

# **Building Healthier, Safer, More Caring Communities: A Call to Action**

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**FINAL REPORT**

**Prepared for:**

**Community Solutions Program  
Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services  
Urban Community Development Unit**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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“Building Safer, Healthier and More Caring Communities - A Call to Action” resulted out of dialogue between community groups and agencies who see a need to work together to address needs of the community. On June 23, 2000, representatives of several Cowichan Valley community organizations, local government, School District 79 and Public Health, met to discuss the development of a comprehensive community strategy for safe, healthy and caring communities in the Cowichan Valley. They defined a range of goals and objectives reflecting a variety of needs both for the development of programs and supports, and for involvement of community members in defining and implementing solutions.

Members of the committee felt that a process for developing a community strategy for health and safety should focus on a specific action plan for one neighbourhood. The James Street area, which encompasses different jurisdictions and has many diverse needs and issues, was identified with regard to personal safety and accessibility concerns for women, children and people with disabilities. Building community capacity, revitalization projects and programs and facilities for youth at risk are among the needs addressed in the community consultation project.

### **The James Street Area**

The Call to Action Project included James Street, between Duncan Street to the Trans Canada Highway, Alderlea and Garden Streets, Vian and Clements Streets, and parts of Ypres and Festubert Streets (refer to map). This area is a mixed commercial, public use (recreation), institutional (school, community services) and residential area.

The diversity of the James Street area reflects an evolution from the sixties and seventies when large community schools and facilities were the standard and attracted small businesses and services that did not require a downtown location and higher overheads.

Today, the area’s mixed use attracts many diverse groups to the area to live, work and access services. However, the area is in transition and there may be little incentive for new business to invest, while larger facilities must continue to allocate funds for upgrading. Many residents in the area move into other areas if possible, and those that do remain may not have the energy or the background to initiate and sustain work towards positive change. For these reasons, the Call To Action Project worked with community organizations, local government, businesses and residents in the area in order to build capacity for continued growth.

Cowichan Senior Secondary High school, located at the southeast end of James Street, serves 1,200 students in grades 10 through 12. Many of these students regularly access the area’s diverse services, businesses and recreational programs throughout the day and after school. The large student population in the James Street area is one important factor of the area’s vibrant diversity.

Cowichan Community Centre and Pioneer Complex are major public recreation sites, comprising several acres on the eastside of James, and include the Community Centre building, a tennis court, a skate board park and ball fields. As well, the

Community Centre's array of programs and services provide an integral component in the potential and quality of life around the James Street area. In fact, the James Street area offers the highest concentration of public recreation facilities, parks, amenities, programs and low cost activities in the Cowichan Valley.

Among the important community services in the area are the Cowichan Valley Basket Society (James Street), Cowichan Valley Association for Community Living (Clements), a youth group home on Ypres, and the Open Door Program on Festubert Street. These organizations provide support and resources to many individuals living in or using the area, who require assistance with various aspects of day-to-day living including access to food, health and safer living.

The Bread Basket Society serves over eighty meals each day to people who come from all over the Cowichan Valley, and the Central Vancouver Island Health Region's Open Door Program also provides approximately 630 meals to its members each month as well as employment, recreational and life skill opportunities for people managing mental health issues. The Association for Community Living provides employment training through their Lunch On Clements Program to individuals with developmental disabilities as well as programs that support safe, independent living. Combined, these community organizations provide services that address the needs of the diverse range of people who access and live in the James Street area.

The commercial corridor of James contains several fast food outlets, restaurants, public recreation outlets (billiards, bowling), community services (C.V. Association for Community Living, Basket Society); nearby on Duncan Street are industrial locations and two fire halls.

Residential neighbourhoods surround the core commercial area on James and include Vian and Clements on the east side, and Alderlea and Garden to the west. There are two apartment buildings on Alderlea Street, which are adult and seniors oriented and approximately 50 single family detached houses. Residential population in the study area is estimated at 400.

### **Vehicle and Pedestrian Traffic**

As well as being a major destination area for all of the uses noted above, James Street itself is a major corridor for traffic and pedestrians surrounding neighbourhoods and downtown services and businesses. Residential streets of Alderlea and Garden also experience a fair amount of through traffic.

### **Crime, Personal Safety and Barriers to Access**

James Street and the surrounding neighbourhood fall into two different crime report zones of the District. It was not possible to obtain reported crime data specific to James, Garden and Alderlea Streets other than calls for service to police. Data on calls for service to police from the immediate area show a decline from a high of 789 for 1997, to 341 during 1999.

However, community knowledge and perceptions of this area reveal that the James, Garden and Alderlea area have been subject to many complaints from residents with regard to loitering, drug use, theft, vandalism, harassment and other inappropriate activities.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Taking a community development approach, the Call To Action project aimed to work at the level of local groups and organizations to build capacity of the James Street area and to enable people to define the issues and solutions to develop a more equitable community. Issues related to personal safety, accessibility and quality of life in and near the James Street neighbourhood were addressed by working collaboratively with residents and local youth, community agencies, and local government to develop a multi-sectorial approach to community development.

Specifically, the objectives of the project were:

- To engage and mobilize local community involvement, participation and partnerships to generate the basis for a community development initiative in the James Street neighbourhood;
- To assist local residents, organizations and other stakeholders to identify priorities and develop an integrated strategy for addressing the need for local community development to support women, children and youth, and other multi-barriered individuals in the community;
- To create awareness of the issues around and needs relating to community safety and access for people who experience multiple barriers to participation, and in particular, women, children and youth;
- To coordinate a neighbourhood revitalization project to stimulate local interest, ownership and momentum toward long-term community development

### **The Safer Communities Approach**

Across Canada, many municipalities are developing strategies to address violence through “Safer Communities” approaches to crime prevention. While each area is different, in general, the goal of enhancing community safety involves improving the quality of life for people by reducing crime and fear and providing support that people need to feel safe and secure in their living environments.

A Safer Communities approach to crime and violence prevention stresses integration of all components: law enforcement, social development, and environmental design strategies in order to effectively reduce crime and violence. Working cooperatively to foster partnerships and coordination between and among all sectors including planners, citizens, community groups, police and local government is essential.

The Safer Communities Approach offers a process for fostering partnerships and coordination between all sectors, including citizens, voluntary sectors, local government, police, health, etc., as well as for promoting the ability of individuals and groups to take ownership in defining the issues and solutions. The process emphasizes community involvement, the formula for which is inviting and encouraging residents to provide their views, and incorporating those into a plan of action that will be defined and directed by residents themselves.

Community safety and participation issues are complex and inter-related. Factors that affect participation include gender, age, abilities, income, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. In turn, these factors are related simultaneously to the physical, social/cultural, institutional and economic environments in which people live. *The*

*solutions lie in healthier, safer and more caring communities that respect the needs of those who experience barriers to participation.*

**The Safer Communities Approach recognizes that:**

- crime and violence are community issues because they affect quality of life of people in communities.
- there are distinct differences in women's experiences of crime and violence, and in the consequences, and that these differences make it essential to have community strategies which specifically address vulnerability due to gender, class race/ethnicity, age, - all the things that are associated with people's vulnerability.
- there is a whole spectrum of solutions aimed at reduction of both crime and fear of crime - increasing public safety, addressing domestic violence and addressing equality of treatment and of service provision in institutional systems.
- community partnerships are essential - the whole community has to be involved, but that a major catalyst in mobilization, maintaining the momentum, and sustaining the process, is political will.
- action is based on achievable goals - getting simple and effective things done within the avenues that are open. Achieving simple goals contributes to momentum, and in turn helps to keep the community involved.

**The Safe Communities Approach is rooted in the belief that:**

- prevention of crime and violence is most effectively achieved through promoting safer and more equitable communities;
- the most effective place to begin tackling the issue of violence is at the local level, and that to be successful, the whole community has to be involved; and local leadership is essential to provide the energy and direction needed.

## **2. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

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Many local organizations participated in these activities during the community consultation, giving their time, skills and material contributions. Focus group discussions, written surveys, safety audit walks, two community enhancement events held at Kinsmen Park, and the development of a youth action team combined to develop a framework for this collaborative approach to address safety issues in the area.

The following sections provide details about the information obtained through this process.

### **2.1. Community Health and Safety Survey**

Standardized questionnaires were distributed and collected through focus group discussions, distribution to local residents and businesses and sampling at the Cowichan Community Centre. In total, 307 surveys were collected and 269 were analyzed for information about various aspects of community safety and access, including:

- Safety concerns at home, work and public places
- Places and reasons for safety concerns
- Restrictions due to concern for personal safety
- Participation in community life
- Suggestions to make James Street a better place to live

## **2.2. Analyses of the Survey Data**

The Community Health and Safety Survey identified several areas of concern for people who responded. Overall, the results suggest that people using or living in the James Street area experience high levels of concern for their safety at home, at work and especially in public places. While the places and reasons that people feel concern for safety are similar, results suggest that people's responses to these concerns vary between different community groups. These similarities and differences are illustrated in the following sections.

### **2.2.1. Concern for Safety at home, work and in public places**

Concern for safety in public places was reported by 85% of survey respondents, with Kinsmen Park, James Street itself and dark places such as alleys and parking lots comprising the most frequently identified locations. People's most common reasons for feeling afraid included fear of violence and harassment, threatening behaviour related to drugs and alcohol, inadequate lighting, and unsafe traffic patterns in the area.

- Over 60% of survey respondents (66% of women and 61% of men) said they are concerned for their safety at home. These percentages were highest for seniors and lowest for teens.
- Approximately 50% (57% of women and 47% of men) said they are concerned for their safety at work. These percentages were highest for the 40-59 age group and lowest for 19-24 ages.
- Just over 70% of men and 90% of women said they are concerned for their safety out in public in the James Street area. These percentages were highest for seniors and lowest for people under years of age.
- In response to these concerns, 53% of women and 29% of men restrict their use of the area. Those most affected by safety concerns are women, and particularly women over 25 years of age.

### **2.2.2. Principle places and aspects of the neighbourhood that were identified in relation to people's safety concerns**

#### **Places:**

Kinsmen Park

Dark Places (darkness is determining factor—not specific location)

James Street (participants who mentioned at least one spot on James Street)

Anywhere (indicated places spread throughout the region/area)

**Reasons:**

- Fear of violence, harassment or threats
- Fear of drug and alcohol related behaviours
- Inadequate lighting
- Traffic concerns
- Combination of more than one of these factors

### 2.2.3. Common Factors Affecting Safety and Accessibility Where and Why Safety is a Concern – by Age

Where:

#### **YOUTH UNDER 25:**

- 71% identified places that make them feel unsafe
- 27% locations throughout the region
- 20% James Street
- 12% dark places
- 11% Kinsmen Park

Why

- 35% fear of violence, harassment or threatening behaviour
- 21% fear of drug and alcohol related behaviours
- 21% inadequate lighting
- 6% traffic concerns
- 17% at least two of the above

Where

#### **ADULTS 25-59**

- 67% identified places where they feel unsafe
- 25% indicated locations throughout the region
- 24% indicated James Street
- 13% indicated Kinsmen Park
- 5% indicated dark places

Why

- 33% inadequate lighting
- 20% fear of violence, harassment or threatening behaviour
- 17% fear of drug and alcohol related behaviours
- 13% traffic concerns
- 18% at least two of the above

Where

#### **ADULTS 60 AND OVER**

- 70% identified places where they feel unsafe
- 37% indicated James Street
- 21% indicated Kinsmen Park
- 12% indicated locations throughout the region

Why

- 43% traffic concerns
- 18% fear of drug and alcohol related behaviours
- 11% fear of violence, harassment or threatening behaviour
- 8% inadequate lighting
- 21% at least two of the above

### Places Where Safety is a Concern – by Gender

| PLACES INDICATED by WOMEN:   | PLACES INDICATED by MEN:   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>71% identified places where they feel unsafe</li> <li>25% places located throughout the region</li> <li>23% James Street</li> <li>16% Kinsmen Park</li> <li>7% dark places such as parking lots, streets, alleys, etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>59% identified places where they feel unsafe</li> <li>21% James Street</li> <li>21% areas located throughout the region</li> <li>9% Kinsmen Park</li> <li>8% dark places</li> </ul> |

| WOMEN'S REASONS:  | MEN'S REASONS:  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>27% inadequate lighting as a reason for feeling unsafe</li> <li>24% fear of violence, harassment, threatening behaviour</li> <li>15% combination of at least two of the above</li> <li>16% fear of drug and alcohol related behaviours</li> <li>18% traffic concerns such as speeding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25% fear of violence, harassment or threatening behaviour</li> <li>20% fear of drug and alcohol related behaviours</li> <li>18% a combination of at least two of the above</li> <li>14% traffic concerns</li> <li>24% inadequate lighting</li> </ul> |

As illustrated in the previous tables, people living in and using the James Street area indicated very similar rates and types of safety concerns. Inadequate lighting and fear of threatening behaviour were the most frequently reported concerns for people under 60 years of age, while traffic concerns were most commonly reported by adults over 60.

