

# Safety Audit Report Card

**Date:** October 26, 2007, from 1:30-2:30pm

**Area Audited:** Allan Gardens Park Playground (Gerrard Street East & Jarvis Street)

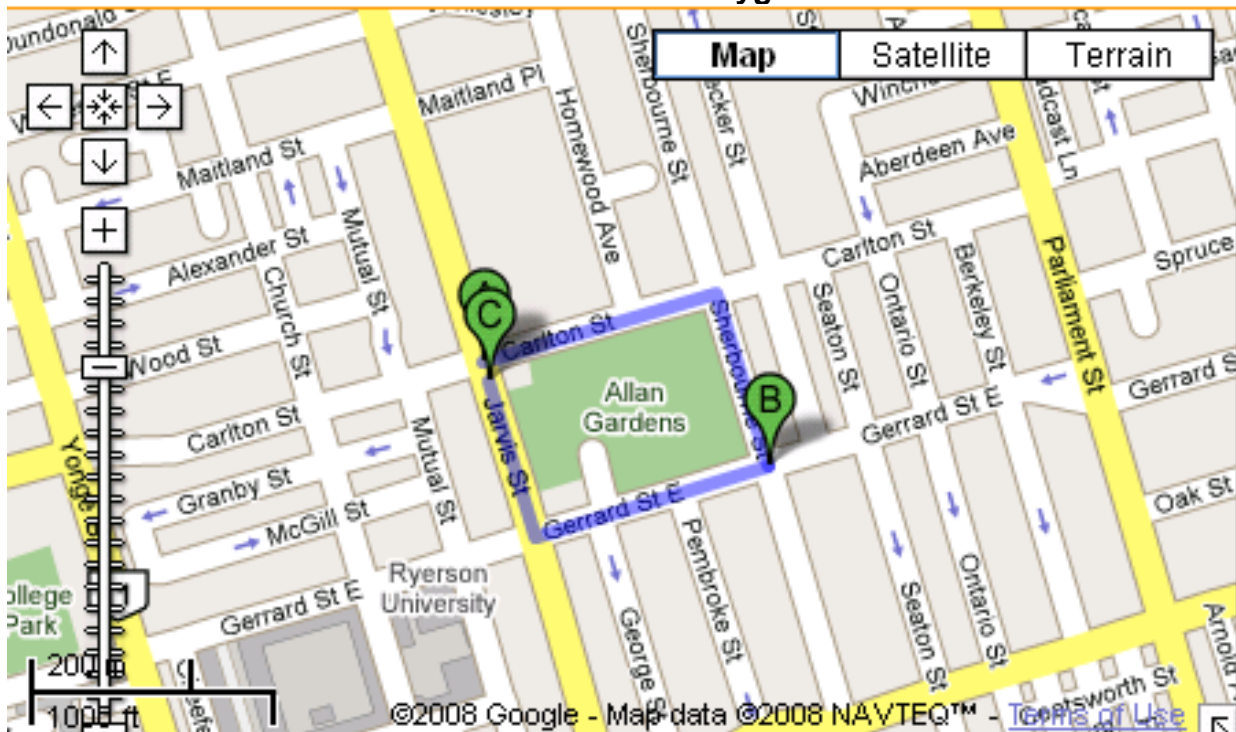
## 1. OVERVIEW OF SAFETY AUDIT RESULTS – Physical Environment

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.

Joanne Chong-Kettle organized a group of local residents to conduct a safety audit of the Allan Gardens Park playground. Approximately 9 people participated in the safety audit walkabout on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007 from 1:30 to 2:30pm. The group consisted of parents from the neighborhood, including eight women and their young children, as well as a visiting social work student from Finland. Joanne from the 519 Church Street Community Centre organized and led the audit, and a childcare worker participated as well.

The audit route is below.

**Allan Gardens Park Playground**



The average rating for each area of the audit is in the table below. Allan Gardens Park playground was generally seen as substandard in terms of safety; there were several areas in urgent need of improvement. The main areas of concern for the group were the playground area, the wading pool, the lack of proper identifying signs.

