

## **Safety Audits - What is next?**

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### **Summary**

Pilot projects are being implemented in Kitchener based on research and community-driven Safety Audits commissioned its Safe and Healthy Community Advisory Committee. Projects account for private property and public considerations - ex., standards for new street lighting and retrofitting (adapting) old lighting were based on pedestrian experience, not merely traffic requirements.

While local research on the economic impact and fear of crime has persuaded some politicians and planners to "revitalize" downtown city cores, resources for research and safety audits are scarce. Recommendations for partnering with universities to pool resources and reduce costs:

- Offer to present information to urban planning students or to supervise their thesis; offer practical research experience to social research methods students to get programs evaluated or surveys completed;
- Assist with audits of campus, residences, school routes;
- Suggest your local university apply for funding under the CURA program (Community-University Research Alliance).

Suggestions for "infiltrating" Municipal Government to gain support and resources:

- Invite politicians and management staff to participate in safety audits and training; present safety audits to Mayor ;
- Build partnerships with other citizen-based Committees which advise City Council;
- Incorporate safety audit recommendations into departmental work plans so that recommended work will be included in budgets;
- Ask that contractors tendering urban development bids and landscape maintenance workers be made aware of safety audit principles; ensure that planning documents such as design guidelines for private and public sites incorporate safety audit principles and standards;
- Develop programs addressing specific safety audit concerns (ex., community-awareness campaign, community gardens, youth grants).

### **Factors that facilitated the process**

- 1) Kitchener background: presentation of safety audit results by a subcommittee to the Mayor's Task Force on the Downtown (The safety audits had been done by the Sexual Assault Support Centre with the help of METRAC and delivered to City Hall.). An interdepartmental working group revisited them and made recommendations and determined the budget allocations required. Recommendations of the Task Force resulted in the establishment of a Safe City Committee and budget allocation in 1995. Full-time staff resources were not provided.

- 2) The Kitchener Safe and Healthy Community Advisory Committee is a Committee of City Council made up of politicians, residents and citizens with full time staff support; it has annual budget allocation. Members contribute to subcommittees – one of those, the Safety Audit Working Group, helps facilitate the audit process upon request from the community. I, as coordinator, helped to develop an internal City process and implementation follow-up with community participants.
- 3) Safety audits in Kitchener are community-driven. Strong and active neighborhood associations (often predominantly women) make it easier to conduct safety audits.
- 4) *On Lighting Downtown* was a study commissioned by the Safe City Committee. A number of pilot projects for different street types are being implemented in the core. Lighting standards for new development and retrofitting the old were developed based on pedestrian experience, not merely traffic requirements. Results of safety audits were taken into account and the scope included private property as well as the public realm.
- 5) An annual Lighten up Campaign seeks to encourage residents to help contribute to the streetscape through lighting of their houses and apartments.
- 6) Partnership development with universities, women's and community organizations has helped us to pool resources and conduct research.
- 7) Local research on fear of crime and the economic impacts is persuasive to politicians and planners trying to 'revitalize' downtown city cores.

### **Factors that hinder the process**

- 1) Resources are scarce. We have partnered with others who already have programs on the go or are developing such as:
  - Active and Safe Routes to School program;
  - Neighborhood watch;
  - Community information forums.

- 2) The educational process is ongoing and it's hard to find the time to do that important piece.

## **How to “infiltrate” the municipal government and gain resources**

My thoughts about how to ‘infiltrate’ the Municipal Government and gain resources are as follows:

- 1) Invite plans review staff to participate in a safety audit.
- 2) Invite politicians and management staff to participate in safety audit training.
- 3) Contact the Risk Manager of public organizations.
- 4) Present safety audits to Mayor and C.A.O. of City or Regional Government.
- 5) Approach the Committees of Council which are citizen-based groups which advise the government. See if there is one that you can work with such as barrier free/accessibility, community safety, economic development, ethno-cultural... the entry point is not as important as gaining access to the structure.
- 6) Find an advocate within the municipal structure and build the relationship.
- 7) Incorporate the safety audit recommendations into departmental work plans so that work can be costed into budgets.
- 8) Ask that landscape maintenance workers be made aware of safety audit principles.
- 9) Ask that contractors who are tendering bids on road reconstructions, new buildings and parking garages to review existing safety audits.
- 10) Ensure planning documents such as design guidelines for private and public building and site development incorporate safety audit principles and standards.
- 11) Develop specific programs to address concerns from safety audits such as Lighten Up campaign, Graffiti Busters program, Mural Mentoring program, community gardens, youth grants, Little Black Book.

You can also use schools and universities as a resource.

- 1) Approach universities and offer to present information to planning students.
- 2) Offer to supervise students doing their thesis.
- 3) Assist with audits of campus, residences and school routes.

- 4) Offer real life opportunities to classes in Social Research methods to get your programs evaluated or surveys done.
- 5) CURA project (Community-University Research Alliance). Suggest your local university make an application for funding under this program.

## Available resources

I am bringing some hard copy examples to pass around and CD's with safety audit and spin-off projects that I've worked on for hand-outs. The contents are as follows:

- 1) 2001 audit form (adapted for use for project with University of Waterloo in a core area).
- 2) Background Jamie mthbp (safety audit and survey background)
  - Also see Powerpoint presentation: MHBP\_Pres
  - See Safety audit report: MHBP audit.
- 3) Cedar Hill safety audit (report and audit findings organized in summary sheets).
- 4) CURA Projects – Core safety audits and pedestrian survey.  
(Community-University Research Alliance)
- 5) Graffiti Busters incl Community Srvcs –Final  
(Powerpoint Presentation)
- 6) Lighten Up – DRAFT ONLY  
(Draft paper describing a public awareness campaign and survey)
- 7) Safe & Healthy – final draft (draft terms of reference for the Safe & Healthy Community Advisory Committee).
- 8) Safety Audit-class pres (Powerpoint presentation) (Relates safety audit checklist to 'crime triangle' of victim, perpetrator and environment).