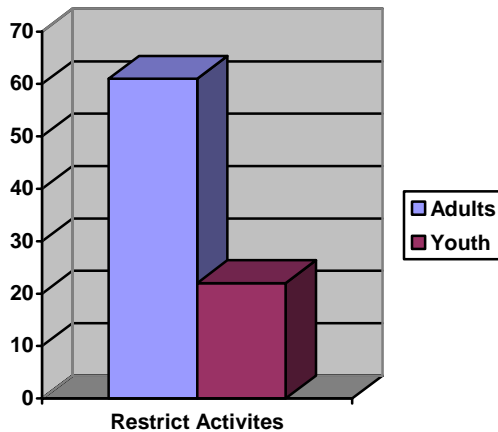
#### 2.2.4. Restriction of Activities due to Safety Concerns

Some interesting trends emerge from the data obtained from the James Street Community Health and Safety survey. Most notably, while the previous tables show some of the similarities in the reasons and places that people are concerned for their personal safety, there are differences in how these concerns impact daily living among community groups.

Many adults indicated that they avoid areas after dark, and do not go out at night to attend social functions, school or meetings because of potential risks. Overall, 61% of all adult respondents (those 25 years of age and over) indicated that they do in fact, restrict their participation in community life in order to safeguard themselves. However, despite similarly high rates of safety concerns, youth are less likely to restrict their

activities than adults are. In fact, adults are nearly three times as likely to restrict their activities when compared with youth under twenty-five.

**Restriction of Activities  
Comparison of Youth and Adults**



The implications of this trend lend themselves to further exploration within the context of building a safer, more caring community. For example, why are youth less likely to restrict their activities despite knowledge and fear of potential risks?

Part of the answer may be drawn from the youthful tendency to perceive oneself as somewhat indestructible; however, given the high percentages of youth who indicated that they commonly experience safety concerns, this does not appear likely to provide a complete explanation. Other clues may be obtained from responses provided in the Community Health and Safety survey as well as comments recorded in youth consultation groups.

When discussing high-risk behaviours such as drugs, alcohol and impoverished self-safeguards, including walking alone at night or going where there is criminal activity, many young people suggested that engaging in such behaviours is a reasonable response to their sense of powerlessness to affect change in community and family cycles of poverty, violence and marginalization.

For example, one local youth whose survey responses identified twelve factors that affect personal quality of life including drugs and alcohol, food and nutrition, racism and feeling afraid, when asked, “**What would make James Street a better community?**” responded:

*“I have no suggestions—only because it would be too hard to change anything while I’m a youth.”*

Furthermore, given the high rates (37%) of concern related to economic conditions in the James Street area, it may also be reasonable to consider whether youth living in and using this area have the means by which to access resources that can increase their safety. For example, 33% of youth that filled out surveys, and many who participated in focus group discussions, indicated that transportation is a factor that impacts their quality of life. Traveling around the James Street area to and from work, school and home may pose significant risks for youth, especially after dark. However, in the absence of safer alternatives, many youth without vehicles, rides from family, or money for bus fare rely on bicycles and walking rather than being excluded from participating in community life.

Other reasons that many youth place themselves in potentially dangerous situations such as congregating in parks after dark, substance abuse and unsafe driving, is that there may not be enough affordable alternatives within the community that provide and encourage young people to engage in positive activities. For example, one young person echoed the sentiment continually heard in youth discussions when she commented on the survey:

*“We need more activities for teenagers—there isn’t much to do without a lot of money to burn.”*

Still, other youth suggest that their concerns for personal safety loom largest at home. In fact, some of these youth identified places such as Kinsmen Park and the streets, as safe locations compared to home. Unfortunately, these young people also indicated that people in the community, especially seniors, often view their presence as threatening. The juxtaposition of the fearful becoming feared was illuminated by one youth that stated:

*I’m always in the line of fire – so some people think that I am the one shooting*

Although the consultation process has revealed some possible explanations as to why many youth do not restrict their activities despite concern for personal safety, many other possibilities remain. And while overall, youth restrict their activities less than adults do, young males are even less likely than young females to restrict their activities in response to safety concerns. In fact, 30% of young women and only 9% of young men indicated that they restrict their activities in response to fear and safety concerns.

Knowing whether or not this gender disparity is evident in earlier stages of development would be beneficial in considering programs for children. For example, it would be useful to know more about the role of fear and safety concerns in younger children’s activities: whether young girls’ and boys’ activities are restricted equitably, and what impact these restrictions have on developing assertiveness, confidence and overall potential. The

Call To Action Project did undertake one focus group with children aged ten through twelve years of age in order to identify some of the issues that concern them in and around the James Street area but it did not explore gender differences around safety concerns and safeguarding behaviours. More research is needed in this area.

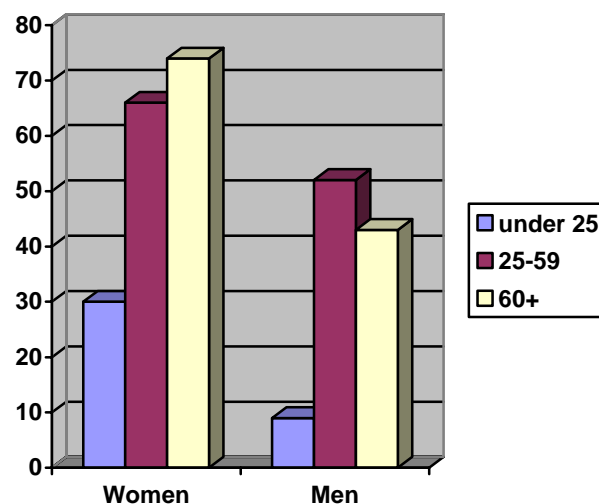
Since youth are least responsive to personal safety concerns, it would be beneficial to *encourage young people (especially young men), to be more proactive in safeguarding themselves against potential risks.* Moreover, because women's life patterns of restricting activities are present by adolescence (and possibly earlier), *measures to increase women's sense of personal safety should begin in earlier stages of development in order to reduce their exclusion from community life.*

Clearly, there is a need in the James Street area for youth activities that provide alternatives to crime, fear of crime, drug and alcohol misuse, problems at home and other issues associated with unsuccessful community integration. Moreover, these activities must engage young people in a meaningful way; that is to say, it is important that the community encourage young people to develop creative solutions that will build and utilize strengths and abilities. Getting young people actively involved in developing and implementing community enhancement projects that encourage innovative ways to meet challenges will help to reduce the sense of powerlessness and hopelessness that are at the root of many young people's high-risk behaviours.

While youth issues are extremely important to the overall community composition of James Street, adults over the age of twenty-five not only report concern for their safety but they also significantly reduce their activities in relation to their concerns.

Not surprisingly, restriction of activities increases with age, especially among women. Women across all age groups restrict their activities more than men do, with 74% of female seniors indicating that they limit their participation in community activities.

**Restriction of Activities  
By Age Group and Gender**



The above graph illustrates that generally, women are more likely to restrict their participation in community life than are men. This tendency is present at adolescence and continues throughout the life span.

In trying to understand the reasons that men and women respond differently to similar concerns for personal safety, it may be helpful to identify aspects of the external environment that promote the exclusion of women and other vulnerable individuals from community activities. Factors such as societal attitudes about women, (over one third of all women in the survey felt that attitudes about women impact their quality of life), racism, economics and sexual preference can all impact upon people's ability to effectively contribute to the community in which they strive to belong.

Moreover, women, more than men, may feel that they cannot adequately defend themselves in potentially dangerous situations. For example, men and women may both have similar safety concerns about going into a dark parking lot after an evening activity. However, after running through potential situations, men may conclude that they have a reasonable chance of defending themselves against harm, while women imagining the same situations conclude that the potential for harm is too high. Moreover, men and women may perceive very different kinds of threats to their safety.

In focus group discussions, men tended to relate their safety concerns firstly to material loss such as being robbed, followed by physical assault. Conversely, women more often related their concerns first to physical harm including sexual assault, and then to monetary losses. Given the differences between men and women in their conceptual frameworks for harm, compounded by varied defense ability, it is not surprising that women's fears translate to greater levels of safeguarding behaviour, including exclusion from community activities.

The fact that so many people in the James Street area restrict their activities, impacts the health and vibrancy of the community in many ways. With so many people, and in particular, women, seniors and disabled people, feeling that they must restrict their participation in community life because of fear, the area is often described as having a feel of abandonment and neglect. Moreover, this reduction of appropriate use creates a circular problem: people avoid the James Street area because it feels unsafe which in turn, increases the likelihood that the area will be used for unsafe activities.

### **2.2.5. Drugs and Alcohol**

Concerns about drugs and alcohol were the highest response item on a list of twenty variables that have the potential to impact quality of life. Overall, 54% of all respondents indicated that drugs and alcohol impact the quality of their lives in and around the James Street area and the concern about the role of drugs and alcohol was even higher when we

analyzed youth under 25. In this age group, 61% of respondents indicated that drugs and alcohol affect their quality of life.

Drugs and alcohol play a major role in the dynamics of James Street. Concern exists among all community groups and in all neighbourhood locations. This perception was further illuminated in written responses to open-ended questions such as “**What makes places feel unsafe?**” on the Community Health and Safety survey. Comments such as:

*“Big groups of people, drug dealers and annoying drunks.”*  
*“People doing drugs and just hanging around.”*

**“What would make the James Street Area a better community?”**

*“Safety for families not to be around drugs and alcohol problems.”*  
*“Alcohol and drug abuse in Kinsmen Park could be monitored better”*  
*“Less drugs and alcohol, keeping addicts busy doing other activities”*  
*“Put a stop to blatant pot smoking”*

Concern around drugs and alcohol may prevent optimal community participation: Thirty-seven percent of adult respondents of the James Street survey indicated concerns about their safety related to harassment, threats and drug and alcohol related behaviours.

### **2.3. Focus Group Discussions**

Ten focus group discussions were held throughout the James Street community and included over 200 local residents, women, youth, children, disabled individuals, business owners and service providers, in an effort to identify issues that ranged from inadequate lighting, accessibility, and housing, to concerns about drugs, alcohol, crime and fear of violence.

Focus groups enabled us to hear from people who might not feel comfortable filling out a survey and they also helped to provide important context around safety concerns and accessibility within the community. As well, the discussions illuminated some of the unique perspectives among diverse community groups, and identified areas of common ground shared between them.

Focus group discussions were held at:

- Cowichan Valley Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society
- Tsewultun Health Centre—Youth Services
- Finding Alternative Solutions: Mentorship Program for Youth
- Women of the Moose
- Bread Basket Society
- Growing Together Daycare
- Association for Community Living
- Bethel Baptist Youth Group
- Cowichan High School
- Central Vancouver Island Health Region Open Door Program

### 2.3.1. People Living with Developmental Disabilities

Two focus group discussions were held at the Association for Community Living and included, 'Supported Independent Living' program participants and individuals who participate in day programming offered through the association. In all, approximately twenty-five individuals attended these focus group discussions to help explain areas that are cause for concern and those that decrease the likelihood of successful community participation.

#### Harassment

Participants noted that they experience ridicule, teasing and bullying when walking to programs such as Lunch On Clements, when waiting for the bus or travelling to work. First hand reports of being punched, pushed and threatened were among some of the experiences reported by people living with developmental disabilities.

Some of the participants talked about ways that they attempt to avoid harassment in the James Street area. Suggestions included looking behind and watching ahead for danger, ignoring comments and not looking at people, taking longer routes to get to places, crossing the street, and not walking in the area at night.

Participants in these focus group discussions also shared their fears related to large groups of youth in the area. Some of the reports about teasing and ridicule involve students and young people around the high school, pool hall and Kinsmen Park. When discussing Kinsmen Park, participants commented on garbage, broken beer bottles and drinking that occurs there. In addition, one individual commented:

*"I won't go there. I go around the long way. I don't want to take a chance."*

#### Barriers to Access

One man commented that:

*"I had a job but I couldn't work evenings in the winter time because it was too dark."*

Difficulty crossing James Street was commonly reported both because of vehicles ignoring posted speed zones and pedestrian crossing areas, and because of congestion attributed primarily to the high school and community center. When talking about difficulty trying to get across James Street on foot, one woman commented:

*"They should put up bright lights at the crosswalks but they won't do it until someone gets hurt."*

As well, the designated parking in front of the News Leader and James Street Billiards is another traffic concern. One caregiver reported that a client was knocked down in front of the News Leader by a car backing out across the sidewalk onto James Street.

### **Barriers to Food**

Another concern expressed in these discussions was barriers to adequate food and nutrition. Participants in the Supported Independent Living program talked about what it is like to run out of food and not know where to go for help. Several people commented that they feel scared around the food bank because of *“too many people hanging out the doors.”* Still, others said that the food bank was too busy and that it should be open on Sundays.

### **What Would Help?**

People living with developmental disabilities in the James Street area had many constructive suggestions to reduce crime, fear of crime, alienation and exclusion. They suggested more lights and better traffic signs, wider sidewalks by the high school, activities for lower income families, more policing, flowers, benches and garbage cans, and more fun events at Kinsmen Park so that everyone can join in. They also felt that people needed to be educated about pedestrian safety and bullying.