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.	2.6			
<b>LIGHTING</b> – the ability to see and be seen clearly.	2.8			
<b>SIGNS AND MAPS</b> - knowing where you are reduces fear of being attacked or getting lost.	3.0			
<b>ISOLATION</b> - people tend to feel safer when others are around.	3.0			
<b>SIGHTLINES</b> - clear views ahead and all around, not blocked by bushes, walls or fences.	3.6			
<b>MAINTENANCE</b> - dirty and untidy areas make people feel no one cares and no one will come if they need help.	2.5			
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b> - it is easy to move around the area.	3.2			
<b>SECURITY</b> – presence of security systems in place that work and security staff treat everyone the same way.	2.0			

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

### OVERVIEW

- a) Lack of proper fencing around playground
  - anyone (people and dogs) can enter/children can exit
  - latches do not close properly
- b) Wading pool is a major safety issue
  - large open space surrounded by exposed pipes
- c) Lack of maps and signage
  - no emergency phone numbers posted
- d) Water fountains
  - only one fountain located in park and it is broken

### PLAYGROUND (SEE APPENDIX B FIGURES 2, 6 & 7)

- Physical condition of playground (limited equipment, garbage/used condoms, broken pavement, thorny bushes)
- Safety of playground (latches do not close, fencing is too low, dog park not separated)

### **WADING POOL (SEE APPENDIX B FIGURE 5)**

- Physical condition of wading pool (large, open space sitting on top of hill with concrete stairs; not used in some time; rusty pipes exposed; takes up majority of already limited playground space)
- Safety of wading pool (lack of maintenance of wading pool means that children are at risk of falling into pool and injuring themselves)

### **SIGNS AND MAPS (SEE APPENDIX B FIGURE 3)**

- There are no maps indicating where you are in the park, and no signs to indicate where the facilities are or how and who to contact in case of emergency.

### **WATER FOUNTAIN**

- There is only one fountain, located in the general park area, and has it has been broken for several months.

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

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 - on the streets, in parks and on public transit. They are targeted towards newcomers with accents, people of color, people of lower economic status and the homeless.

While less than 50% of participants have witnessed or heard about incidents of violence and or harassment, over 67% of participants disclosed personal experiences of discrimination and or harassment. These statistics demonstrate the fear, isolation and lack of community that is preventing neighbours from discussing their commonly experienced safety issues.

The acts of discrimination/harassment were in the following forms: glances/staring, graffiti, verbal comments, ignoring and being chased and or followed. The most common form of harassment reported was glances and stares.

Of those who told of their personal experience of harassment/discrimination, over 60% told both family/friends and the remainder told either a community worker or employer.

There are a number of services in the area that are either lacking or are needed. They include: recreation centers, youth services, and housing options. The participants noted the lack of ethno-lingual services and also noted police/security as a key service that was needed in the neighborhood.

The place that the majority of participants felt uncomfortable entering was the general park area of Allan Gardens Park.

One of the main areas of concern for the group in terms of the social environment is the presence of youth, homeless, mentally ill and/or those with addictions in the park area.

## C. KEY HIGHLIGHTS

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Comments from participants:

- *Homeless/people with mental illness enter park, especially in afternoon and night*
- *It is scary for parents to enter playground area with their children*
- *Lack of activities for children in playground*
- *Many unsafe areas and activities*

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.

Concern over both the physical and social environment in the area has impacted people's feeling of safety in the area, particularly in areas in and around Allan Gardens Park and Playground. Lack of proper fencing and gates, combined with the overall physical upkeep of the area and lack of maps and emergency contact information has pushed people away from the park and has increased people's feeling of isolation. There was also great concern over the presence of youth and others in the park/playground area that decreased parent's feeling of safety.

Experiences of racism and discrimination were commonplace for newcomers and those of lower economic status, including the homeless.

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 suggested that a stronger police presence (increased patrolling) was needed due to drug dealing and drug-use, as well as a significant population of homeless sleeping in the park. Possible means to address these issues include:

- Contacting social service agencies in the area to discuss possible resolutions;
- 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.

