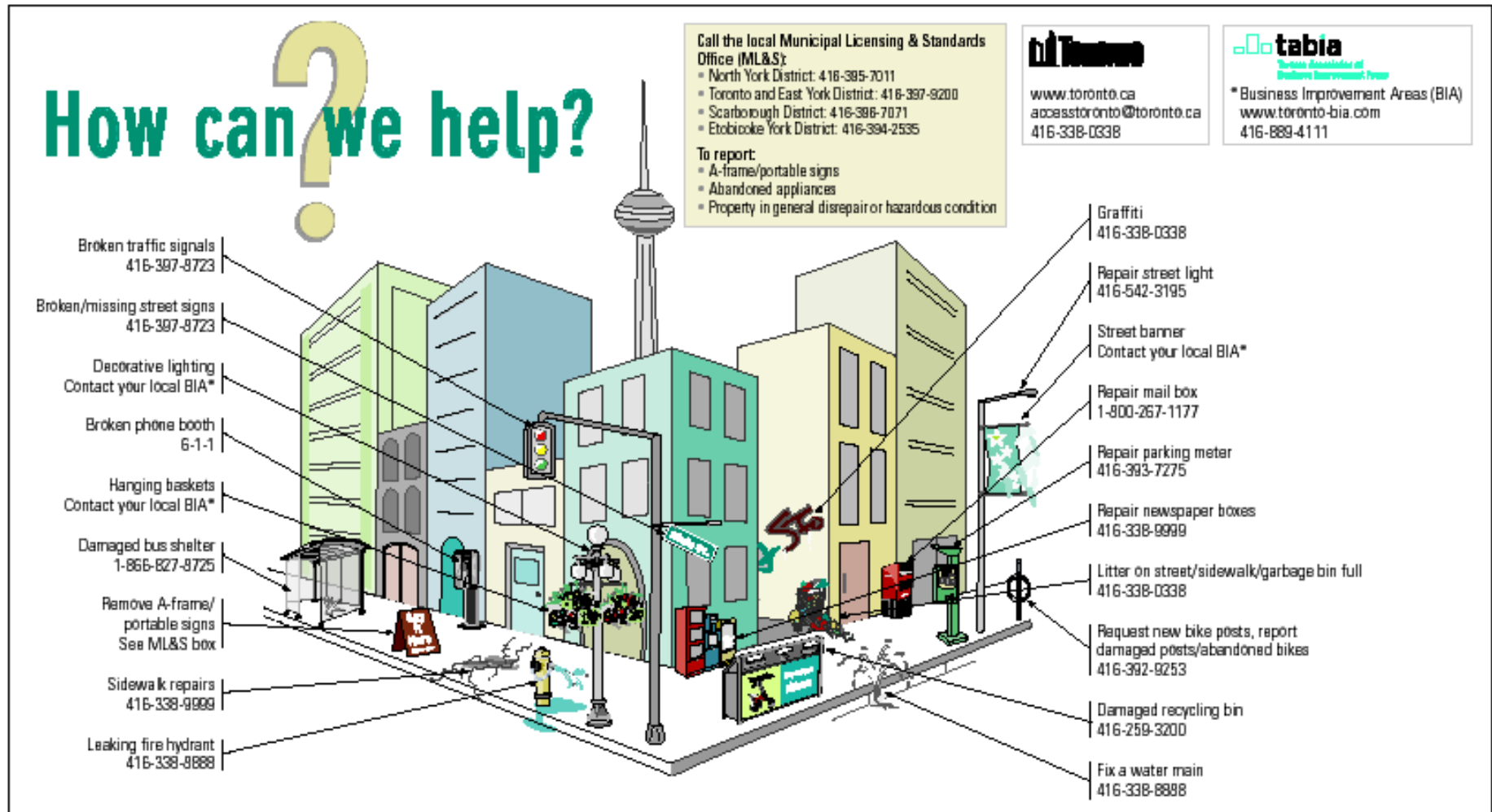
<http://www.tenant.net/Organize/orgbas.html>

#### **Information about Harm Reduction Principles and Practices:**

- <http://www.canadianharmreduction.com/> (Canada)
- <http://www.harmreduction.org/> (USA)

# APPENDIX A: City of Toronto Contact Information for Community Repairs

[http://www.toronto.ca/services/pdf/whose\\_job\\_is\\_it.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/services/pdf/whose_job_is_it.pdf)



## APPENDIX B: Demographics of Ward 37

### Age:

- Children 0-14, 18.6%
- Youth 15-24, 12.6%
- Working Age 25-64, 54%
- Seniors, 65+, 14.8%

### Language:

- 50.4% of the population speaks English as their mother tongue
- Tamil (7.4%), Tagalog (4.9%), Chinese (3.7%), Greek (3.5%), and Urdu (2.3%) are the next 5 most spoken mother tongues

### Social Identity:

- The top ten ethnic groups are: Chinese, East Indian, Filipino, Canadian, Sri Lankan, Greek, English, Italian, Jamaican, and Scottish
- 56.8% of residents identify as a “visible minority”

### Housing:

- 61.2% of dwellings are owned; 38.8% are rented
- 68.8% of private dwellings are one-family households

### Family Status:

- 49.2% of couples have children
- 28.7% of couples do not have children

### Income:

- Average household income - \$58,684
- 5.3% of households have an income less than \$10,000 (compared to 7% across Toronto)
- 34.4% of households' income is less than \$40,000
- 45.2% of households have an income of \$40,000 - \$99,999
- 22.1% are single parents
- 15% have household income of +\$100,000
- 42.3% of individuals are low-income
- 23.4% of families are low-income

Source: The City of Toronto. *2006 City of Toronto Ward Profiles: Ward 37*. Retrieved from [http://www.toronto.ca/wards2000/pdf/2006/ward37\\_2006profiles.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/wards2000/pdf/2006/ward37_2006profiles.pdf)