## **2.3.2. People Managing Mental Health Issues**

Approximately fifteen people from the Central Vancouver Island Health Region's Open Door program attended a focus group discussion about health and safety in and around the James Street area. The Open Door Program serves people who are managing mental health issues and has over one hundred members who use its services on a regular basis, as well as several hundred participants who drop-in occasionally. According to program statistics, the Open Door serves more than 630 meals each month to its members.

The participants who attended the focus group discussion were part of a work explorations program, offered by the Open Door, to help people live independently and to pursue meaningful work. In addition to this discussion, other members of the Open Door Program gave interviews to Call to Action staff and/or filled out surveys in order to help identify important issues for people managing mental health issues in the area.

### **Safety Concerns**

Many people using the Open Door Program feel that James Street is an unsafe area. In fact, the Open Door Program and its staff have modified or restricted program activities due to concerns about the area. For example, Open Door staff driving clients home in the James Street area must take them right to their doors because they are scared to be dropped off at a corner. In addition, recreational outings to the pool hall on James Street were discontinued because of security and smoking issues.

*“If people avoid James Street, businesses may fail or not do well.”*  
*“Walking around James Street is scary.”*

### **Barriers to Food**

It was also reported that food bank clients often come to Open Door to try to access food and that there needs to be more than one food bank because it services a very large area.

Still, others felt there should be alternatives to people in need of food such as:

*“. . . more support to Community Kitchens, and churches should get involved—Bethel Baptist is a great example.*

Teenagers are afraid of the same things everyone is afraid of: bullying, alcohol, drugs, someone bigger and stronger. Someone suggested that teenagers hang around in large groups because they are afraid of adults.

*“Teenagers should have access to a drop-in Centre to allow them a voice.”*  
*“Teenagers may look tough but many are friendly and go to church.”*

A parent was afraid to use Kinsmen Park because her child might be harmed and there are people parked in cars boozing.

*“There needs to be better access to drug and alcohol counseling for people in the area.”*

### **2.3.3. Women**

Focus group discussions for women were held at the Intercultural and Immigrant Aid society and Women of the Moose, with approximately fifty women attending. Major concerns for these women included lack of activities for young people, hazardous traffic patterns, and fear of being assaulted in the James Street area. Women talked about their safety concerns in the James Street neighbourhood and that they included: walking alone, especially at night, because of fear of assault.

Women commented that there are not enough programs for teenagers and that:

*“The community needs to develop a place where kids can utilize their talents. In the future, they will be our leaders.”*

Other ideas included partnering youth with seniors in mutually beneficial activities. It was suggested that students could get school credits for participating in programs with seniors designed to break down the barriers that come from not knowing about someone who is different.

**Kinsmen Park**

As well, this group of women identified Kinsmen Park as an area that is unsafe but with many potential benefits to the community. It was suggested that the high school could use the park for class activities and that the community should encourage more events in the park such as lunch hour fun tournaments between local organizations, agencies and residents. Walkways, flowers and benches were also recommended to increase the appeal and appropriate use of Kinsmen Park.

**Traffic**

Traffic concerns along James related to excessive speeds, congestion and pedestrian hazards were noted. A similar pattern is also observed around Kinsmen Park and one person suggested that Queens Street should be blocked off in order to abolish the vehicular thoroughfare down Alderlea.

**Lack of Vitality**

Finally, women commented on the overall feel of the James Street area as being *"kind of dead"* because there is very little upbeat activity in the area. They did mention that *"Coffee on the Moon is a fun place with great atmosphere that really works."* The Community Centre staff was referred to as friendly and helpful, but the building itself was said to be intimidating. Suggestions were made about improving signs so that people can identify the various entrances and know if the Community Centre is open or closed. Also, women liked the social lounge but felt that its location on the second floor reduced its overall positive impact in the James Street area.

**2.3.4. People Using the Food Bank**

The food bank operating under the Basket Society is located on James Street on the south side of James Street on the corner of Garden Street. Serving about eighty meals a day, the Food Bank provides an important service within the community. As well, twice each week, the organization provides food hampers, which people can access with adequate identification once each month.

People using the food bank discussed many issues that are concerns for their health and safety in and around the James Street area. Economic factors, including occupation, education, housing concerns, transportation, food and nutrition, along with issues around drug and alcohol addiction and racism were among the major concerns for people participating in these discussions.

**Food Bank as an Essential Resource**

It was also noted that there appears to be different ways that people use the food bank. There are people who come to the food bank to sit and chat and have a meal, and there are others who use the food bank only to access hampers once each month.

During the morning at the food bank, there were long line-ups of people, some coming from Lake Cowichan or Chemainus, for a food hamper containing enough non-perishable items to last a few days. People who waited for hampers discussed their frustrations with distances traveled, lack of transportation and the process required to obtain a hamper.

Yet, many people face barriers to accessing food through this avenue. For example,

- in order to track and equitably distribute hampers, the food bank requires identification such as a care card to get a hamper.
- Some of the people who were waiting for hampers were parents, some of whom had left their children elsewhere rather than bring them to the food bank. Reasons given for this were related to concerns about some of the people using the food bank being viewed as unsafe or hostile, making threatening or lewd comments.
- One person commented that parents don't like to bring their children into the building—they sometimes see parents lock children in cars outside while they go into the food bank to get a hamper.

As well, many, many people praised the food bank, saying that they could come and sit all day, stay warm in bad weather and get a hot meal. As one person pointed out:

*“They give people food with no hesitation because people need to eat even if they are drunk.”*

#### **What Would Help? More resources needed**

The food bank is extremely busy because it must service a very large area and there is a great deal of need. Moreover, the diversity among people needing the service creates challenges in providing everyone with food. Some people using the food bank said that they would like to have programs available whereby they could participate in preparing the meals and then take them home, rather than relying on staying at the food bank to eat. Programs such as Community Kitchens are already operating in the community to assist people with meal budgeting, planning and preparation.

These, and other creative community solutions, may help to alleviate some of the issues around hunger in the James Street area, while maintaining essential service to people who are not able to participate in other programs for varied reasons including drug and alcohol addictions.

#### **2.3.5. Young People**

An important component of our focus group discussions were that they were youth centered and youth led. Five focus group discussions comprised of local youth addressed issues around safety, accessibility, racism, discrimination, powerlessness and so on. Youth expressed many concerns about living in and using the James Street area and shed light on some important factors that affect their day-to-day lives.

Social and cultural issues that were brought up by youth in focus group discussions were issues around drugs and alcohol, bullying and gossip. Many youth reported experiencing first hand acts of violence such as bullying, fighting and intimidation by large groups of people. In addition, youth were very conscious of drugs and alcohol being part of the culture in and around the James Street area and noted that it is common to see other youth drinking and doing drugs in and around James Street and finding needles in Kinsmen Park.

### **Bullying**

Youth described many different acts of violence that they see in and around the James Street area. Fights, other kids “getting jumped,” parents fighting, are among some of the situations that were highlighted. Young people also emphasized the fact that bullies don’t care who sees the acts of violence or who “gets it.” Youth described violence and fear of violence as factors that made them avoid certain areas:

*“If you don’t know who is there—you go around it.”*

As well, young people talked about how there are increasingly “*more chick fights*” and kids “*ganging up to steal clothing or other things*”

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Youth were very open about discussing their perceptions and experiences with drugs and alcohol in the James Street community. Young people commented many times about the inappropriate use of Kinsmen Park and some reported having found needles in the area. Moreover, youth described feeling unsafe walking through Kinsmen Park and other areas of James Street because of the groups of people who drink and do drugs in public.

### **Racism**

Racism was a concern for many First Nations youth who participated in focus group discussions. Comments about being stereotyped, name-called and excluded were some of the examples that these youth identified as their day-to-day experiences in and around the James Street area. Some youth, in relation to discussing these forms of racism described some of the impact that these acts had on their ability to participate in the community life. For example, First Nations youth commented that:

*“Racism around James Street is mostly for First Nations.”*  
*“Natives are looked down on by other groups of kids.”*  
*“Car loads of people go down the street and yell at us because we’re Natives.”*

### **Gossip**

In addition to racism, other forms of behaviour were implicated in safety concerns. Interestingly, youth described gossip as the most common and

one of the most hurtful and potentially dangerous behaviours that they experience in their day-to-day lives. Gossip was described as:

*“. . .nasty, hurtful comments that are made when people feel peer pressure to open their mouths.”*

Youth talked about how dangerous and hurtful rumors are when they get started and how they can lead to fighting, stereotyping, gang behaviours and other acts of violence as they continue to escalate. Youth described gossip as a cycle that usually begins with a relatively small incident and group of people in the know, and then moves rapidly with increasingly damaging accounts of the alleged event until some form of explosive conclusion is acted out among one or more of the rumor's principles. This climax is usually followed by a truce of some kind and is rapidly replaced by the next cycle.

### **Lack of Resources and Lack of Safe, Affordable Housing**

As well, youth, and especially young parents, talked about their economic difficulties and how these impact their day-to-day life and their ability to fully participate in community life. Affordable housing was a factor that played a significant role in many young parents' lives. The dilemma that young parents describe is that affordable housing is not appropriate for children.

Parents said that most buildings with low rent, house people who use and/or sell drugs, behave violently, such as screaming, yelling, and banging walls or other acts of anti-social behaviour.

One woman described her dilemma in trying to find affordable and appropriate housing. She stated that it was impossible to find anywhere “decent” for she and her child to live, so she finally rented in Lake Cowichan. She attends school in Duncan and her child is in day care, so she must catch the bus from Lake Cowichan to Duncan every weekday to do this. The buses are always crowded and there is no wheelchair or stroller access. Because groceries are so expensive in Lake Cowichan, she economizes by shopping in Duncan and so, is often loaded with school books, her child, a stroller and groceries as she gets on to the bus after a full day of school work and parenting. Other parents similarly mentioned their frustrations around barriers to life maintenance activities.

### **Litter and Graffiti**

Youth also said that the garbage and graffiti stood out for them in the James Street area. Youth depicted the area as:

*“dirty with cigarette butts and lots of litter bugs”*

When asked what to do about it young people's responses ranged from ideas about enforcement, to apathy, to changing attitudes and behaviour:

*“Video tapes to show whose littering and show it at a school assembly.”  
“People don't care.”*

*“Make people realize they have a choice; a chance to contribute.”*

### 2.3.6. Children

Among the focus group discussions with youth, a group of ten through twelve-year olds were consulted about their perceptions of life around James Street. This focus group discussion explored children’s perceptions of Kinsmen Park and the activities that happen there.

When asked **“What don’t you like about Kinsmen Park?”** children’s responses included remarks about not being able to go without supervision because the “people there make it uncomfortable” and it “doesn’t feel safe”. When asked, **What makes Kinsmen Park feel unsafe?** children commented:

*“People who smoke on the side of the road.”*  
*“A drunk man who banged on the car window.”*  
*“Reckless drivers.”      “Students swearing.”*

When asked, **What do you like about Kinsmen Park?** children unanimously responded:

*“The Ship!”*

Children’s ideas for making Kinsmen Park a better place included:

*“Better slides” “More swings” “Curtains in the change room for more privacy”*  
*“Signs saying: Leash dogs and clean-up their mess.” “Pool Toys”*  
*“Bigger and better bathroom stalls.” “Lots of benches” “More trees”*  
*“Tire Swings” “Paint it so it doesn’t look so gross.”*

## 3. SAFETY AUDITS

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### Introduction and Summary

The safety audit for the James Street and surrounding area was conducted in conjunction with the Call to Action Project, whose purpose is to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve safety and overall quality of life of residents in the James Street Neighbourhood.

The overall aim is to present options that will contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder and increase residents’ sense of safety through design, security and management measures that will reduce opportunities for offending and lend to increased levels of control and ownership by residents

The process involved:

- Identification of areas and aspects of places where people feel concerned about their personal safety and accessibility,
- Examination of those areas for obstacles and other factors which detract from safety, access, and
- Development of recommendations for actions that will help to improve safety and accessibility, both for the short and the long term.

Three walkabouts were conducted: the first was a 'walkability audit' facilitated by GMK 2000 transportation planners, in conjunction with the "Art Works for Community" event on March 20, 2001, which focused on accessibility for pedestrians. The second and third walks took place during the afternoon and evening respectively, on April 24th, 2001. The audits involved twenty-two community volunteers, elected officials, planning and recreation staff of the District of North Cowichan.

The audit walks concentrated on James Street and Kinsman Park. A range of broad safety issues were identified, as well as site specific aspects that present obstacles to safety and accessibility. Among the factors that were identified were inappropriate uses of some areas, insufficient lighting in some areas, places that contain litter and/or require maintenance, and design and accessibility of the park. Participants identified a range of needs for supporting safety and access through revitalization, community involvement, and design measures and security.