## D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for enhancing the safety features of the Allan Gardens Park Playground 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><b>Priority 1: Allan Gardens Playground</b></p> <p>a) Fence around playground needs repair/replacement</p> <p>b) Latches do not close</p>	<p>Replace fence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- space between bars too wide, children can become trapped</li> <li>- paint is peeling and rusty</li> <li>- Children can get out/others can get in</li> <li>- Height of fence needs to be increased to prevent dogs from entering playground</li> </ul> <p>Gates to be replaced with latches that lock/park to be locked after hours</p>	<p>Contact the Parks Supervisor, Mark Emslie, (416) 392-1759</p> <p>Contact councillors of the area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Councillor Pam McConnell (Ward 28)</li> <li>- Councillor Kyle Ray (Ward 27)</li> </ul> <p>Bob Doogood, (416) 392-1925 Toronto Parks Landscape Architect</p> <p>Brad Eyre, (416) 392-0359 Policy Officer for Parks Service</p>
<p><b>Priority 2: Wading Pool</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not in use</li> <li>- Raised above ground/exposed metal pipes/steep stairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove/cover pool (there is a risk of children falling into the exposed hole)</li> <li>- Maintain existing pool to be clean and safe water play activity for children</li> <li>- Adapt existing space into splash pad.</li> </ul>	<p>Mark Emslie, Parks Supervisor – Wards 20, 27, (416) 392-1759</p> <p>Brad Eyre, (416) 392-0359 Policy Officer for Parks Service</p>
<p><b>Priority 3: Signage</b></p> <p>a) No signs in park indicating where you are</p> <p>b) No signs for emergency contacts/washrooms</p>	<p>Need signs to tell people using the park where they are and who to call in case of emergency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- locations of washrooms</li> <li>- locations of payphone</li> </ul>	<p>City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Mark Emslie, Parks Supervisor – Wards 20, 27</p>
<p><b>Priority 4: People in and around the park/playground</b></p> <p>a) Youth</p> <p>b) Homeless</p> <p>c) Populations – Individuals experiencing mental illness/addictions</p>	<p>Increase Social Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Drop in centre and soup kitchen</li> <li>- Harm reduction open late</li> <li>- Women’s specific services</li> </ul> <p>Increase types of recreation services to serve a broad range of individuals in the area</p>	<p>Contact social service agencies to discuss these social issues and possible solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 519 Community Centre</li> <li>- St. Christopher House</li> <li>- BREAKAWAY Family &amp; Youth Initiatives  Harm Reduction Outreach</li> <li>- All Saint’s Church Community Center</li> </ul> <p>Discuss options with Councillor’s office</p>

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Appendix A lists other contact information for city repairs.

### **1. City Contacts**

#### **Mark Emslie**

**Parks Supervisor – Wards 20, 27**

Phone: 416-392-1759

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

*Set up a meeting with the Parks Supervisor of Allan Gardens to discuss concerns and share ideas for changes to make the park safer.*

#### **City Councillor Name: Kyle Rae (Ward 27)**

Address: 100 Queen Street West, Suite A5 Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Phone: 416-392-7903

Fax: 416-696-4300

Email: [councillor\\_rae@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_rae@toronto.ca)

#### **City Councillor Name: Pam McConnell (Ward 28)**

Address: 100 Queen Street West, Suite A7 Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Phone: 416-392-7916

Fax: 416-392-7296

Email: [councillor\\_mcconnell@toronto.ca](mailto:councillor_mcconnell@toronto.ca)

#### **Bob Doogood**

**Toronto Parks Landscape Architect**

416-392-1925

#### **Brad Eyre**

**Policy Officer for Parks**

Service Improvement Coordinator

416-392-0359

#### **Toronto Police Services 51 Division**

Address: 51 Parliament St., Toronto, ON , M5A 2Y5

Phone: 416-808-5100

Fax: 416-808-5102

Email: [51division@torontopolice.on.ca](mailto:51division@torontopolice.on.ca)

Community Relations Officer: Constable Paul Nadeau, (416) 808-5108

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

Phone: 416-338-0338

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

## **2. Local Community Services**

### **519 Church Street Community Centre**

519 Church Street, Toronto ON, M4Y 2C9

Phone: 416-392-6874

Email: [info@the519.org](mailto:info@the519.org) Website: [www.the519.org](http://www.the519.org)

- *Drop-in for homeless and hostel residents -- Sunday 10-3, free hot meal (1-2:30), 8-5, including morning coffee and pastry, noon lunch \* clothing (after Thanksgiving)*
- *Child and family programs -- Family Resource Centre, parent/caregiver and child program \* parenting workshops \* Growing Up Healthy Downtown -- for children birth-6 years \* summer day camp for children 6-12 years*
- *Community counseling for persons in distress \* income tax clinic \* clothing exchange \* social clubs for persons with developmental disabilities Friday evenings*

### **St. Christopher House**

248 Ossington Avenue, Toronto, ON, M6J 3A2

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

Phone: 416 532-4828

Email: [info@stchrishouse.org](mailto:info@stchrishouse.org) | Website: [www.stchrishouse.org](http://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.*