A number of recommendations have been made for improvements - both for physical environments, for community services and programming, and for community planning policies and guidelines. These are contained in the Strategy Outline in the next section of the report and in Appendix A. As well, please refer to accompanying photos for illustrations of some of the existing challenges and possible implementations.

Traffic Calming



Install a Crossing Light



Parking Considerations



Bicycle Lanes

## 4. Developing a Community Strategy for Health and Safety in the James St. Area

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### 4.1. Strategy Session Workshop

After several months of conducting the community consultation in the James Street area, an all day strategy session was held on May 22, 2001 and attracted over twenty-five representatives from community agencies, organizations and local government. The session was intended to provide a forum to address the priorities identified and to develop strategies to increase safety and well being in the James Street community.

Presentations were given in the morning to provide an overview of the issues identified through the James Street community consultation process. Based upon information provided in the morning presentations, small groups worked collaboratively throughout the afternoon to address the issues and to develop multi-sectoral strategies to enhance the James Street Community.

### 4.2. Components of the Community Strategy

Three broad components have been used as a means to organize the framework of actions recommended at the strategy session and through the community consultation process to achieve the aims of a comprehensive strategy for community health and safety:

**Safety, Security and Access**  
**Community and Social Development**  
**Planning, Design and Management**

Of course, all of these approaches are interrelated and each contributes to the overall community health and safety goals. However, addressing each component individually within the larger framework creates an effective method to achieve short, mid and long-term goals.

#### **Community and Social Development**

Community and social development programs are mid to long-term strategies that promote healthy lifestyles. They focus on building individual and neighbourhood capacity for equitable participation in community life including training, employment and recreational opportunities. As well, community and

social development strategies, work to prevent domestic violence, child and youth victimization and other crime, while supporting people who are affected by it.

**Planning, Design and Management**

Planning, design and management strategies to guide long term development that will incorporate safety, improve accessibility and integration with neighbourhoods and services.

**Safety, Security and Access**

Physical improvements, along with personal and physical security services and programs are important short-term strategies to reduce the vulnerability of individuals, their homes and neighbourhoods. The extensive data obtained through the three audit walks conducted in the Call To Action Project provide a wealth of observations and recommendations to increase personal and physical safety.

**4.3. Strategy Outline****COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY FRAMEWORK**

| <b>1. COMMUNITY / SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT</b>   | <b>Potential Lead Agency</b>        | <b>Potential Partnerships</b>  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>1. Family Supports and Early Childhood Intervention</b>   | <b>Provincial Ministries</b>        |  |
| Increase the availability of affordable, local daycare, particularly for single parents<br>Enhance programs to identify at risk children and to provide support to parents   |                                     | First Call<br>Regional Health<br>Healthiest Babies<br>Growing Together<br>CYC  |
| <b>2. Opportunities and Services for Children and Youth</b>  | <b>Children and Youth Committee</b> |  |
| Youth Centre<br>Youth Outreach Worker<br>Intergenerational Activities<br>Youth-led Community Enhancement Projects<br>Youth Action Team<br>Programs to address young men's lack of safeguarding behaviour and to increase young women's sense of personal safety<br>Programs to address children's safety concerns and teach safeguarding behaviour<br>Role modeling and mentoring programs for elementary and middle school students<br>Leadership opportunities for high school youth |                                     | Community Options<br>Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society<br>Cowichan Spirit of Women<br>School District 79<br>Cowichan Police Advisory<br>RCMP<br>Big Brothers and Big Sisters<br><br>Cowichan Tribes—<br>Youth Services |

| 5. Support Services and Networks   | Health Region |   |
|--|---------------|---|
| <p>Increase capacity and range of local programs to address gaps that have been identified, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• alcohol and drug programs</li> <li>• seniors' health care and outreach</li> <li>• self defense programs for women, children and other vulnerable members of the community</li> </ul> <p>Enhance community information networks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop seniors' network that supports those who restrict activities due to health and safety concerns</li> <li>• coordinate efforts to distribute information about community programs to churches, businesses and community organizations</li> </ul> |               | <p>Connections Drug and Alcohol Program</p> <p>School District 79</p> <p>Community Centre</p> <p>Independent Living Resource Centre</p>   |
| 6. Build Alternatives for Accessing Food   |               |   |
| <p>Mobile food bank to assist seniors and people with disabilities</p> <p>Increase number of Community Kitchens in area</p> <p>Provide additional pick-up points, for hampers, to women families and disabled individuals</p> <p>Connect young people to seniors through meals on wheels program</p> <p>Community Gardens Program</p>  |               | <p>Basket Society</p> <p>Association for Community Living</p> <p>Somenos Transition House</p> <p>Community Kitchens</p> <p>Local Churches</p> <p>Cowichan Spirit of Women</p> <p>Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society</p> <p>Open Door</p> |

| <b>2. PLANNING, DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT</b>  | <b>Potential Lead Agency</b>      | <b>Potential Partnerships</b>  |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>1. James Street Revitalization</b>  | <b>Task Force</b>                 |  |
| Beautification of James Street Area<br>Create a Street Identity<br><br>Promote art and recreation themes and activities<br>Create vibrant community image<br><br>Promote more positive attitudes towards youth through involvement in Street Identity initiatives  |                                   | Cowichan Valley Arts Council<br><br>Cowichan Community Centre<br><br>Cowichan Secondary High School<br><br>Residents |
| <b>2. Local Park Stewardship</b>   | <b>District of North Cowichan</b> |  |
| Facilitate community-based activities and social events in Kinsmen Park<br><br>Provide support and assistance to community groups to hold events and make park improvements<br><br>Work with youth to encourage stewardship<br><br>Connect youth with seniors and disabled individuals through park enhancement projects |                                   | Residents<br><br>Cowichan Secondary<br><br>RCMP<br><br>Intercultural and Immigrant Aid Society                       |
| <b>3. Traffic Study</b>  | <b>Traffic Safety Committee</b>   |  |
| Traffic calming<br>Link transit plan to traffic plan<br>Improved accessibility<br>Increase pedestrian safety<br><br>Crosswalks<br>Designated parking   |                                   | Traffic Engineer<br><br>District of North Cowichan<br><br>ICBC   |
| <b>4. Housing and Shelter</b>  | <b>District of North Cowichan</b> |  |
| Provision of affordable and special needs housing such as second stage housing for women, supported independent living units for people with disabilities, subsidized housing for young families, and seniors housing<br><br>Designation of land uses and densities to support availability of land                      |                                   | Health Region<br><br>BC Housing<br>Cowichan Women Against Violence Society<br><br>Private Developers                 |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   |  |  |
| <p><b>5. Official Community Plan</b></p>  | <p><b>District of North Cowichan</b></p> |  |
| <p><b>Community Planning Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Develop and implement land use planning policies and development guidelines that will serve to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage revitalization and redevelopment that will enhance the local area.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage redevelopment by bringing in incentives for desired types of development (for example, reduce or remove Development Cost Charges).</li> <li>• Promote a healthy mix of commercial, residential and recreational development.</li> <li>• Encourage innovative commercial ventures such as coffee shops and markets, which would also serve to increase the flow of people to the area.</li> <li>• Highlight and enhance pedestrian access.</li> <li>• Encourage adequate levels of lighting as well as creative lighting.                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ (For example, mini lights were suggested for trees along James Street, to increase the level of lighting as well as work to beautify the area.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Respect and preserve residential properties.</li> <li>3. Respect and consider residential facilities and users (i.e., Open Door Program).</li> <li>4. Promote and encourage affordable housing throughout the district to provide more and better options for families living in low-income situations.</li> <li>5. Ensure Plan Policies incorporate provisions to encourage supportive management structures to support tenant involvement.</li> <li>6. Ensure Plan policies provide for adequate provision of facilities and recreational services to support accessibility and affordability.</li> <li>7. Adopt community planning policies and develop municipal guidelines which support crime prevention in future development. Elements:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage layout and design of streets, buildings and open spaces to influence reduction of opportunities for crimes to occur (adequate lighting, elimination of hiding and entrapment areas and movement predictors, reduce isolation and increase awareness of surroundings.</li> <li>• Integrate security measures to reinforce both formal and informal surveillance, as well as access control of routes and entrances to increase security.</li> <li>• Implement a program of education, training and information for planners and developers on planning and design for safety.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> |  |  |

| <b>3. SAFETY, SECURITY AND ACCESS</b>                                      | <b>Potential Lead Agency</b>      | <b>Potential Partnerships</b>       |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Physical Improvements/Repairs</b>                                    | <b>District of North Cowichan</b> |                                     |
| Sidewalks, crossings, curb cuts, signage, lighting<br>Park facilities etc. |                                   | Business<br>Task force              |
| <b>2. Post project Safety Analysis</b>                                     | <b>RCMP</b>                       |                                     |
| CPTED review and safety audit  |                                   | Safer Futures<br>Residents          |
| <b>3. Improved Safety Communications</b>                                   | <b>Pioneer Park Committee</b>     |                                     |
| Public telephones and signage  |                                   | Telus<br>District of North Cowichan |

| RECOMMENDATION - BY AREA   | RESPONSIBILITY / AREAS OF INTEREST & COLLABORATION        |
|--|---|
| <b>A. KINSMEN PARK</b>   |   |
| <b>1. Increase security – deter inappropriate uses</b>   | CDNC / PPC  |
| i. Install a public telephone in or as near to the park as possible to provide for an emergency outlet, but also to provide for access.  | CDNC / PPC / Telus  |
| ii. Design and install appropriate signage to provide information containing location and numbers for emergency assistance.  | CDNC / PPC  |
| iii. Increase lighting levels to enhance nighttime visibility.   | CDNC / PPC  |
| a. Install streetlights on the two poles that border the park on Alderlea.   | CDNC / PPC  |
| b. Consider installing additional mercury vapour lighting at the entrance near Ypres.  | CDNC / PPC  |
| iv. Limit access points to and from the park.  |   |
| a. Create a physical barrier between the high school and the park.   | CDNC / SD79 / RCMP  |
| • Establish a firm, low, stub wall of stone or concrete, with a see-through upper level to a height of two metres.   |   |
| • Use plantings (e.g., ivy) for covering to enhance aesthetics.  |   |
| • Gate(s) should be located at natural points of access.   |   |
| • The type of gates used should not eliminate access for scooters, wheelchairs or strollers.   |   |
| b. Install a barrier at the park entrance off Ypres Street.  | CDNC / PPC  |
| • As for a) above.   |   |
| v. Enhance presence of authority in the park. Explore options:   | CDNC / RCMP / SD 79 /                                     |
| a. Police presence   | Residents   |
| b. Private security  | Businesses  |
| c. Recreation and maintenance staff of the District of North Cowichan  |   |
| Options would need to be further explored for cost, feasibility and potential negative impacts.  |   |
| Refer to sections 2 & 3 for community and social development measures.   |   |
| <b>2. Enhance accessibility, promote diversity, multi-use, and revitalize</b>  |   |
| i. Undertake renovations, maintenance and repairs to enhance accessibility and aesthetic appeal.   | CDNC / PPC  |
| • Explore avenues to continue and enhance clean-up efforts to ensure the park is clean and free of garbage.  | CDNC / PPC<br>SD 79 /<br>Open Door Program                |
| • Install designated handicap parking near the front entrance.   | CDNC  |
| ii. Over the mid to long term, re-develop the park to accommodate multi-uses and be more appropriate for the local area and contribute to a stronger neighbourhood.            | CDNC / PPC /<br>Community organizations<br>Service groups |
| Park Design Recommendations:   |   |
| • Update play equipment and redesign layout so that play areas are congregated into smaller, designated areas to delineate and separate uses and allow for proper supervision. |   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate an area for teens and design a space with equipment that will invite them and gather them into one particular area.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make facilities and grounds wheelchair accessible through installing wheelchair ramps at all entrances, developing a boardwalk system within the park, and revamping washrooms.</li> </ul> |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update benches and install at least 2 to 3 picnic tables to encourage more use.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a walking/jogging ‘fitness trail’ track around the perimeter of the park.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop activities such as lawn bowling or shuffleboard.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the park as a green space and community resource through planing more trees and developing a common garden scheme.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the height of the fence at Alderlea and use more aesthetically pleasing materials.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over the long term, undertake a major project such as a waterpark to replace the wading pool.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <p>iii. Transit plays a role in making an area accessible. A transit stop close to the park with posted schedules, would greatly enhance the accessibility of the park to those without a vehicle.</p>                              | CVRD Transit   |
| <p><b>3. Promote Activities, Events, Stewardship</b></p>  |  |
| <p>i. Continue and enhance efforts to facilitate community-based activities in the park, social events, public activities.</p>  | CCC<br>Community organizations<br>CDNC<br>SD 79 / CSS        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide support and assistance (both monetary and in-kind) to local community groups to hold events and make improvements to the park.</li> </ul>  | CDNC / CVRD<br>PPC   |
| <p>ii. Promote more positive attitudes toward youth.</p>  | Local media /<br>Community organizations                     |
| <p>iii. Work with youth to encourage respectful use and stewardship of the park; connect youth and seniors, school and community.</p>   | Community organizations<br>SD79                              |
| <p><b>4. Develop youth programming and outreach, and alternative places for youth to gather safely.</b></p>   | Community organizations<br>SD 79<br>CCC<br>CSS<br>Businesses |

| <b>B. ALDERLEA STREET</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Slow traffic down, make the area more pedestrian friendly</b>   |  |
| i. Enforce the 30 km/hour speed limit in front of the park.   | RCMP / Speedwatch                          |
| ii. Design and install traffic calming measures. For example, a narrowing of the street at intervals would give the street less of a thoroughfare feeling.  | CDNC<br>ICBC                               |
| iii. Improve sidewalks to enhance accessibility.  | CDNC                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widen sidewalks to reduce obstacles posed by telephone poles.</li> </ul>   | CDNC                                       |
| <b>2. Improve lighting and visibility</b>   |  |
| i. Install a light on the hydro pole adjacent to the church.  | CDNC                                       |
| ii. Consult with apartment residents to determine other needs for lighting.   | CDNC / Safer Futures                       |
| <b>3. Enhance physical security of residences</b>   |  |
| i. Offer free security checks of homes to recommend physical security measures.   | RCMP                                       |
| ii. Explore with residents, options for grants and other assistance for making desired improvements .   | Safer Futures                              |
| <b>4. Foster community</b>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After the success of the event held in the park “Art Works for Community” it was felt that more neighbourhood events would enhance the residents’ sense of community. Taking part in neighbourhood events creates a sense of ownership for the area.</li> <li>It was noted that many youth “hang out” around the Church and suggested that working with the Church to provide activities for youth could be a way to connect the Church and the youth in the area. This could give youth something to do, plus give them a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.</li> </ul> | Community organizations<br>Lutheran Church |

| <b>C. JAMES STREET</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1. Clean up and Revitalize James Street</b>   | CDNC<br>Local businesses<br>Community groups |
| i. Increase efforts for clean up of garbage and litter on James Street.  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore creative solutions such as having a community clean-up day, painting garbage cans and placing them all along James, etc.</li> </ul>   |  |
| ii. Undertake a community initiative to revitalize and enhance James Street. Ideas for enhancement included:   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Street pole banners hung along James Street could serve a dual purpose of informing people about upcoming events as well as add to the general appearance of James Street.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planters in front of businesses would beautify the area.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decorative lighting in trees to add to lighting levels and aesthetics.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <b>2. Slow and/or Reduce Vehicle Traffic</b>   | CDNC<br>ICBC<br>RCMP<br>SD 79                |
| i. Enhance enforcement and encourage traffic speed limits already in place.  |  |
| ii. Replace existing speed zone signs with larger sized, neon coloured signs, and adjust locations to increase their visibility.   |  |
| iii. Install a crossing light for the school crosswalk.  |  |
| iv. Create a more effective lane for busses to enter the parking area for drop off and pick up.  |  |
| v. Give priority attention to the development of planning and design measures and policies aimed at reducing both traffic and speed of traffic along James Street.   |  |
| It may be advisable to engage a professional traffic study to provide technical expertise and recommendations for traffic calming measures, placement of pedestrian lights, measures to alleviate problems caused by parking lots adjacent to sidewalks and redesign of sidewalks and curb cuts to promote better pedestrian access to encourage more walking, less driving. |  |
| <b>3. Enhance Accessibility for Pedestrians</b>  |  |
| i. Clearly mark bus stops along James Street through larger and more visible signage.  | CVRD Transit                                 |
| ii. Install benches at bus stops to allow people to sit while they wait. This would also serve to clearly mark the stop.   | CDNC / CVRD                                  |
| iii. Post bus schedules at the bus stops to give people the option of waiting or going somewhere where they feel safer while waiting for the bus.  | CVRD Transit                                 |
| iv. Improve access across the Trans Canada Highway to James Street through improving the 'island' on the York Road side.   | CDNC /MoTH                                   |
| v. Construct a sidewalk from Canada Avenue over the train tracks   | CDNC   |
| vi. Repair curb cuts that do not provide optimal access.   | CDNC   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>James and Duncan Street (on the corner adjacent to Chevron).</li> </ul>   |  |

|   |  |                       |
|---|--|-----------------------|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elvin Street (existing curb cut is encroached upon by roadway.)</li> </ul>  |                       |
| vii.                                      | Encourage all building owners to ensure they have wheelchair access at the front of buildings.   | Safer Futures         |
| viii.                                     | Trim hedges that encroach onto sidewalks impede access (near Vaars Gym) and in front of the CCC.   | CDNC                  |
| ix.                                       | Install a crosswalk over James from Clements.  | CDNC                  |
| x.  | Explore and implement measures to address problems created by parking lots adjacent to sidewalks, which presents hazards for pedestrians.  | CDNC<br>Businesses    |
| xi.                                       | Install signage to indicate 'no exit' on Elvins.   | CDNC                  |
| <b>4. Improve Lighting and Visibility</b> |  |                       |
| i.  | Increase overall levels of lighting and enhance the design of lighting to better serve pedestrians along James Street. Areas of concern include:   |                       |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chevron grounds</li> </ul>  | owner                 |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duncan Auto Parts lot</li> </ul>  | Owner                 |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrance to alleyway beside Newsleader</li> </ul>   |                       |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsleader shed (was open at night)</li> </ul>  | Owner                 |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaars Gym building and adjacent alleyway</li> </ul>   | Owner                 |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alley next to the bowling alley</li> </ul>  | Owner                 |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cowichan Community Centre (east corner of the building; far corner of parking lot next to tennis courts)</li> </ul>                             | CCC                   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cowichan Senior Secondary side parking lot (Elvins)</li> </ul>  | CDNC / SD 79          |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alleyway next to tennis courts</li> </ul>   | CCC                   |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crosswalk in front of CCC</li> </ul>  | CDNC                  |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit stops</li> </ul>  | CVRD                  |
| ii.                                       | Encourage businesses to leave a light on in their business or in front of their shops to increase the level of lighting along the street. Building lighting should be white, not yellow. | Safer Futures<br>CDNC |

#### **D. COWICHAN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

|  |   |             |
|--|---|-------------|
| <b>1. Improve the physical appearance of the school and grounds.</b>   |   | CSS / SD79  |
| i.   | Continue and enhance efforts to clean up garbage and litter around the school.                              |             |
| ii.  | Improve the appearance of the school through painting the exterior.   |             |
| iii.   | Continue and enhance efforts to engage students to develop projects to beautify the school and grounds.     |             |
| <b>2. Address physical security and design elements to reduce opportunities for crime and violence to occur.</b> |   | CSS / SD 79 |
| i.   | Increase building lighting on both sides of the school (track side and lot side).                           |             |
| ii.  | Consider trimming vegetation that blocks sightlines to increase visibility from the street to the building. |             |

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <p>iii. Facilitate the reduction of ‘cross traffic’ from Alderlea to the school through eliminating the student parking lot off Elvin Street (near park) and replacing it with parking area in front of the school.</p> |                                |
| <p>iv. Consider obtaining a detailed safety audit of the building and grounds that includes input from staff and students.</p>  |                                |
| <p><b>3. Continue and enhance efforts where possible to engage, support and promote strong community partnerships for social development.</b></p>   | <p>CSS<br/>SD 79</p>           |
| <p>i. Open the school in the off hours to facilitate youth activities.</p>  | <p>Community organizations</p> |
| <p>ii. Continue and enhance support and facilitate school and community-based initiatives that foster prevention of violence, particularly gender-based and racial violence and discrimination.</p>                     | <p>Public Health</p>           |
| <p>iii. Continue and enhance efforts to develop and implement alcohol and drug prevention programming.</p>  |                                |
| <p>iv. Continue and enhance support and participation in local events aimed at promoting community development and civic-oriented activities.</p>   |                                |
| <p>v. Engage all students, particularly those who are marginalized, in an active and ongoing dialogue to understand and ultimately address their safety concerns at school and in the community.</p>                    |                                |

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|---|--------------------------------|
| <p><b>E. COWICHAN COMMUNITY CENTRE</b></p>  |                                |
| <p><b>1. Improve physical design, security and access:</b></p>  |                                |
| <p>i. Trim hedges to reduce entrapment areas and increase visibility.</p>                                     | <p>CCC<br/>CDNC<br/>PPC</p>    |
| <p>ii. Have an open / closed sign clearly visible to the street, as well as an ‘hours of operation’ sign.</p> | <p>Community organizations</p> |
| <p>iii. Add a ‘Public Telephone’ sign to inform people of this service available inside community centre.</p> |                                |
| <p>iv. Paint stair nosing strips on concrete stairs, outside of pool entrance</p>                             |                                |
| <p>v. Install sensor lights outside this entrance.</p>  |                                |
| <p>vi. Add a handicap parking space in the parking lot nearer the pool entrance.</p>                          |                                |
| <p>vii. reduce height of hedge</p>  |                                |
| <p>viii. move bike rack outside entrance to pool to street level</p>  |                                |
| <p>ix. increase lighting in front, along James street</p>   |                                |
| <p>x. increase signage re: emergency services available</p>   |                                |
| <p>xi. create safer place for busses to offload students</p>  |                                |
| <p>xii. install picnic tables in green space, parking area</p>  |                                |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>2. Enhance the role of the CCC as a local center of community.</b><br>Examples include: |  |
| i. Explore avenues for supporting a local Neighbourhood house                              |  |
| ii. Increase funding for no/low cost recreation programming                                |  |
| iii. Explore avenues for housing a youth outreach program                                  |  |

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| <b>F. CLEMENTS AND VIAN STREETS</b>   |       |
| i. Add streetlights on the three existing poles along Clements.                             | CDNC  |
| ii. Increase building lighting to illuminate the lot and alleyway behind the bowling alley. | Owner |

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

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The purpose of an action plan is to bring priorities and goals to reality through a process of planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation. The key elements needed to support such a process are political commitment, local involvement and neighbourhood management, cooperation and communication among all of the sectors, and monitoring and evaluation.

While local government should play a lead role, the process - and structure around the process - should be based on a community partnership. Such a process requires coordination and assistance to undertake research, identify and recruit resources, promote and support committee development and operation.

### **5.1. Implementation Structure**

It is recommended that a Community Health and Safety Task Force be set up and be comprised of representatives from each of the lead agencies identified in the strategy document, to monitor and evaluate the progress of action groups working in each of the three priority areas.

Ideally, three Action Groups should be set up to correspond with the three strategy components – Community / Social Development; Community Planning and Management; and Safety and Security.

Each group would meet monthly to work towards their goals. The Community Health and Safety Task Force would meet quarterly to obtain progress reports from monthly meetings with respective action groups. For example, Safer Futures and Call To Action will attend monthly Personal and Property Security meetings about the beautification of James Street Area with the other partners identified beginning in September of 2001. In November, they will provide progress reports to the Community Health and Safety Task Force for feedback and direction.

An action plan includes steps and actions to support short, medium and long term goals and aims, some of which are inter-related and must be built upon a series of smaller, achievable objectives.

The process itself must be guided by objectives with measurable outcomes, but at the same time, be flexible to allow for learning and adaptation to changing circumstances. As well, additional sources of funding will need to be sought out as projects are defined. Currently, there are a range of possible funding sources, from federal to provincial agencies that provide funding on a project basis. Financial and in-kind support from the District will be a critical component of the strategy to foster committee operations.

**5.2. Implementation Phases**

Implementation of recommendations involves three overlapping phases:

1. Review and assessment of recommendations:  
 Feasibility of recommendations should be examined in light of costs, budgets, timing, availability of staff, as well as assessment of possible negative outcomes that may not have been considered.
  
2. Planning and programming of works:  
 Planning and programming of works should then be done to determine short, medium and long term actions, responsibilities and areas of collaboration and partnerships.

Objectives and actions must be framed and achieved by the community itself. Therefore, the cornerstone of the strategy is the establishment of a structure and process to support and assist in achieving goals for community safety, and to build community involvement and participation to increase the ability of community members to be a part of the process of change.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation:  
 An evaluation plan should be developed at the onset of the next phase, and should be used to monitor and assess progress.