### **All Saint's Church Community Center**

315 Dundas St E, Toronto, ON, M5A 2A2

Toronto East (Sherbourne St-Dundas St E)

Email: [admin@allsaintstoronto.com](mailto:admin@allsaintstoronto.com) | Website: [www.allsaintstoronto.com](http://www.allsaintstoronto.com)

*Outpatient treatment for youth with substance abuse related problems. Day treatment program for youth 14-18 years with addictions and mental health problems. Community professionals and agency staff -- consultation and training in early identification and management of substance abuse \* also education and prevention programming \* outreach to correctional facilities in west end of Toronto \* street outreach provided from a mobile van, including counseling, needle exchange and free condoms*

### **BREAKAWAY Family & Youth Initiatives| Harm Reduction Outreach**

41 Niagara St, Toronto, ON, M5V 1C2

Toronto Central (Bathurst Street-King Street W)

Email: [mseymour@breakawayyouth.org](mailto:mseymour@breakawayyouth.org) | Website: [www.breakawayyouth.org](http://www.breakawayyouth.org)

*Comprehensive, individualized treatment and harm reduction services \* community-based setting \* treatment includes pharmacotherapies such as methadone, individual and group counseling, acupuncture \* social and recreational activities \* referral and advocacy \* outreach to correctional facilities in Toronto*

### **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>

## 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:

- **Local Politician** – Because the audit was done on public property, following up with the local City Councillors should be done. A copy of this report card will be sent to Pam McConnell (Ward 28) and Kyle Ray (Ward 27). 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](http://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](http://www.toronto.ca/services/pdf/whose_job_is_it.pdf)

## Whose Job Is It?

**To report:**

- Litter and debris
- A-frame signs and portable signs
- Abandoned appliances
- Property in general disrepair or hazardous condition

→ **call the local Municipal Licensing and Standards (ML&S) Office:**

- North York District: 416-395-7011
- Toronto and East York District: 416-338-0338
- Scarborough District: 416-396-7071
- Etobicoke District: 416-394-2535

- Traffic signals broken  
416-397-8723
- Broken or missing traffic signs  
416-338-9999
- Street lights out  
416-542-3195
- Decorative lighting  
Contact Local BIA\*
- Broken Phone booth  
6-1-1
- Hanging baskets  
Contact Local BIA\*
- Damage to bus shelter  
416-338-9999
- Remove A-frame and portable signs  
See ML&S box
- Sidewalk Repairs  
416-338-9999
- Leaking fire hydrant  
416-338-8888
- Graffiti  
416-39-CLEAN (416-392-5326)
- Broken/damaged streetlight  
416-542-3195
- Street banner  
Contact Local BIA\*
- Broken/damaged mail box  
1-800-267-1177
- Broken parking meter  
416-393-7275
- Broken/damaged newspaper boxes  
416-338-9999
- Litter on street/sidewalk or overflowing garbage bin  
416-39-CLEAN (416-392-5326)
- Request new bike posts, report damaged posts or abandoned bikes  
416-392-9253
- Damaged Eco-Media  
416-259-3200
- Water main breaks  
416-338-8888

**\*For the Business Improvement Area (BIA) in your community, visit [www.toronto-bia.com](http://www.toronto-bia.com)**

## APPENDIX B: Digital Photos of Key Areas of Concern



**Figure 1 Thorny Bushes** – uneven slate pathway & tangled ground vines by playground

**Figure 2 Playground Area** – no benches for parents supervising children to sit on, abandoned demolished wading pool area and only one swing for toddler, one for child and one teeter totter



**Figure 3 Broken Latch** – rusted fencing; there are spaces between fence's bars wide enough for a child's head or part of body to become stuck

**Figure 4 Park Entrance Sign** – it would be helpful if the park sign on Gerrard St. provided more information, e.g. a map of the playground, Children's conservatory, washrooms, water fountains, and emergency contact information





**Figure 5-Concrete Steps** – dangerous for all patrons of the park

**Figure 6- Play Area** – prickly bushes/spike/poky plants; thick mulch could prevent seeing clearly items that should not be in children's play areas



**Figure 7 Playground Area** – paved path raised along edge of sand area; on other side of path is a concrete slope surrounding wading pool's open south side; curb is a tripping problem; path does not provide surface for strollers, wheel chairs, tricycles