**5.3. Implementation Process**

| <b>IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS</b>   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| <b>1. Committee Development</b>   | <b>Time Frame</b> |
| Establish a Steering Committee / Task Force of residents, community organizations, authorities, planners and elected officials with the role of overseeing planning, implementation and evaluation of the strategy throughout the next two to five years. | Sept – Nov 2001   |
| Form working groups for each of the priority areas to develop specific action and implementation plans, identify and recruit resources. Each working group should meet regularly and report on a quarterly basis the steering committee on progress.      |                   |

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>2. Information Needs</b>   |                    |
| Conduct research to obtain information.   | Sept – Dec<br>2001 |
| <b>3. Community Involvement</b>   |                    |
| Conduct neighbourhood meetings to bring together residents, parent groups, police, schools, social services and businesses to provide input on local issues and priorities.                   | Jan – Mar<br>2002  |
| <b>4. Program Development</b>   |                    |
| Establish and adopt short, medium and long term goals and benchmarks for program development and implementation. Identify existing resources, as well as resources needed for implementation. | Jan – Mar<br>2002  |
| <b>5. Implementation and Evaluation</b>   |                    |
| Quarterly meetings will provide ongoing opportunities for monitoring and evaluating progress.<br>A comprehensive progress report should be prepared at the end of each year.                  | <i>ongoing</i>     |

## 6. APPENDIX A: The Safety Audit

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### Safety Audit Procedures

Procedures were based on standard safety audit processes developed by METRAC (METRAC, 1993):

- i. The process involved a discussion of issues and objectives, and a walk-about to examine the area for factors that detract from safety. The process is designed to be as informal as possible, to encourage comfort of all participants, and to allow for various means of expression and discussion.
- ii. A checklist of questions (Appendix D) provided a reference for examining aspects with respect to personal safety and the physical/social environment. The basic questions addressed in an audit are, *“What about this place makes me feel unsafe and what would help to address those concerns?”*
- iii. A follow-up discussion period provided further opportunities for comments.
- iv. Observations and suggestions for solutions were recorded by staff throughout the process.

The audits provided in depth consideration of design and management factors from the perspective of the participants. This report also offers suggestions based on research and experience of the author.

The overall aim has been to address questions that have been raised in the consultation process ( i.e., how can we deter inappropriate uses and crime in the park so that residents will feel safe enough to use it, and so that they have legitimate opportunities to use it). The recommendations will present options that will contribute to the reduction of crime and disorder and increase residents’ sense of safety through design, security and management measures that will reduce opportunities for offending and lend to increased levels of control and ownership by residents.

*Primary options that are explored are:*

#### a) Passive physical security and design measures

The aim of passive security and design improvements is to increase security and access control and reduce opportunities for potential offenders through changes to the physical environment. (Crouch, Shaftoe and Fleming, 1999) Examples include:

- enhancing territoriality,
- improving security of vulnerable dwellings or public buildings,
- increasing opportunities for casual surveillance,
- enhancing accessibility to encourage a variety of users to increase legitimate uses and thus, social controls.

### b) Management and Security Measures

The aim of security and management measures is to provide supervision, presence of authority and personal assistance, provided by professional and semi-professional staff persons (such as police, recreation managers, apartment managers, or even key community members) that, when properly designed, can help to deter anti-social behaviour, provide assistance to care for the physical environment, promote safety and contribute to community development, including neighbourhood strategies that will augment control and ownership of the neighbourhood.

### **Considerations**

This safety audit has been approached from the perspective of the overall neighbourhood, and as such, provides a macro view of safety issues and solutions. It has not, for example, involved detailed assessment of buildings for security issues that might be present.

It should be stressed that there are both physical and non-physical factors involved in personal and public safety. Thus the search for solutions must incorporate a range of factors. Community surveys have provided information about a range of solutions, which are required to enhance safety and security, including changes to the physical environment, but also education, information and other cooperative community strategies.

### **Limitations**

There are numerous perspectives from which to assess an area for personal safety, and in general, the more diverse perspectives included, the better. The audit groups were representative of a wide range of users and age groups, and therefore perspectives. Based on knowledge and research of people's experiences and perceptions of places, the current representation provides a fairly comprehensive picture. However, it should be noted that this audit did not directly address questions from the perspective of cultural and language differences.

It is important to understand that physical design and security measures on their own are not comprehensive solutions, and must be approached within the context of an overall plan that includes community and social development measures. The Call to Action Project has also developed and presented recommendations for community and social development that will be integral to the overall strategy.

### **Priority Issues and Areas Identified**

#### **a) Criminal Activities, Violence, Conflicting and Inappropriate Uses of Places**

The majority of people feel unsafe and/or avoid certain places in the community due to the activities and behaviours of others that are considered illegal or intimidating. Many people have experienced violence and/or been the victim of harassment. Conflicts between user groups, inappropriate uses of places and criminal activities, in particular public areas, include:

- people hanging out in parks, including Kinsmen Park, Pioneer Park, in alleyways, around the pool hall and high school
- alcohol, drug use, and trafficking in parks and alleyways is common

- sexual harassment, racial harassment, intimidation
- violence (fighting)
- noise, disorder

Building and home security was also an issue for some people.

#### **b) Barriers to Accessibility**

Accessibility is an important component of community safety for people with disabilities, and in general, for people to be able to access areas and buildings without risk or fear. Physical obstacles to access, as well as locational obstacles (for example, services that are spread out over distances) create barriers to people who must walk wherever they go, and increase difficulties in accessing both essential services and opportunities for healthy lifestyles.

- Obstacles posed by sidewalks, crossings, uneven pavement on streets and buildings that are either in need of maintenance or have not been designed inadequately for accessibility, were common issues expressed in the audits.

#### **c) Vehicle / Pedestrian Conflicts / Traffic Volumes / Congestion**

James Street is a high activity area (both pedestrian and vehicle) both in the day and often in the evenings. Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians are common. Issues include:

- high vehicle traffic sometimes results in congestion, for example, vehicles turning left into the highschool lot, delivery trucks which sometimes block the path of pedestrians walking along sidewalks
- high levels of pedestrian traffic which sometimes conflict with vehicle traffic (e.g., the high number of students walking through the area)
- the layout and design of commercial buildings and parking lots (i.e., parking in front of buildings) often results in high levels of in and out vehicle traffic over sidewalks which presents hazards for pedestrians
- the Trans Canada/York crossing area was also noted to be an obstacle to access to James Street, particularly for the many people who travel on foot and people with disabilities who need to use this route for access to downtown
- the Canada Avenue/James Street crossing over the train tracks
- speeding is also common along James Street, Alderlea and Garden.

#### **d) Isolation, Hiding and Entrapment Spots**

Places that are isolated, or contain hiding and entrapment areas, are often perceived as unsafe because they present opportunities for violence to occur.

- Parts of the area are isolated at certain times of the day, resulting in no one around to access help should people feel they need it.
- There are several places that present hiding and entrapment areas; these include alleyways, bushes, parked cars, parking lots, building alcoves and recessed entrances, as well as hedges that border sidewalks.

**e) Lack of sufficient lighting in places**

Lighting at night is essential for people to see and to be seen. While there are no standard levels of illumination that can be drawn upon to indicate ideal situations, there is substantial research that indicates the value of lighting, particularly in urban areas, in influencing criminal activity and feelings of safety. Women have expressed concerns about their personal safety using the area at night, whether walking down the street or parking in lots that are dark. One senior resident said she does not venture out at night at all out of concern for her personal safety. Places noted for lack of sufficient lighting included:

- The south side along the whole length of James Street
- Garden and Alderlea only have two and three streetlights respectively
- On James from the Community Centre to the gas station

**f) Aesthetics, Maintenance, Litter and Graffiti**

The maintenance and aesthetic features of a space affect sense of comfort, and give strong messages to people as to the level of safety they can expect. Further, it stands to reason that a person that feels safe will be inclined to stay longer and indeed return to that space. In contrast, garbage and casual litter, peeling paint and graffiti, and unkempt properties give a message that no one cares and that a place is subject to inappropriate uses.

- Places that were noted as being quite well cared for included the Sea Breeze Laundry, Low's Garden Restaurant, and Pims Photography on James Street.
- Litter is very noticeable along streets, particularly near and around the highschool and in park areas.
- Graffiti, as well as vandalism is an ongoing problem particularly in Kinsman Park.
- Alleyways next to the News Leader building, Vaars Gym and the tennis court were noted as 'very scary'.
- During the consultations and audit walkabouts, an array of things were observed, including needles, liquor bottles, vomit and dog fasses.

**Observations and Recommendations**

This section covers observations, discussions and suggestions made during the audit walkabouts, as well as from discussions with individual owners and staff. It also considers comments and suggestions from discussion groups and surveys, and information collected over time through contacts with service providers and community organizations in the Cowichan Valley.

**a) Kinsmen Park**

Kinsmen Park on Alderlea Street is a 1.84 acre neighbourhood park that has been an important resource and recreation area for the community for many years. The park is located adjacent to the high school; it is also bordered by apartment buildings and single family residences. Facilities include a wading pool, washrooms and change-rooms, two benches, and play equipment, including swings and an adventure playground. Kinsmen Park is owned and managed by the District of North Cowichan.

Cowichan Community Centre provides summer programs and supervision in the park

during summer months. During this time, the park is used quite intensively, particularly as the use of the wading pool is free, and the need for no/low cost recreational opportunities in the general community is high.

The park has a history of complaints and there have been many comments about people feeling intimidated and reluctant to use it, particularly women, seniors and children. Kinsmen is a popular gathering spot for young people during the day, as well as during the evening from spring to fall when the weather is mild. Conflicts with regard to inappropriate uses (blatant drug use in the park, vandalism, etc.) and intimidation have been noted as common.

A great deal of discussion has been offered with regard to overall attitudes toward youth. It has been argued that for the most part, youth using the park are not behaving criminally and do not intentionally intimidate others. However, safety of children and youth is a separate and important consideration. Concern for the safety of children and youth has been expressed by people working in the area. Staff have observed groups of youth and children who appeared as young as twelve years old in the park late at night.

Consultation has revealed that for some children and youth, the park is a 'safe haven' and an important place to be. Thus, the issues need to be viewed in light of and with great consideration to the needs of children and youth for a safe place and for their overall health and well-being.

### Comments and Observations

*'Families come to the park but don't stay.'*  
*'There are not enough trees.'*  
*'A major problem is with teens smoking here.'*  
*'All it's missing is coiled barbed wire at the top.'*

- The park was felt to be an important asset to the neighbourhood and general community, with great potential for accommodating a variety of needs, and worthy of investing in. However, overall, the park has a feeling of being unkempt and outdated in terms of equipment and facilities. Words like *dull, unsafe, hangout, uninviting, fortress, cold*, were used to describe it. There is only one large tree located in the southwest corner, and this was noted to be extremely welcome.
- The chain link fence around the park and wading pool feel unfriendly, institutional, and a bit 'prison-like', as if 'this is a place that expects and even invites trouble.'
- Overall, the park lacks accessibility for people with disabilities. Entrances and facilities are not built for scooters, wheelchairs or anyone with mobility issues.
- There are no formal emergency outlets (i.e., public telephones or nearby designated authorities) for people who might need assistance due to personal or safety reasons.
- Clean up efforts cannot keep up with the garbage.

- The park does not provide for or encourage multi-use, which is an essential component of safety. There are no specific amenities that invite seniors for example, although there are many seniors who live in the area who could potentially be caretakers of the park if given opportunity and avenues to be a part of it.
- Playground equipment is outdated, and in some cases unsafe. Also, the design and layout are inappropriate for supervising children. Equipment is too spread out. The adventure playground is located near the entrance to Ypres Street, and is more often used by teens than tots.
- Lighting was considered to be key in terms of providing nighttime visibility for neighbours, enhancing safety for those who use the park after dark, and for deterring people from hanging out. An evening site visit was later conducted.

There are two lights that illuminate the park, one near the adventure playground and one adjacent to the apartment building. Two primary areas where the park is very dark are the adventure playground near the Ypres entrance, and the front entrance to the park, especially the corner containing the maple tree. On the evening the site visit was done, there was a group of six youth at 11:30 pm in the shadows near the adventure playground.

At the same time, participants felt that the park was an essential amenity and that it has a lot of potential to serve the community better. Participants felt that Kinsmen Park warrants an investment of resources and ongoing care. They noted the recent hanging of artwork and commented that this was a positive addition.

### **Suggestions for Improvements**

Over the short term, it was recognized that security needs to be enhanced and inappropriate uses discouraged. However, audit participants pointed out that physical security measures such as fencing (particularly chain-link fencing) actually detract from the quality of the park. It is stressed therefore, that solutions will require a variety of coordinated actions, and that they need to be combined with objectives and actions to enhance the park, make it more useable for everyone, and in consideration of providing alternatives for youth.

#### **1. Increase security – deter inappropriate uses**

- i. Install a public telephone in or as near to the park as possible to provide for an emergency outlet, but also to provide for access.
- ii. Design and install appropriate signage to provide information containing location and numbers for emergency assistance.
- iii. Increase lighting levels to enhance nighttime visibility.
  - Install streetlights on the two poles that border the park on Alderlea.
  - Consider installing additional mercury vapour lighting at the entrance near Ypres.
- iv. Limit access points to and from the park.
  - a) Create a physical barrier between the high school and the park.

RCMP and Cowichan Senior Secondary have discussed plans that include fencing of the boundary between the park and school to limit access during the daytime. The goal is to discourage through-traffic from Alderlea to the high school by youth and hopefully to reduce opportunities for drug trafficking.

The design, detailing and construction of fences that close off natural routes must be carefully considered! In the past, chain-link fences between the high school and park have quickly been vandalized. Re-fencing this boundary may still result in vandalism and at the very least, will require stronger materials.

Design considerations:

It was suggested that this objective be pursued with due consideration for aesthetics in order to avoid the problem of 'fortressing.' Further, it should not create a safety issue for others (for example, people with disabilities) through eliminating a possible access route.

- Establish a firm, low, stub wall of stone or concrete, with a see-through upper level to a height of two metres.
- Use plantings (e.g., ivy) for covering to enhance aesthetics.
- Gate(s) should be located at natural points of access.
- The type of gates used should not eliminate access for scooters, wheelchairs or strollers.

b) Install a barrier at the park entrance off Ypres Street.

- As for a) above.

v. Enhance presence of authority in the park.

a) Policing: At various intervals, Duncan/North Cowichan RCMP have increased their monitoring and enforcement activities in the park, and Cowichan Senior Secondary has taken a low to no tolerance stance on students involvement with drugs. The practice has been to suspend students who are caught with drugs or alcohol. Given the decline in calls for service to RCMP over time, this may have had a positive impact in deterring inappropriate activities in the park.

However, the feasibility and effectiveness of further increased police presence in the park is questionable for a variety of reasons:

- ⇒ Police have many competing demands for their time.
- ⇒ Increased police presence has the possible result of creating a feeling of 'trouble can be expected here,' and is only effective as long as the presence of authority continues.
- ⇒ Without other measures, crime and disorder just resume as soon as authority disappears.
- ⇒ Enforcement alone does not address the root issues of crime, and can result in just 'shifting the problem' to other, more vulnerable areas.
- ⇒ Enforcement is made difficult due to the current layout and design of the park which provides easy access/escape for offenders.

b) Private security: Patrolling and monitoring by private security personnel are used by the Cowichan Community Centre nearby.

c) Recreation and maintenance staff of the District of North Cowichan might also be used to monitor the park during 'key' times.

Options b) and c) would need to be further explored for cost, feasibility and potential negative impacts.

Often, suggestions for increased police enforcement are related to goals for increased ownership and control that arise out of feelings of powerlessness by residents who do not have the resources and energy to 'take charge'. The desire for increased police presence and authority might better be approached through enhancement of other kinds of social controls (e.g., neighbourhood activities and events), along with youth mentorship and outreach programs, alternative places for youth, and through empowering the local community to use the park. The following sections address ways in which this might be achieved.

## **2. Enhance Accessibility, promote diversity, multi-use, and revitalize**

The consultation process has stressed the need to enhance the ability of citizens to use the park. The reasons behind this are twofold:

The James Street neighbourhood is made up of a very diverse population who need and deserve access to recreational opportunities at low or no cost, however, the current design and facilities in the park do not accommodate needs for example of seniors or youth at all, and the current design does not work well for families with children for whom it was intended to serve originally.

In encouraging and accommodating diversity of use, the park will hopefully attract more people and more legitimate uses which will assist in deterring inappropriate uses. The park needs to welcome and invite participation and ownership of the local community, which means that the makeup and character of the local community must be recognized.

- ii. Undertake renovations, maintenance and repairs to enhance accessibility and aesthetic appeal.
  - Minor improvements have already been made by the District of North Cowichan in response to communication of some needs, including clean-up and a wheelchair accessible platform at the main entrance.
  - Explore avenues to continue and enhance clean-up efforts to ensure the park is clean and free of garbage.
  - Install designated handicap parking near the front entrance.
- iii. Over the mid to long term, re-develop the park to accommodate multi-uses and be more appropriate for the local area and contribute to a stronger neighbourhood.

Park Design Recommendations:

- Update play equipment and redesign layout so that play areas are congregated into smaller, designated areas to delineate and separate uses and allow for proper supervision.
- Designate an area for teens and design a space with equipment that will invite

them and gather them into one particular area.

- Make facilities and grounds wheelchair accessible through installing wheelchair ramps at all entrances, developing a boardwalk system within the park, and revamping washrooms.
  - Update benches and install at least 2 to 3 picnic tables to encourage more use.
  - Develop a walking/jogging 'fitness trail' track around the perimeter of the park.
  - Develop activities such as lawn bowling or shuffleboard.
  - Develop the park as a green space and community resource through planting more trees and developing a common garden scheme.
  - Reduce the height of the fence at Alderlea and use more aesthetically pleasing materials.
  - Over the long term, undertake a major project such as a waterpark to replace the wading pool.
- iv. Transit plays a role in making an area accessible. A transit stop close to the park with posted schedules, would greatly enhance the accessibility of the park to those without a vehicle.

### **3. Promote Activities, Events, Stewardship**

In order to achieve a desired level of appropriate activity in the park and to hopefully deter and offset other inappropriate activities, it will be essential to make a concerted effort and invest in enabling the local community to use the park. Because of the historical conflicts involving youth, it has been noted that all youth have been tarred with the same negative brush. Therefore, involving youth in stewardship of the park is critical. Not only will it serve to enhance the park overall, it will give youth positive responsibilities and opportunities, engage youth in the local community, and promote more positive attitudes about youth as citizens. At the same time, it is essential to remember that this community has historically experienced severe barriers to participation, and it has not been easy to achieve local ownership and control therefore, it will be important for local authorities to provide support and assistance to both empower and enable such participation.

- i. Continue and enhance efforts to facilitate community-based activities in the park, social events, public activities.
  - Provide support and assistance (both monetary and in-kind) to local community groups to hold events and make improvements to the park.
- ii. Promote more positive attitudes toward youth.
  - Local media can be an important resource in documenting and publicizing positive activities and events.
- iii. Work with youth to encourage respectful use and stewardship of the park; connect youth and seniors, school and community.
  - The Call to Action Project has achieved success in this regard during the course of the project, illustrating that this is indeed an achievable objective. It will be

essential to continue to facilitate youth involvement, activities and stewardship.

#### **4. Develop youth programming and outreach, and alternative places for youth to gather safely.**

This recommendation is addressed in detail in the main Call to Action Project Report. Essentially, what is needed is outreach and mentorship for at risk youth; a safe place for at risk youth to gather and to receive assistance and support. Currently there is a community committee working on this objective, and there are various possibilities being explored. However, funding is a primary barrier and there needs to be substantial community assistance in order for this objective to be achieved. In the short term, the local community can assist through providing in-kind assistance. For example, program space might be provided by Cowichan Community Centre and Cowichan Senior Secondary.

#### **Summary and Comments**

It is clear that Kinsmen Park plays an essential role in the health and well-being of the local community, and that there is a strong desire for its revitalization, and for diversification of uses. While security is important, it must be understood that passive physical design measures are only effective to a degree, and need to be approached in close consultation with local residents, combined with other efforts. It is essential that redevelopment of the park be undertaken in close consultation and with the active participation of those for whom it is intended to serve. An investment in social and community development efforts will be offset by savings in damage, crime control and security, and over the long run, in costs such as incarceration, hospitalization, etc.

#### **b) Alderlea Street**

Alderlea is a residential street that also acts as a through street connecting James Street and Queens Road. The main entrance and parking for Kinsmen Park is on Alderlea Street. This street is home to two adult apartment buildings, and a Church is located on the corner of James and Alderlea.

#### **Observations and Comments**

- Because of the park, the school, the Community Centre and the connection between James Street and Queens Road, this area sees a lot of non-residential traffic.
- Speeding and noise from cars was noted as a major issue.
- There is a 'slow to 30 KM' traffic sign on this street, however it was noted that very few cars slow down and in fact, the sign was not highly visible.
- The Church has been renovated but there were comments that the church has become a fortress and even more of a "hang out" area for youth.
- Overall the street lacks the sense of community and feels more like a thoroughfare. Its use as a thoroughway detracts from the neighbourhood character, presents hazards to local children and seniors, and creates a great deal of noise disturbance for residents. With so many strangers 'invited' into the area, it must be impossible for local residents to feel comfortable and secure about their surroundings.
- Sharron Apartments is comprised largely of seniors, some who have discussed their concerns around home security and personal safety in public

places. The apartment building is located next to Kinsmen Park and is vulnerable to break-ins and vandalism in terms of its location to a high traffic area. Ground level suites are the most vulnerable.

- Sidewalks pose obstacles to access in places.

## **Suggestions for Improvements**

### **1. Slow traffic down, make the area more pedestrian friendly**

- i. Enforce the 30 km/hour speed limit in front of the park.
- ii. Design and install traffic calming measures. For example, a narrowing of the street at intervals would give the street less of a thoroughfare feeling.
- iii. Improve sidewalks to enhance accessibility.
  - Widen sidewalks to reduce obstacles posed by telephone poles.

### **2. Improve lighting and visibility**

- i. Install a light on the hydro pole adjacent to the church.
- ii. Consult with apartment residents to determine other needs for lighting.

### **3. Enhance physical security of residences**

- i. Offer free security checks of homes to recommend physical security measures.
- ii. Explore with residents, options for grants and other assistance for making desired improvements .

### **4. Foster community**

After the success of the event held in the park “Art Works for Community” it was felt that more neighbourhood events would enhance the residents’ sense of community. Taking part in neighbourhood events creates a sense of ownership for the area.

It was noted that many youth “hang out” around the Church and suggested that working with the Church to provide activities for youth could be a way to connect the Church and the youth in the area. This could give youth something to do, plus give them a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood.

## **c) James Street**

Survey respondents, focus group participants and audit participants agreed overall that James Street is an important focus of the community, and is an area that is valued by many people, for many reasons. However, audit participants had a lot to say about improving James Street. This area was noted by approximately 25% of survey respondents as an area where they are concerned for their safety. In short, James Street seems to be an area that many people use and value, but at the same time, lack an adequate level of safety and accessibility.

### **Comments and Observations**

*“Come live on our street and get first hand knowledge of what happens.”*

*“If the appearance was improved, it would create more positive attitudes for citizens that would allow them to feel safe in their community.”*

*“If it was just cleaned up...”*

*“There needs to be more emphasis on pedestrian areas.”*

*“There is just no “Lets go for a stroll” feeling to the area.”*

*“I walk to work along James early in the morning and have lots of concerns.”*

*“I have been beaten up.”*

### **Traffic**

- Speeding along the length of James Street is common and many vehicles do not slow down in the school zone. Peak traffic times, especially during, before and after school hours, are bad.
- School zone signs are not optimally located and lack visibility to drivers.
- The lack of area for busses to pull out of the main access to the Community Centre and high school parking areas impedes traffic flow.
- Delivery trucks sometimes block the path of pedestrians walking along sidewalks. Areas of particular concern are the News Leader / Pictorial, James Street Billiards, carpet and flooring place.
- High levels of pedestrian traffic sometimes conflict with vehicle traffic (e.g., the high number of students walking through the area).

### **Obstacles to Access**

- The layout and design of commercial buildings and parking lots (i.e., parking in front of buildings) often results in high levels of in and out vehicle traffic over sidewalks which present hazards for pedestrians.
- The Trans Canada Highway/James Street and the Canada Avenue/James Street (train) crossing areas were noted to present obstacles to access to James Street, particularly for the many people who travel on foot and people with disabilities who need to use this route for access to downtown.
- Sidewalks and curb cuts are not optimally accessible in places – particular spots noted were James and Duncan Street (over the train tracks and on the corner adjacent to Chevron).
- Some buildings do not offer wheelchair access (the Food Basket?).
- Places where hedges encroach onto sidewalks impede access (near Vaars Gym) and in front of the CCC.
- There are 4 transit routes that travel along James Street. There are a couple of designated bus stops along James Street, however the stops are not well marked, and there are no posted bus schedules. Public transit is an important means of access for people without alternate means of transportation.
- There is a natural crossing over James from Clements which does not have a crosswalk.

**Isolation, Hiding and Entrapment Areas**

- Alleyways beside the News Leader and Vaars Gym are isolated and dark after hours.
- Tall hedges in front of the CCC impede visibility and present hiding and entrapment areas.
- The parking lot to the east of the CCC is an isolated area – some participants said they would avoid that side of the street altogether if walking alone at night.

**Lighting**

- Several businesses have exterior lighting that contributes very well to overall lighting levels.
- There are streetlights on all poles on the south side of the street that work well overall, but are still not optimal for pedestrian visibility.
- There are spots along the length of James that lack lighting and/or are shadowed.

**Suggestions for improvements****1. Clean up and Revitalize James Street**

- ii. Increase efforts for clean up of garbage and litter on James Street.
  - Explore creative solutions such as having a community clean-up day, painting garbage cans and placing them all along James, etc.
- iii. Undertake a community initiative to revitalize and enhance James Street. Ideas for enhancement included:
  - Street pole banners hung along James Street could serve a dual purpose of informing people about upcoming events as well as add to the general appearance of James Street.
  - Planters in front of businesses would beautify the area.
  - Decorative lighting in trees to add to lighting levels and aesthetics.

**2. Slow and/or Reduce Vehicle Traffic**

- i. Enhance enforcement and encourage traffic speed limits already in place.
- ii. Replace existing speed zone signs with larger sized, neon coloured signs, and adjust locations to increase their visibility.
- iii. Install a crossing light for the school crosswalk.
- iv. Create a more effective lane for busses to enter the parking area for drop off and pick up.
- v. Give priority attention to the development of planning and design measures and policies aimed at reducing both traffic and speed of traffic along James Street.

It may be advisable to engage a professional traffic study to provide technical expertise and recommendations for traffic calming measures, placement of pedestrian lights, measures to alleviate problems caused by parking lots adjacent to

sidewalks and redesign of sidewalks and curb cuts to promote better pedestrian access to encourage more walking, less driving.

### **3. Enhance Accessibility for Pedestrians**

- ii. Clearly mark bus stops along James Street through larger and more visible signage.
- iii. Install benches at bus stops to allow people to sit while they wait. This would also serve to clearly mark the stop.
- iv. Post bus schedules at the bus stops to give people the option of waiting or going somewhere where they feel safer while waiting for the bus.
- v. Improve access across the Trans Canada Highway to James Street through improving the 'island' on the York Road side.
- vi. Construct a sidewalk from Canada Avenue over the train tracks
- vii. Repair curb cuts that do not provide optimal access.
  - James and Duncan Street (on the corner adjacent to Chevron).
  - Elvin Street (existing curb cut is encroached upon by roadway.)
- viii. Encourage all building owners to ensure they have wheelchair access at the front of buildings.
- ix. Trim hedges that encroach onto sidewalks impede access (near Vaars Gym) and in front of the CCC.
  - Install a crosswalk over James from Clements.
- ix. Explore and implement measures to address problems created by parking lots adjacent to sidewalks which present hazards for pedestrians.
- x. Install signage to indicate 'no exit' on Elvins.

### **4. Improve Lighting and Visibility**

- i. Increase overall levels of lighting and enhance the design of lighting to better serve pedestrians along James Street. Areas of concern include:
  - Chevron grounds
  - Duncan Auto Parts lot
  - Entrance to alleyway beside Newsleader
  - Newsleader shed (was open at night)
  - Vaars Gym building and adjacent alleyway
  - Alley next to the bowling alley
  - Cowichan Community Centre (east corner of the building; far corner of parking lot next to tennis courts)
  - Cowichan Senior Secondary side parking lot (Elvins)
  - Alleyway next to tennis courts
  - Crosswalk in front of CCC
  - Transit stops
- ii. Encourage businesses to leave a light on in their business or in front of their shops to increase the level of lighting along the street. Building lighting should be white, not yellow.

It will be important to keep in mind the potential major changes facing the area, with the building of a new library and the possibility of the school relocating.

#### **d) Cowichan Senior Secondary School**

Cowichan Senior Secondary is a significant and important neighbour in the James Street area. CSS School administrators and students, and trustees of School District 79 have been important partners in the Call to Action Project and have given commitment to contributing to solutions to make the neighbourhood a more positive environment for students and residents alike.

Survey respondents and audit participants noted issues ranging from traffic, crime, behaviours (violence, disregard for others), to garbage and aesthetics of the school building and grounds. These have been acknowledged, and staff and trustees have pledged their support to making improvements where possible. At the same time, it is acknowledged that efforts are constrained by monetary issues. Recommendations are offered in consideration of future redevelopment. Some of the following suggestions for improvements are already supported. We also bring some additional recommendations forward with regard to design and security to reduce opportunities for crime, as well as for community / social development.

#### **Observations and Comments**

##### **Physical Appearance, Layout and Design**

- The appearance of the high school is often noted as detracting from the overall aesthetics of the neighbourhood, described as run down and grungy.
- Vandalism and damage to the school are fairly common. A couple of spots of graffiti were noted at the rear of the school.
- The layout and design of the school grounds present numerous hiding areas, movement predictors and entrapment spots. Examples include:
  - ⇒ The front setback, combined with obstacles to visibility to the building (trees and shrubs)
  - ⇒ Numerous access points allow lots of after hours pedestrian traffic
  - ⇒ Portables to the side and rear of the main building
  - ⇒ Garbage bins
  - ⇒ Building alcoves and alleyways
- Although overall the building exterior and grounds are very well lit, there are several spots that are quite dark/shadowed that present both physical and personal security concerns. These include:
  - ⇒ The side lot off Elvins
  - ⇒ The side driveway next to the track
  - ⇒ The rear open areas paralleling St. Julian and Festubert Streets

- As an urban facility, the school grounds experience a lot of through traffic (both pedestrian and vehicle) that is difficult to control. Even at night, there is a lot of activity through the grounds between Festubert through to Elvins. The combination of its situation, design and use patterns makes the school vulnerable from a security perspective.

### **Safety Concerns of Youth**

- It is noteworthy that 84% of youth surveyed are concerned for their safety in public places – 56% of youth identified safety issues related to violence, harassment, drugs and alcohol; and about 1/3 indicated James Street or Kinsmen Park as the source of their concerns.

Youth are often perceived as the cause of crime, violence and safety issues in the James Street area. However, it is critical to understand that youth are very vulnerable and often victimized. Violence and abuse, sexual and racial harassment, intimidation, pressure to meet norms and expectations, etc., etc., comprise a spectrum of safety issues for young people which can affect their lives in many ways, including their scholastic achievement and even their ability to stay in school at all. It would be prudent (on the part of both the school and the broader community) to further explore with students their safety concerns, and work at the local level to address them.

*“We need to find a place for people, especially youth, to congregate...when they hang out in front of a store its intimidating, especially to seniors. Although they’re probably good kids, they might be perceived a being up to no good. Appearances matter”.*

*“We desperately need places for young people to be, especially at risk youth. We know this is needed but for some reason, the community doesn’t want to invest in these kids.”*

### **Suggestions for Improvements**

#### **1. Improve the physical appearance of the school and grounds.**

- Continue and enhance efforts to clean up garbage and litter around the school.
- Improve the appearance of the school through painting the exterior.
- Continue and enhance efforts to engage students to develop projects to beautify the school and grounds.

#### **2. Address physical security and design elements to reduce opportunities for crime and violence to occur.**

- Increase building lighting on both sides of the school (track side and lot side).
- Consider trimming vegetation that blocks sightlines to increase visibility from the street to the building.
- Facilitate the reduction of ‘cross traffic’ from Alderlea to the school through eliminating the student parking lot off Elvin Street (near park) and replacing it with parking area in front of the school.
- Consider obtaining a detailed safety audit of the building and grounds that

includes input from staff and students.

**3. Continue and enhance efforts where possible to engage, support and promote strong community partnerships for social development.**

- i. Open the school in the off hours to facilitate youth activities.
- ii. Continue and enhance support and facilitate school and community-based initiatives that foster prevention of violence, particularly gender-based and racial violence and discrimination.
- iii. Continue and enhance efforts to develop and implement alcohol and drug prevention programming.
- iv. Continue and enhance support and participation in local events aimed at promoting community development and civic-oriented activities.
- v. Engage all students, particularly those who are marginalized, in an active and ongoing dialogue to understand and ultimately address their safety concerns at school and in the community.

**e) Cowichan Community Centre**

Cowichan Community Centre and Pioneer Complex are major public recreation sites, comprising several acres on the east side of James, and include the community centre building, a tennis court, skateboard park and ball fields. The CCC, similar to the high school, is a highly valuable resource and has a critical role in the community. It goes without saying that the CCC is an important and significant neighbour on James Street.

CCC administration and staff have been actively involved and supportive of the Call to Action Project, and other safety initiatives, contributing substantial time and resources to both the steering committee processes and to action events.

**Observations and Comments**

Comments and observations arising from surveys, focus groups and audit participants included:

**Design and Layout**

- The overall location and layout of the facility and surrounding land uses makes the CCC an important entity for the local community and beyond – but at the same time, lends to safety and security issues.
- The front entrance to the CCC is somewhat hidden from view and lacks a feeling of invitation and welcoming.
- Parking lots are an ongoing concern around traffic flow, isolation, lighting, hiding and entrapment areas and obstacles to visibility created by vegetation, and inappropriate activities.
- The CCC has taken measures to enhance security aimed at opportunity reduction, including hiring security guards, increasing lighting in some areas, security cameras. These efforts have had mixed results and responses. For example:

- ⇒ Security guards assist in making the public feel safe while using the area; however, some people have expressed sentiment that the money would be better spent supporting youth rather than sending them away. This is most definitely a difficult aspect of trying to address safety concerns, and illustrates the need for comprehensive approaches.
- ⇒ Staff have commented that security issues have not disappeared with enhanced security.

### **CCC as center of community**

- The CCC is generally very well maintained, and an active center of the James Street area. It has the potential to be even more community-oriented, and a more positive force in community development.
- The CCC must be supported and allowed to support the local community through low and no cost services and programs, and community development initiatives.

### **Suggestions for improvement**

- i. Improve physical design, security and access:
  - a) Trim hedges to reduce entrapment areas and increase visibility.
  - b) Have an open / closed sign clearly visible to the street, as well as an 'hours of operation' sign.
  - c) Add a 'Public Telephone' sign to inform people of this service available inside community centre.
  - d) Paint stair nosing strips on concrete stairs, outside of pool entrance
  - e) Install sensor lights outside this entrance.
  - f) Add a handicap parking space in the parking lot nearer the pool entrance.
  - g) reduce height of hedge
  - h) move bike rack outside entrance of pool to street level
  - i) increase lighting in front, along James street
  - j) increase signage re: emergency services available
  - k) create safer place for busses to offload students
  - l) install picnic tables in green space, parking area
- ii. Enhance the role of the CCC as a local center of community. Examples include:
  - a) Explore avenues for supporting a local Neighbourhood house
  - b) Increase funding for no/low cost recreation programming
  - c) Explore avenues for housing a youth outreach program

## **f) Clements and Vian Streets**

Clements Street contains a few residences, businesses, a used parts lot, and the Cowichan Valley Association for Community Living building. Clements is a main entrance for events at Pioneer Park. Vian Street contains several single family residences, duplexes and a multi-family building. Vian Street is often used as a thoroughway for people walking from the CCC to Clements.

- High traffic levels, especially during events, result in a lot of noise and disturbance for local residents.
- At night, Clements Street is inadequately lit, particularly for people attending

events.

### **Suggestions for Improvements**

- i. Add streetlights on the three existing poles along Clements.
- ii. Increase building lighting to illuminate the lot and alleyway behind the bowling alley.

### **Summary and Comments**

This audit has focused on the physical environment. However, in terms of overall community safety, it is important to take a holistic view of the area and the people. Some of the issues surrounding these conflicts are quite complex and rooted in broader social problems. While these questions are indeed difficult, they are important in terms of defining and implementing community safety strategies that will be effective over the long term.

Social and Community Development strategies will be critical. It will also be essential to plan improvements so that short term strategies do not result in ‘shifting the problem.’ It is important to understand that all of these approaches are connected, and that each will contribute to the overall aims.

For example, improvements to physical security of homes and neighbourhoods will help to reduce the vulnerability of people and property through addressing opportunities for crime and violence. In the short term, these are effective ways to reduce incidences of crime. However, over the long term it will be important to ensure future development happens in a way that provides safety, accessibility and localized services to the neighbourhood. And finally, it is essential that we address the root causes of crime through prevention strategies that address overall quality of life, and provide supportive services, opportunities for children, youth and families.

### **Community Planning Considerations**

A number of the recommendations in this report have implications for future planning and development.

Incorporating considerations for personal safety into planning, design and management of communities, into process that guide development is an important component of community safety.

The District of North Cowichan can integrate personal safety and accessibility into its Official Community Plan and corresponding by-laws that guide and regulate development. There are several examples of how safety audit recommendations and general principles for planning and design have been incorporated into Official Community Plans, zoning by-laws and Development Permit Area by-laws in the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

### **Community Planning Recommendations:**

Develop and implement land use planning policies and development guidelines that will serve to:

1. Encourage revitalization and redevelopment that will enhance the local area.
  - Encourage redevelopment by bringing in incentives for desired types of development (for example, reduce or remove Development cost charges).
  - Promote a healthy mix of commercial, residential and recreational development.
  - Encourage innovative commercial ventures such as coffee shops and markets, which would also serve to increase the flow of people to the area.
  - Highlight and enhance pedestrian access.
  - Encourage adequate levels of lighting as well as creative lighting.
    - (For example, mini lights were suggested for trees along James Street, to increase the level of lighting as well as work to beautify the area.)
2. Respect and preserve residential properties.
3. Respect and consider residential facilities and users (i.e., Open Door Program).
4. Promote and encourage affordable housing throughout the district to provide more and better options for families living in low income situations.
5. Ensure Plan policies incorporate provisions to encourage supportive management structures to support tenant involvement.
6. Ensure Plan policies provide for adequate provision of facilities and recreational services to support accessibility and affordability.
7. Adopt community planning policies and develop municipal guidelines which support crime prevention in future development. Elements:
  - Encourage layout and design of streets, buildings and open spaces to influence reduction of opportunities for crimes to occur (adequate lighting, elimination of hiding and entrapment areas, movement predictors, reduce isolation and increase awareness of surroundings).
  - Integrate security measures to reinforce both formal and informal surveillance, as well as target hardening and access control of routes and entrances to increase security.
  - Implement a program of education, training and information for planners and developers on planning and design for safety.